



Proposed federation of Butterknowle, Frosterley and Woodland Primary Schools

For the past 5 years Frosterley and Woodland Primary Schools have been working in a Shared Headship arrangement, 3 years ago Butterknowle Primary School joined the collaboration, which has evolved to become much more than sharing a Headteacher. These arrangements have worked to the benefit of the children, staff and governing bodies. They have ensured that each school remains viable and able to set a balanced budget. There have been numerous benefits in curriculum provision and staff development from the existing cooperation between the schools. But the existing arrangements have to be renewed annually. The governing bodies of the three schools would like to make the arrangements permanent and utilise the additional benefits of the federation to further improve the educational opportunities for all the pupils in Butterknowle, Frosterley and Woodland Primary Schools.

Many different directions towards an improved future are being taken by schools across the country. One such route, successful elsewhere, is to agree to formalise partnerships between schools. To this end, and following careful consideration the Governing Bodies of Butterknowle, Frosterley and Woodland Primary Schools have agreed to consult on formalising the collaboration by the establishment of a Federation from Monday, 25th April 2022 because they believe it would provide increased opportunities for all pupils and staff in the three schools.

A formal consultation with parents, staff and other stakeholders will now take place before a final decision is taken.

We believe our schools can gain many benefits from working collaboratively and can achieve more by working together. We have made a commitment to a shared responsibility to the wider education community, the provision of good quality education and the improvement of life chances for pupils in the community beyond our own schools. Teachers, support staff, school leaders and governors have added expertise in working alongside colleagues to improve provision and outcomes for pupils.

What is a Federation?

A Federation is a governance structure whereby two or more schools share a single Governing Body under Section 24 of the Education Act 2002. Federations allow schools to share best practice, facilities, expertise and to learn from the strengths of excellent teaching in different phases to enable them to raise standards. A shared Governing Body provides an effective and accountable mechanism for schools to pool resources and staff, release strategic capacity in the senior management team, and gain economies of scale and efficiencies.

Working together in a Federation can enable those schools in it to co-ordinate either curriculum, teaching or learning strategies relevant to specific communities and localities and can also facilitate inclusion and diversity. The ability to federate under a single Governing Body could also benefit small schools or schools in more isolated rural areas, opening up opportunities to share management and Governing Body responsibility and curriculum expertise.

Key Points about a Potential Federation

- The schools would remain as individual schools, as they are now.
- The names of the schools would not change, but there would be a name for the federation, which we are proposing is The Dales Partnership.
- There will be no changes to admission arrangements.
- There would be no need for a change in school uniform.
- There would be one governing body and one Executive Head Teacher with strategic responsibility for all three schools. Please see Appendix I for the full structure of the federated governing body. It allows for all existing governors to continue in post so we can benefit from the skills and experience of all three governing bodies.

Potential Benefits of Federation for our Schools

Pupils

- A consistent approach to high quality teaching and learning for all children as best practice is shared between the schools.
- Sharing staff expertise leads to better teaching and learning for children in all subjects.
- Children are part of a wider community broadening their experience.
- More enrichment opportunities for children as the schools share visits, projects and residentials.
- Sharing ideas on activities, fund raising and extra-curricular activities leads to more exciting and varied experiences for the children.
- Cost savings between the schools means there is more money to spend for the children's benefit.

Staff

Federation does not change the designation of any school, the Local Authority will continue to be the employer of all staff at the three schools through the Governing Body. The staffing structure will remain as it is with an executive headteacher across the federation and a deputy headteacher in each school.

Every year governors review the staffing complement of each school to ensure the experience and expertise required is available to meet the requirements of pupils and the curriculum. This will continue to be the case in each school within the federated arrangement.

Federation will bring

- Opportunities to share good practice and expertise, joint planning and assessment amongst the three schools to improve the education and outcomes for our children / pupils
- Opportunities for more shared professional development amongst the three schools
- Improve opportunities and security for support staff through networking and more access to training
- Improved leadership development opportunities and support for all staff through mentoring
- Potential opportunities for promotion due to changes to leadership structures.
- Opportunities, for current staff who wish to, and for all staff appointed post federation to work across schools, increasing their knowledge and expertise of different phases, or aspects of the schools' work.
- For existing staff, contractual arrangements remain the same.

Governors and Governance

- The school's individual governing bodies would be replaced by a single governing body for the Federation, but the School Governance (Federation) (England) Regulations 2012 and other Regulations on the

composition, duties and responsibilities of governing bodies must be followed. These ensure the representation from all the school communities and the same “stakeholder” groups – parents, staff, LEA and co-options and that we have the skills, knowledge and experience to be an effective Body. All existing governors are invited to be part of the Federated Governing Body.

- Across our three governing bodies we already have a very strong skill and knowledge base that will continue to develop and provide the necessary level of support and challenge so all our pupils can learn and develop in a safe and secure environment.
- It will be a stronger and more effective governing body by combining our skills and experience.
- The proposed composition of the governing body of the federation is shown in Appendix I.

In addition, a federation would provide opportunities for:

- A structured way for the three schools to collaborate further to the benefit of their school communities.
- Cost effective and coherent budget management in terms of procurement across three sites to ensure best value.

Our three schools working closely together as a Federation can offer their children opportunities beyond that which one single school can provide.

Admissions

Durham County Council, our Local Authority, will continue to be the admissions authority for pupils to Butterknowle, Frosterley and Woodland Primary Schools. As such, parents will express their preference for a school place via the Local Authority's admissions procedure, as they currently do.

Additional Information

The three schools will remain individual schools. Pupils will belong to a single school within the federation. The schools would be part of the federation. The names of the individual schools would not be changed.

Consultation

The Governing Bodies wish to consult widely with stakeholder groups associated with the three schools. Your thoughts and opinions about the future of our schools are valued and Governors welcome comments about this exciting development. Written comments will be considered at a joint meeting of the Governing Bodies following the conclusion of the consultation period.

We will also hold a consultation meeting for staff and an additional meeting for parents. Trade Unions will receive a copy of the consultation documentation.

The consultation period begins on Friday 7th January 2022 and closes at midday Friday 18th February 2022. A timeline for the process is set out on the below.

If you wish to comment, please complete the attached form and return it to one of the addresses below, or write to the Chair of Governing Body in any of the three schools.

Following the Consultation period, the Governing Bodies of the three schools will jointly consider the responses and then meet separately to decide whether or not they wish to continue to federate. They will make that decision in the best interest of their school and its pupils' future. The time scale for the whole process is on page 4. We will keep you informed of progress at each stage of the process.

Timeline of Key Events

Key Step	Date
Formal Consultation Proposal circulated to all stakeholders.	Friday, 7 th January 2022
Staff Meetings	Thursday, 13 th January for all schools Butterknowle PS 9.30 - 10.30am Woodland PS 11.00am – 12 noon Frosterley PS 1.15 – 2.15pm
Parent Meetings Drop-ins to be held in local village halls to meet current Covid regulations.	Butterknowle PS Monday 10 th January 4-5pm Woodland PS Wednesday 12 th January 4-5pm Frosterley PS Friday 14 th January 4-5pm
Consultation Ends	Friday, 18 th February, Midday
Joint Meeting of Governing Bodies to consider consultation responses. Following this meeting, individual governing bodies to meet separately to vote on proposed federation.	Thursday, 3 rd March
Proposed Date for Federation	Monday, 25 th April

Appendix I The proposed structure of the Governing Body for the Federation		
Local Authority	1	Max allowed, one existing LA gov to move to co-opted.
Headteacher	1	
Parent Governors	3	One parent Governor from each school - maximum allowed by regulation. The rest can be transferred to Co-opted.
Staff Governor	1	Max allowed, 2 move to co-opted
Co -opted	19	Includes transferees and existing co-opted governors.

Frequently asked Questions

- 1. Will the names of the schools change?**

No. There is no requirement or intention to change the name of the schools. It is proposed that the federation be called 'The Dales Partnership'.
- 2. Do the pupils belong to the federation or to a single school?**

The children belong to a single school within the federation. The schools are part of the federation.
- 3. Will there be any change to admissions arrangements?**

No. Durham County Council, which is our Local Authority, will continue to be the admissions authority for all three schools. Parents would apply for a named school within the federation.
- 4. Will pupils from the schools have opportunities to work together? (POST COVID RESTRICTIONS)**

Yes. There may have already been times (pre-COVID) when pupils met together for activities, trips and residential. These opportunities will increase where there are benefits for the children.
- 5. Does the school day or term or lesson times of schools in a federation have to be the same?**

No, this is not essential.
- 6. Do schools in a federation have to have the same training days?**

No. Such decisions will be within the federation/schools discretion. It may be helpful for some training days to coincide so that staff training could be shared, but there is no compulsion.
- 7. Will there be any changes to the curriculum as a result of federation?**

All schools in England follow the National Curriculum 2014. Each of the schools teaches the curriculum in a creative and engaging way designed to meet the needs of the children in each school.
- 8. What changes will the children see?**

The children will not see any significant changes in their day-to-day school life. However, they will all benefit from additional opportunities and expertise.
- 9. Who employs the staff of a federation?**

Members of staff continue to be employed by the Local Authority via the Governing Body of the Federation. Therefore, there is no need for TUPE transfer (Transfer of undertakings – protection of employment). This means that there will be no changes to the employment of existing staff.
- 10. Will there be any changes in conditions of service for staff?**

No changes. All employment rights, pension arrangements etc. remain exactly as they are.
- 11. Can staff teach or work across the schools in a federation?**

Existing members of staff cannot be directed to teach or work in a school they were not originally contracted to be employed in, although there may be opportunities to if staff wish to do this. Future vacancies can be advertised as working across more than one school, so any new employees will know their contractual position and job roles when they accept the post.
- 12. Can schools in a federation share continuing professional development arrangements?**

Yes, when they wish to, this is one of the distinct advantages of belonging to a federation.
- 13. Who will be “in charge” when the Executive Headteacher is not in school**

If the proposal is carried forward, then Governors will give consideration to ensuring that an effective and efficient leadership structure is in place for all three schools, including cover for the absence of the Executive Head.

14. Do schools in a federation have a single governing body?

Yes, in a federation the previous Governing Body for each school would be dissolved upon federation and a new single Governing Body would be established for the federated schools. We would have considerably more governors, representing the three schools. It is for the governing body of the federation to determine how they will operate within the requirement to have at least one meeting each term.

15. Do federated schools have a combined budget allocation?

The Federation Governing Body is responsible for the budget of all three schools but each school continues to receive its budget share from the Local Authority in accordance with the formula funding rules.

16. Can governors combine funding from each school?

Governing bodies of federations often have a relatively small proportion of funds ‘pooled’ for the benefit of all schools in the federation. The salary costs of the Executive Headteacher and any other shared staff would be paid by the three schools, as they are now.

17. Will a federation be inspected by Ofsted?

Ofsted sometimes inspect federated schools at the same time, but each school is inspected separately, and each have their own judgements and their own report. Each school will, as now, have to respond to its own Ofsted findings.

18. Can a school leave a federation?

The Governing Bodies are supporting federation to help secure the long-term future of the three schools and further develop and sustain the improvements / benefits for the children’s education and staff development. However, Government Regulations allow for the dissolution of a Federation.

19. How will everyone be informed of progress?

We have organised meetings with parents, staff, unions and the community during the consultation period to explain and discuss the proposals. Once the Governing Bodies have considered the responses to the Consultation we will let you know our decision by Monday, 14th March 2022 by letter, e-mail and on school websites.

If you have any questions, concerns or comments please contact one of the Chairs or Vice Chairs of the Governing Bodies whose contact details are given below.

If you have any questions, concerns or comments contact the chairs of your governing body.

Contact details are:

Frosterley – Chair Mrs J Bainbridge: J.Bainbridge600@durhamlearning.net

Butterknowle – Chair Mr P Tennick: P.Tennick600@durhamlearning.net

Woodland – Chair Mrs C Dixon: C.Dixon600@durhamlearning.net

Or, write to the Schools at the following addresses marked for the attention of the Chair of Governors.

Chair of Governors Butterknowle Primary School Butterknowle Bishop Auckland DL13 5PB	Chair of Governors Frosterley Primary School Bridge End Frosterley Bishop Auckland DL13 2SN	Chair of Governors Woodland Primary School The Edge Woodland Bishop Auckland DL13 5RF
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Consultation Response Form

(To be returned to one of the three schools by 12 p.m. on Friday, 18th February 2022.)

The Governing Bodies of Butterknowle, Frosterley and Woodland Primary Schools would like to hear the views of parents/carers, staff, staff Trade Union representatives, and other members of the schools' communities on the proposed federation.

Please use this form to give us your thoughts and views regarding the proposal to federate the three schools, returning it by 12 p.m. on Friday, 18th February 2022, to one of the addresses below.

It would be helpful if you were able to give any reasons and/or evidence to support your views.

Are you in favour of a federation between Butterknowle Primary School and Frosterley Primary School and Woodland Primary School (Please circle)	
Yes	No

Comments

Please circle as appropriate

I am a....

Parent/Carer	Staff Member	Trade Union	Other
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From....

Butterknowle Primary School	Frosterley Primary School	Woodland Primary School
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Forms should be returned to:

Chair of Governors Butterknowle Primary School Butterknowle Bishop Auckland DL13 5PB	Chair of Governors Frosterley Primary School Bridge End Frosterley Bishop Auckland DL13 2SN	Chair of Governors Woodland Primary School The Edge Woodland Bishop Auckland DL13 5RF
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