



Ecclesfield Primary School

High Street
Ecclesfield
SHEFFIELD
S35 9UD

Tel: 0114 2467396

Fax: 0114 2570854

E-mail: enquiries@ecclesfield-pri.sheffield.sch.uk
Executive Head J. Eagleton BSc Hons PGCE NPQH

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Dear Parents and Carers,

The Governors of both Coit and Ecclesfield Primary Schools want to thank all of you that contributed to the consultation on the possibility of the formation of a federation between the two school Governing Bodies.

Following a meeting at the end of last term, the governors felt it was important to respond to the comments that were made and the questions that were asked.

The two schools are different in size but their aims and objectives are the same, to provide the best possible experience and outcomes for the pupils. For schools, the range of what we can provide and the outcomes we have to achieve are defined by central government; what is distinctive is the settings in which we do this. There is no intention to merge the two schools or change the school that any child attends. The schools will retain their individual character and identity.

The size of the schools is reflected in the budgets of the schools but in the same way that there is no intention to merge the schools, the budgets will remain separate and a federated governing body would have the responsibility to monitor each of the budgets. What is joint is the Executive Leadership and this enables the schools to share a Headteacher and to have a Deputy Head in each of the schools (although they are called Heads of Schools). The cost of this is proportioned to the two schools. Staff that are employed at each of the schools remain employed at each of the schools and only if we were to decide that a joint appointment should meet specific needs would then be shared between the two schools. What we will do is to continue having joint staff development events regularly, as we do now, whether we are a federation or not. It also means that we can share expertise and in a climate of diminishing resources that is vitally important – we can then maintain the level of training and development without squeezing this in the respective budgets.

We want to ensure that as much of the money we have is directed to the learning and the learning environment for the children so that we would not be duplicating or adding to the staffing structures that we currently have. Staff will have more opportunity to move between schools, to develop their skills and share good practise, albeit movement will be kept to a minimum to ensure consistency and continuity for the children remains paramount. That way we hope that we can retain staff across the two schools.

The movement of staff within the city is considerable, staff are encouraged to have experience of a wide range of settings as they seek to further their career and we would not want to stop this happening but we want to benefit from good staff as long as they are with us.



The structure of the Governing Body is determined by Central Government. We have proposed a structure that gives representation to parents and staff of both of the schools and to the wider community. However, we can only have a percentage of the governors employed by the school (one third and that includes the Headteacher, who has to be a governor). We can have more than two governors who are parents but only two are allowed to be called parent governors. We have to have seven governors and everyone above those specified has to be recruited to the governing body on the basis of the skills that they bring rather than the groups that they represent. In an Ofsted inspection we would have to justify the selections that have been made. Governors have to agree to a code of behaviour, to attend meetings and to undertake training so it is a commitment on the part of those that are elected or recruited. The proposal of 15 Governors overall came from a judgement of a manageable group with sufficient skills and representation. A single governing body would need to have a view of the experience for all pupils and the particulars of the two schools. It is hard to recruit governors who are prepared to make this voluntary commitment, subject themselves to the scrutiny of Ofsted, keep up-to-date with current requirements and know the school(s) that they govern. Equally the leadership when shared between two schools and two governing bodies has to commit to 100% more meetings, preparation of papers and documents than would be the case for a single governing body. In this year two governing bodies could be 24 meetings – almost one every eight days! We want our leaders to be concentrating on teaching and learning and being accountable to the governors and community not committed to endless meetings.

Both schools are judged by Ofsted to be good (Coit November 2011 and Ecclesfield January 2015), there is potential for the schools to be outstanding. In forming a federation, the schools keep their existing category and character, and in particular do not gain, lose or change their character through membership of a federation. The federated governing body is not a separate legal entity. Schools in the federation continue to be maintained by the Local Authority. The LA has formal, statutory powers of intervention where they view the standards of performance in a school are too low. The general guidance about avoiding and managing conflicts of interest also applies to local authority (LA) maintained schools, including federations. (Regulation 16 and Schedule 1 of the School Governance Roles and Procedures Regulations 2013). The way that the federation operates is governed by law and many documents from research and Ofsted reports conclude that federations have an impact on:

- Financial sustainability and efficiency.
- Clear accountability for school improvement.
- Stronger governance.
- Support for schools that cannot or do not wish to convert independently (that is to academies).

For all these reasons, it was the decision of the Governing Bodies both separately and then together that we should form a federation of Coit and Ecclesfield Primary Schools.

Thank you again to those returning comments, meeting with governors, and making detailed written responses. These were considered in the meeting and we will be writing to you again in the near future on what we do next.

Alison Warner

Chair of Governors at Ecclesfield Primary School

Kevin Corke

Chair of Governors at Coit Primary School

