



OAKINGTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND (A) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Monday, 19th June 2017

Dear Parents/Carers

PROPOSED FEDERATION WITH DRY DRAYTON SCHOOL

I am very pleased to inform you that we have decided to begin the formal consultation process towards federation with Dry Drayton Church of England Primary School.

This is perhaps the most significant event since the school was founded, and the decision has not been taken lightly. The governing body had for some time been considering the best ways of meeting the challenges posed by the current climate of funding reductions, and the growing trend towards partnerships such as academies and federations. Following an approach from Dry Drayton, and after taking external advice, looking at other successful partnerships, and exploring the options available to us we have concluded that choosing to federate with Dry Drayton, a nearby school with similar values, is the best way of preserving and strengthening the character and qualities that we love about our village school.

The two federated schools will be led by one Headteacher, and there will be a single governing body, and more distributed leadership responsibility. Federation should be seen as the coming together of two schools, rather than one school taking over the other. Staff, governors, and school leaders at both schools strongly back this proposal to federate.

Federating the two schools has a formal process and all stakeholders in the schools involved must be consulted. If you have any questions or concerns please come along to one of the informal drop-in sessions (dates and times below). There will also be more opportunities to ask questions during the formal consultation process, which begins with the forthcoming publication of the formal proposal.

In the current climate, this is an exciting opportunity to enhance our schools, make them more resilient in these challenging times, and to improve the richness and quality of the experience both for our own children, and those of generations to come.

Yours sincerely

Edmund Buss (on behalf of the Governing Body)

Chair of Governors

Oakington CofE (A) Primary School

When are the drop-in sessions for Oakington parents?

Monday 26th June 3.30 pm (in the school hall at Oakington)

Tuesday 27th June 7.00 pm (in the school hall at Oakington)

We would like to hear any comments, questions, or concerns that you may have. We hope to be able to answer many of your queries, and will take forward others, if necessary, to the Local Authority and/or Diocese, with whom we will be working throughout the consultation process. At a later date, there will be further consultations, which will be of a more formal nature.

What is a federation?

A federation is a group of two or more schools with a single governing body and an Executive Headteacher over all the schools involved. Structurally, each school in a federation remains a separate institution and has its own unique school number, and receives a separate Ofsted inspection. Schools within a federation share expertise and resources to enhance the education and experience of the children in their care.

One way of describing a federation is as 'one school over several sites', although we definitely want to preserve the unique characters of both schools.

Why are we federating?

There are a number of reasons, but fundamentally it is to enhance and strengthen the position of both schools, and to preserve the things each school is passionate about. The schools have many shared visions and values. Federation will allow the schools to benefit directly from each other, and for long-term working relationships to become deeply rooted, producing greater resilience in these challenging times.

Briefly:

- Although we have been in a very good and healthy financial position for a number of years, it has become increasingly apparent that the future is going to be much more difficult.
- The government's 'Fairer Funding' initiative will change the way funds are allocated, and we will lose around £20,000 a year as a result of this.
- Additionally, current government policy heavily favours free schools with the result that existing schools face severely depleted funding for projects such as new classrooms, building maintenance, etc.
- School budgets are already tight – in a recent survey 1 in 5 parents were being asked to make contributions to everyday school activities. Sharing resources will enable us to make our budgets go further.
- Federation or academisation is increasingly seen as an inevitable trend; we had already begun the search for a suitable partner as it would have been unwise to wait until there were no good schools left. Dry Drayton, as a smaller school, may

have had a more immediate need to federate than we do, but are an ideal partner for Oakington and this was too good an opportunity to miss.

- Federating widens the pool of expertise available, and both schools can learn from each other to make the education provision we offer better for all of our children.
- Increased opportunities make it easier to recruit and retain good staff, in the current difficult climate.
- Small schools are perceived as being particularly vulnerable at the moment. It's a sobering thought that even when you put the two schools together, we're still technically a small school.

Will I get a say?

Most definitely. We would like this process to be as transparent as possible, and to take account of as many suggestions, comments and different viewpoints as possible. In the formal process you will receive a copy of the proposal, and will be invited to attend consultation events and send comments during a **six-week period**. You may, of course, contact us with any comments, questions or concerns at any time, not just within the formal consultation process.

What happens next?

1. A sub-committee of governors from both Oakington and Dry Drayton schools (termed the Joint Governance Committee or JGC) will draw up a document outlining the formal consultation proposal.

This proposal will contain details of how the new joint governing body will be made up (its 'constitution'), proposed leadership and staffing arrangements, the proposed name for the federation (the two schools retain their names, identities and uniforms), a timetable for the formal consultation process, and a proposed date for federation.

2. Following approval by both governing bodies, the consultation proposal will be published for comment by staff, parents, carers, LA, Ely Diocese, governors, and all concerned.
3. A minimum **six-week consultation period** is allowed for comments from any interested parties to be received.
4. Consultation events during this period will ensure that everyone is fully informed and can comment on the proposal.
5. As soon as the consultation period has closed, the two governing bodies meet to consider collectively the responses to the consultation proposal, and then vote individually whether or not to proceed with the federation.
6. If both governing bodies agree to proceed, the federation formally begins.

Will we share a Headteacher with Dry Drayton?

Yes, the proposal is that Mrs Sally Daggianti, the current Headteacher at Oakington, will be Executive Headteacher over both schools, dividing her time between the schools, and aiming to be at both schools for portions of most days.

What will happen when the Headteacher isn't there?

In each school, there will be senior teachers able to assume responsibility as appropriate – in fact at Oakington the proposal is to create a new role of Deputy Head. One great benefit of federating with Dry Drayton is that the two schools are only about 7 minutes' drive apart, and the Headteacher could easily return in the event of a serious situation arising.

We hope that this has answered some of the more immediate questions, but please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have others.