

# A consultation Document for the Proposal to Federate Bradley CE Primary School and Brailsford CE Primary School

## **Introduction**

Having already established a successful leadership collaboration, the Governing Boards of Bradley and Brailsford Primary Schools are proposing that the two schools would be ideally suited to working together in a formalised partnership, known as a Federation. This is designed to ensure that each of the schools retain their individual identity and most importantly, their role in maintaining their local communities and sustaining the children and families they serve. Federation is recommended by both sets of Governors as they consider that it would help to secure the future of both schools as individual entities for the long term. This proposal has been agreed by the Governing Boards of each school.

As touched on above, our families are at the heart of both schools and we believe they would want each school to retain its own character and culture, and for its partner to do the same. Federation as discussed in this document is not an amalgamation, a takeover or a route to closure. Our vision for the Federation is two distinct schools, each with their own unique character, working together to ensure the best possible outcomes for all our pupils. This would mean:

- The two schools would remain as separate schools but under the leadership of one headteacher (known as the Executive Headteacher)
- A single shared vision and ethos
- A single Governing Board responsible for Governance and staffing in both schools
- Shared policies and procedures
- Long term sustainability of both schools

This is not a proposal to create one school. The two schools would remain separate under one Headteacher.

This document sets out some of the detail considered by the Governors of both schools in reaching their recommendation following their proposal to federate at their individual Governing Board meetings in December 2016 and follows the statutory requirement for consultation under The School Governance (Federations) {England} Regulations 2012. It also explains what will change and crucially, the way each school will remain as it is currently constituted in serving pupils, parents and the community.

No decision has been made yet. At the end of the consultation period, the Governing Boards of the two schools will make a final decision on whether to federate, taking into account everyone's views and comments.

## **Reasons That Schools Consider Federation**

As both the political and educational landscape have changed over the recent years, the challenge of maintaining small village schools is greater than ever. A recent report from the Church of England states in the foreword that they are "convinced about.....the need for schools to form effective structural partnerships and collaborations if they are to survive into the future" (Working Together: The Future of Rural Schools, October 2014). The Local Authority have also made it clear that whilst they continue to support their small schools, change must be considered to be able to maintain viability in the future. Advice has been taken from the Local Authority and Derby Diocese and they both support the proposal.

The reasons pertinent to the Federation of Bradley and Brailsford Schools are as follows

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- Collaboration since September 2016 has been successful and to enable this to continue it must be moved to a more formal stage
- Both schools are Church of England schools and share a similar Christian ethos
- Both are small rural schools facing shrinking budgets and by federating would save money enabling a more secure future for each school
- Both schools feed into the same secondary school and Dove Valley Cluster making liaison under one Executive Head Teacher time efficient
- Both wish to maintain their current status as individual schools and not be part of a MAT (Multi Academy Trust) where they feel they would be overwhelmed due to their small size
- The schools are only 4 miles apart which makes for easier collaboration between staff and travel for the Executive Head Teacher
- Both currently have a 'Good' Ofsted outcome which means they are federating on a similar basis
- It should help to retain staff who may wish to move to a bigger school for career progress and offer all staff opportunities for sharing expertise and planning or be a more attractive offer for new employees

From a purely financial perspective, having one, non-teaching Headteacher saves each school a considerable amount of money every year and there are other efficiency savings that that can be achieved when working in partnership, whilst retaining all current staff. The leadership of schools is also of concern at a national level, with schools struggling to recruit head teachers; it is considered that a federation of schools is in a stronger position to recruit and retain exceptional leaders who will ensure the schools remain at the heart of their communities and best serve the children who attend them. This would also apply to other school staff who it is considered, would benefit from increased career development opportunities within the Federation.

The current leadership collaboration has been a success at both schools, but this is not a sustainable model over time due to legal restraints and it does not create a firm foundation for those involved in the schools.

Both schools are Voluntary Controlled Church of England schools and share a similar vision. They also provide a caring environment which reflects their Christian ethos, and the values and aspirations of the communities they support. The staff is experienced, well-motivated, capable and well led and these virtues are communicated to the children who are happy, confident and engage well with staff.

### **Implications of Federation**

#### **Would there be any changes to the way the children are taught?**

It is intended that the existing arrangements between the two schools would broadly remain as they are at present. Opportunities would continue to be sought to bring the children of both schools together to share learning experiences and widen their social interactions.

However it is planned that day-to-day teaching and learning in each school would remain allowing each school to retain its individual current identity.

#### **What would change?**

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The most obvious change would be in the official name of the federation which would be:

"The Dales Federation of Bradley Church of England Primary School and Brailsford Church of England Primary School"

This name was decided upon as it reflects the larger area in which the schools geographically lie and was agreed at the Joint Committee made up of three Governors from both schools who have delegated powers given to them by their respective Boards and in conjunction with the Head Teacher.

Each school would retain its current title for normal usage and the abbreviated "Dales Federation" would be used to describe the joint entity. This title has been chosen as a reflection of the ethos of both schools where community, togetherness, a respect for local history and tradition are key parts of everything the schools do.

Federation would mean combining aspects of school management to make the partnership work for the benefit of the children attending the schools. The only significant change at the point of Federation would be the formation of a single Governing Board.

### **The Governing Board**

The Governing Board would be combined as one under the following model:

The model has 13 Governors and aims to give fair and equal representation for both schools and to ensure that key stakeholders are represented appropriately. The members of the Governing Board will be appointed with due regard to their skills, and the needs identified by the skills audit undertaken. The Governing Board, from which a Chair and Vice Chair will be elected, will be made up of:

- Headteacher
- 2 Parent Governors (One in respect of each school in the federation)
- 1 Foundation Governor \*
- 1 Local Authority Governor
- 1 Staff Governors. (Only one staff Governor can be elected, the other will be co-opted from the other school)
- 7 Co-opted Governors including two ex-officio governors\* to reflect the Christian ethos of both schools and one other Staff member so that both schools are represented

\* All of these Governors would be nominated and appointed by the Diocesan Board of Education.

### **Clerking arrangements**

All full Governing Board meetings will be supported by a clerk.

### **School Funds and Finances**

Each school will continue to have its own separate budget, but the Governing Board would be able to make strategic decisions about surplus funds in line with development plans, if the situation arose. In all other respects during the financial year the two schools' budgets remain separate.

### **Staffing**

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Staff numbers would remain at current levels and no contracts will be changed as a result of Federation.

- The proposal is for shared leadership between the two schools. This will mean one Executive Headteacher.
- It is proposed that a Senior Teacher at each school will be responsible for immediate issues when the Headteacher is absent from the school premises.
- Staff will continue to be employed on the same conditions of service
- Stronger collaboration and the size of the combined schools will allow for increased opportunities for continuing professional development and career development.
- The combined size of the schools will enable the proposed federation to attract and retain high quality staff.
- There will be a common approach to teaching and learning, along with a single system of target setting, assessing, moderating teaching and learning, and tracking pupil progress.
- There will be development of continuity and quality by identifying best practice from both schools and applying it across the Federation.
- It is anticipated that staff will continue, and extend partnership working with staff from both schools, and take advantage of the additional CPD opportunities that the Federation will provide in terms of shared expertise, resources and training.

### **Admissions**

Each school would keep the current arrangements for admission.

### **What would stay the same?**

The simple answer from a day to day perspective is 'almost everything'. Each school would keep their own name, identity and uniform. Even from an Ofsted point of view, each school would be inspected separately. In fact, rather than bringing change to the schools, Governors believe that federation is the best way to preserve the things that we value about our schools.

### **How to comment on the proposal**

The Governors of both Bradley and Brailsford Primary Schools have considered the issue of Federation at length. This document summarises our proposal but we realise that you may have other questions, comments and views on the proposal to federate. If any parent or stakeholder requires support to enable them to read this in their own language then please contact the Head Teacher who can arrange for this to happen.

We therefore invite Parents/Carers and other stakeholders to engage in the statutory consultation by speaking to Governors and/or attending the public meetings on Wednesday the 17th May at 6.30pm at Bradley School and at 7.30pm at Brailsford School. You can further comment on the proposal by writing/emailing your comments to Ann Duffy, Clerk to both Governing Boards before the consultation ends on Monday the 12th of June.

Address for Bradley stakeholders – Mrs A Duffy, Clerk to the Governors, Bradley CE (VC) Primary School, Yew Tree Lane, Bradley, Ashbourne, Derbyshire. DE6 1PG

Address for Brailsford stakeholders – Mrs A Duffy, Clerk to Governors, Brailsford CE (VC) Primary School, Luke lane, Brailsford, Ashbourne, Derbyshire. DE6 3DA

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Staff at both schools have been kept abreast of the progress of the collaboration and the proposed federation and have been offered the opportunity to have a consultation with their trade union representatives. They are fully committed to this process and do not wish for any such consultation as their contracts will not be altered. Prospective new staff may be offered different contracts which could enable them to work in both schools.

A copy of this proposal will be available for inspection in both schools during school hours for the seven week consultation period from April 24<sup>th</sup>. This seven week consultation allows for a week's half term holiday.

The two Governing Boards will then meet together on June 19<sup>th</sup> to consider all views collated during the consultation process and hopefully come to a decision. This will enable the separate Governing Boards to make an informed final decision upon the proposed federation at their individual meetings that same evening. The decision will be conveyed to all stakeholders in writing on June 21<sup>st</sup>. If the decision is to proceed, a formal notice of the fact that Bradley and Brailsford School are to federate will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Education asking for permission to federate. The Local Authority and Derby Diocese will also be informed.

If the proposal is accepted The Dales Federation will officially commence on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2017. The Governing Boards of both schools will be disbanded on August 31<sup>st</sup> at midnight and a skeleton Governing Board will have already been elected to take over immediately with further Co-opted, Foundation and Ex-officio Governors joining them on September 6<sup>th</sup> 2017 when the first Dales Governing Board meeting will be held. Elected Parent and Staff Governors currently in position do not automatically transfer to the new Governing Board - new elections for these posts will take place in June/July.

### **Key Dates**

**24th April:** Proposal to federate issued to parents/carers and other stakeholders and the consultation period begins.

**17th May: 6.30pm at Bradley School:** Bradley School stakeholders' meeting with Governors to discuss the proposal.

**17th May: 7.30 pm at Brailsford School:** Brailsford School stakeholders' meeting with Governors to discuss the proposal.

**12th June:** Closing date for written representations which should be forwarded to Ann Duffy.

**19th June:** Joint Governing Board meeting to review responses and make a final decision on the proposal to federate.

**19<sup>th</sup> June:** Governing Boards meet independently later to ratify the final decision.

**21<sup>st</sup> June:** Notification to all stakeholders of the outcome of the process including Derby Diocese, Department for Education and the Local Authority. New Parent and Staff Governor elections to take place.

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