

HEIGHAM COMMUNITY FEDERATION

1. Approval of the federation

On 10th June 2021, encouraged by the positive public response to their plans, the governing boards of Recreation Road Infant School and Avenue Junior School voted in favour of the proposed federation of the two schools; Heigham Community Federation will be active from September 1st 2021. This document outlines details for staff, parents, carers and other stakeholders on how the federation will be organised and run.

2. Response to the consultation

The consultation period ran from 19th April to 7th June and views were sought from all stakeholders. Twelve responses were received, all in support of the federation. Two areas were raised as needing clarification:

1. Wrap-around childcare clubs: arrangements for all clubs will remain unchanged at both schools.
2. Representation of staff and parents on the governing board: this point being raised offered a useful opportunity to explain in more detail how governors are appointed, and how that process helps ensure representation is both broad and balanced.

There is a statutory requirement for the governing boards of all maintained schools to include one staff member – in addition to the head teacher(s) – and two elected parent governors. However, this does not mean that Heigham Community Federation's board will feature only one non-executive staff member and two parents. Additional slots will be available for people who are either staff or parents in the form of 'co-opted' governor roles (in this federation's case, there will be eight); these roles are filled on the basis of individuals being able to help create the right blend of skills for the board to do the best possible job as a collective. (One caveat: the rules state that in order to maintain a good balance of perspectives, the number of governors who are also members of staff must not exceed more than a third of the total number of governors.)

It's worth adding here that regardless of whether they are a member of staff, a parent or any other kind of stakeholder, all governors should always operate in the best interest of pupils; although they will naturally bring a certain perspective to bear on their work, their job as a governor is not to represent their individual views as a member of staff, a parent, etc., nor to lobby on behalf of any particular set of interests.

3. What a federation is

An educational federation is the partnership created when two or more schools formally agree to work together for the benefit of their pupils and their communities. School leaders are answerable to a single governing board, can share facilities and resources, and have the flexibility to offer staff roles that operate across both schools, as well as better opportunities for professional development. The partner schools collaborate on improving aspects of teaching and learning, and set common goals. The principle is that sharing both assets and strategy allows each school in the federation to work more efficiently, and that all children receive a better education as a result. However, a federation does *not* mean that each school loses its individual identity or control over its own finances. Although they commit to working with one or more partners, each school continues to operate as an individual institution, and in legal terms remains an entirely separate entity.

4. Why the governors decided to federate the two schools

There are a growing number of federations already running very successfully in Norfolk, and the local authority is actively encouraging schools to consider the benefits of this kind of partnership. For the past few years the leadership teams and governors of Recreation Road Infant School and Avenue Junior School have been looking at different ways to build on the friendly and trusting relationship that already exists between the two schools, as well as their aligned approaches to education – both emphasising the ‘whole child’, inclusiveness and opportunity for all.

After a lot of discussion, the two governing boards and senior leadership teams saw federation as the best strategic choice for both schools. Alongside this new commitment to collaboration, governors recognised the importance of maintaining the unique identities of both schools, as well as the need to adopt different approaches in Early Years education and at Key Stages 1 and 2. Although there is a mechanism for schools to leave a federation, the governors of both schools are treating the partnership as a long-term commitment.

5. The benefits of federating

Leaders are confident that a federation is the best way to improve social and academic outcomes for all pupils, allowing staff from both schools to work together to create a more coherent learning journey for children as they move through their primary education. They are confident federation will also allow the two schools...

- To share knowledge of children and their families as the children go from infant to junior level, ensuring better pastoral provision and better school-family relationships

- To create a more flexible staffing structure; being able to offer both teaching and support staff roles that operate across both schools will mean better professional development, greater freedom of movement for staff, it being easier to attract ambitious new people to the schools, improved capacity should members of staff leave or be unwell, and enhanced leadership development and succession planning
- To share expertise (e.g. subject knowledge and special educational needs interventions), creating action plans to drive an improvement in standards across both schools
- To make significant savings by sharing the costs of, for example, specialist staff roles, professional development, joint-funding bids and certain aspects of administration
- To build on existing transition arrangements, allowing Y3 children to make the best possible start at junior school
- To streamline and focus governance so that senior leaders will have a reduced workload in terms of reporting and meetings, and will be accountable to (and supported by) the best-qualified new team

6. What will *not* change as a result of federation

The schools will both retain their existing names ('Heigham Community Federation' will simply be the name of their new formal partnership) and the children will remain solely pupils of the individual institutions. Both schools will also still be 'maintained' (i.e. funded and controlled by the local education authority), and admission arrangements will remain exactly as they are: the process will still be run by the local authority, each school will have the same catchment boundaries and accommodate the same maximum number of pupils, and a child being a pupil at Recreation Road Infant School will not grant them automatic admission to Avenue Junior School.

Given they are each an effective fit for their school, existing leadership structures will remain in place: Michael Bunting will continue as Head Teacher at Recreation Road Infant School, and Debbie Dismore will continue as Executive Head at Avenue Junior School (taking overall responsibility for the school and acting as its strategic lead) with Mike Hooper continuing as Head of School (taking responsibility for its day-to-day running). Federation will not mean changes in the rest of each school's existing staffing team, nor in their employment status: staffing levels will continue to be set by the school's budget, staff will continue to be employed by the local authority, and employment rights and pension arrangements will also remain unchanged.

In addition, OFSTED will continue to inspect the schools as individual settings, with results published for them as separate entities.

7. What *will* change as a result of federation

Federation will allow leaders to employ new members of staff to work across both schools, as well as create opportunities for existing staff to work at both infant and junior level, if they want to do so. Although each school will separately receive its budget allocation and keep control over its individual finances (so it won't have to shoulder unexpected costs such as building repairs, or have to help sort out any budgetary difficulties in the partner school's finances), there will be the flexibility to pool a certain amount of money to jointly fund shared equipment, resources or initiatives.

8. The constitution of the new federation

The principle of 'working together' to improve outcomes for children will be at the heart of everything that Heigham Community Federation does, so we will also take a collaborative approach to leadership and strategic responsibility. The federation's leadership team will draw staff from both schools:

FEDERATION LEADERSHIP	
Members of the leadership team with executive responsibility	Michael Bunting (Head Teacher, RRIS) and Debbie Dismore (Executive Head, AJS)
Other members of the leadership team	Mike Hooper (Head of School, AJS), Steve Chambers (Deputy Head of School, AJS), Sheree Brock (Assistant Head, RRIS) and Susanna Manrique (Assistant Head, RRIS)

Members of this leadership team will be answerable to a new single governing board, which will be made up of the following types of governor role:

- x2 head teachers (Michael Bunting and Debbie Dismore)
- x1 local authority governor
- x1 staff governor
- x2 parent governors
- x8 co-opted governors

As each governing board currently does in its work at Recreation Road Infant School/Avenue Junior School, this new governing board will regularly review and evaluate both itself and the way the new federation is run, and make changes as necessary.

Elections for the staff and parent governor roles will take place this month. Please see the attached documents for information on how to get involved. Being a federation governor

offers the opportunity to make an important contribution to the life of more than one school; to understand more about teaching and learning, organisational finance and strategic management; and to enhance a wide range of personal and vocational skills. As a result of the continuing uncertainty caused by COVID-19, it's been decided that for the federation's first academic year, all governors meetings will be conducted online (on Teams), but it's anticipated that where it's deemed safe, some training, monitoring and team-building activities will be in person and/or involve going into school.