

FEDERATION NEWS 01.12

From the Governing Bodies of St Bede's and Send First Schools

Following the decision to federate Send First and St Bede's, the governing bodies wanted to provide more comprehensive details of the decision, what it means and what will be happening over the next few months.

The decision

At a meeting on 19 December 2011, and following a statutory six-week consultation period, governors took the unanimous decision to proceed with federating the schools. Send C of E First School and St Bede's C of E Junior School will therefore formally establish a hard federation with effect from 29 March 2012.

What does hard federation mean?

Like many schools, Send First and St Bede's have worked informally together for many years. Federation will enable us to formalise that link and create greater integration and closer collaboration.

The key characteristics for this hard federation are:

- one Executive Head Teacher appointed to lead both schools
- one governing body is responsible for both schools
- the staff of both schools work for the one governing body
- each school is still legally a separate school
- each school has a separate budget
- both budgets are managed by the one governing body
- both budgets can be used for resources shared by both schools
- each school has its own performance data and Ofsted inspection.

What did the consultation tell us?

The six-week consultation began on 4 November 2011, when governors published a proposal document, and ended on 16 December 2011.

The proposal was circulated to all parents, staff and other interested parties, including education officers in the Diocese of Guildford and Surrey County Council, the Department of Education, Borough and County Councillors, neighbouring schools, the parochial church councils of Send and Ripley and Send Parish Council.

We would like to say thank you to everyone who took the time to give us their opinions – they were extremely valuable and helped us gain greater clarity.

Responses from parents

We received 47 written responses from parents, and of these **83%** either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal.

In addition to the statutory requirement of receiving written responses, governors also held four drop-in sessions, lasting one hour each, for parents. One parent chose to attend. No parents requested additional opportunities to meet governors.

Responses from staff

We received nine written responses from staff of both schools. Of these, three agreed or strongly agreed, four didn't know and two disagreed.

During the consultation period we held a series of meetings with staff. All teachers and 15 TAs/LSAs and admin staff attended meetings at Send First. Seven members of staff at St Bede's attended their meetings. Other meetings were offered but declined and no one asked for extra meetings. Questions were answered during the staff meetings and were also included in the 'frequently asked questions' (FAQs), published weekly throughout the consultation process.

Other responses

Written support for the proposal was received from the Diocese of Guildford, Surrey County Council's School Improvement Advisor, County and Borough Councillor Keith Taylor and Send Parochial Church Council. The local representative of NASUWT requested clarification regarding employment, leadership and governance. Governors also met with Send Parish Council to explain the proposal and answer questions. The council chose to express no opinion.

The Surrey Governance Consultancy Manager described the consultation document and process as exemplary and the Local Education Office said the FAQs were 'very useful'.

FAQs

Governors agreed that the consultation process should be as transparent, interactive, informative and responsive as possible, and answering questions was identified as an important feature. The FAQs, which eventually comprised 43 questions, were continually updated as responses were received and circulated weekly. There was no obligation on governors to produce such a document.

Composition of the governing body

In response to a number of questions raised during the consultation period, we have looked closely at the size and composition of the new governing body. In order to satisfy the legal 'compositional formula' requirements and ensure we can effectively govern the federation, we have increased the number of governors to 21:

- 4 Parent governors
- 5 staff governors (to include the Executive Head Teacher)
- 2 Authority governors (appointed by Surrey County Council)
- 2 Community governors (appointed by the governing body)
- 8 Foundation governors (4 appointed by the Diocese of Guildford, including *ex officio* incumbent or principal minister of the Parish of Send, and 4 appointed by Send Parochial Church Council)

The governing body has the authority to change its composition at any time by altering the Instrument of Government.

Next steps

On 19 January, a substantial number of governors from both schools attended a workshop, facilitated by Sue Boustead of Babcock4s Governance Consultancy, to agree the composition of the new governing body, how governors will be elected, and to plan an orderly transition from the old structure to the new.

The practicalities of federation are being addressed by a small steering group (Tony Shutt, Richard Kelly and Rachel Williams). This committee is taking advice from other recently federated schools, the LA, the Diocese and others to ensure that we benefit from their experience.

The final meetings of the current governing bodies will take place on 29 March. At this meeting we will need to agree that all formal responsibilities have been fulfilled and submit an inventory of assets. Any ongoing or outstanding activities and actions will be documented. The governing bodies will then be dissolved and the term of office of all governors terminated.

On the same evening, the new governing body will convene for the first time and all identified and recorded assets will be transferred to the new governing body.

All governors in the new governing body must therefore be elected, appointed or re-appointed as is appropriate and required by law. We hope that many of our existing governors will become members of the new governing body and so ensure continuity and a good level of knowledge and understanding.

The process to collect nominations for Parent and Staff Governors will begin shortly so that governors are ready to take up appointment from 29 March.

Recruitment

Executive Head Teacher

The recruitment committee, led by Nick Enderby, published an advertisement in the Times Educational Supplement (10 January). The closing date for applications is 30 January, with interviews to be held in early February. The successful candidate will take up position in September 2012. We recognise that the appointment of the Executive Head Teacher is critical and we will keep parents and staff fully informed of developments.

School Business Manager

Mr Lees and the two Chairs of Governors recently reviewed the organisational structure for business management across both schools, and agreed to create a new position of a single School Business Manager (SBM) within an executive structure.

This position will ensure a single point of contact for the Executive Head Teacher and governing body for all budget and administrative matters across both schools. The SBM will be supported by a

Finance & Personnel Assistant and a Premises Assistant, two newly created roles. This structure is broadly cost neutral compared to the current organisation.

By working across both schools this team will be able to identify and adopt best practices, streamline processes and make contractual savings. Existing staff will report to the SBM.

The appointment of a qualified SBM will relieve the Executive Head Teacher from much of the day-to-day administration to focus more fully on teaching, learning and other aspects of school improvement. The SBM's responsibilities will include the management of administration, personnel, ICT, premises and health & safety. Extended schools, external funding, income generation and liaison with external stakeholders are other areas where the SBM can support the Executive Head Teacher.

We are delighted to announce that Caroline Leary, currently the Bursar at Send First, has been appointed SBM and will take up position within the next few months.

Clerk to the new governing body

To support the new governing body, an experienced and well qualified clerk is to be employed on a part-time basis.

And finally...

We would like to thank and congratulate all the staff at St Bede's following a SIAS inspection in December that judged the school to be 'good with outstanding features' – an excellent result!