

From the Governing Bodies of
Edward Peake C of E VC Middle School and Caldecote VC Lower School

Hard Federation Consultation

Frequently Asked Questions

Why have the schools proposed that a Hard Federation is the way forward? What are the advantages of a Federation?

We believe that this is the best way forward and will build on the successful collaboration that the schools have achieved over the past 6 months. We believe that both schools would benefit from remaining in a strong partnership with each other and it will give both schools opportunities that they would not have otherwise. A hard federation would be in the best interests of the children and parents who will benefit from the two church schools working closely in a stable and committed partnership.

There are many other potential benefits which would build on the informal benefits the collaboration has already demonstrated –

- A strong senior management structure
- Coming together for faith and other cultural and social events
- Improved pupil transition as pupils and their families access increased opportunities to visit Edward Peake, becoming familiar with staff, pupils and the school itself
- Cross-fertilisation of good practice and expertise
- Greater opportunities for the moderation of the assessment of pupils' work
- Sharing of staff skills with greater flexibility for supporting learning
- More learning opportunities for the whole community (pupils, parents and staff)
- Stronger purchasing powers and potential economies of scale savings

Why can't we keep what we currently have?

The collaboration with Mrs Reddick as Interim Headteacher is a temporary arrangement and needs to be formalised.

From Caldecote's point of view, the school (like many village schools) is too small to continue alone. The budget does not allow the support needed to raise and maintain standards and provide strong, experienced leadership by a permanent, full-time, non-teaching Headteacher.

The only alternative would be to become part of a multi-academy trust, as requested by the Regional Schools Commissioner.

We believe that by joining with Edward Peake Middle School we are working with a school where there are already strong links, joint working partnerships and the greatest opportunities for increased pupil outcomes because it is our feeder middle school.

Is this simply a step to becoming an academy?

Until last month, there was no expectation that a Hard Federation may lead to academy status. However, the Government has now made it very clear that it expects all schools to become academies. Any move to academy status would be a separate exercise and not one the governing bodies are currently considering.

Will we be able to leave the Federation if we need to?

There is no limit of time for a Hard Federation but the governing bodies would not enter into a federation believing it would be a temporary measure. Hard federations can be dissolved but only with the agreement of the governing body.

What about the relationship with Northhill?

This will continue as a Soft Federation. It will give the opportunity, though, to strengthen even further the links between the two lower schools, with shared resources and training opportunities for staff.

Who needs to be consulted on whether we enter into a Hard Federation?

Both governing bodies have voted to proceed to consultation to become a Hard Federation and there now follows a period of consultation which will last for seven weeks. The governing bodies have published proposals for the federation which are shared with the Local Authority, the Diocese, the staff of both schools, all parents, our MP, neighbouring schools and relevant unions. The governing bodies must jointly consider all responses. Following consideration of those responses, both governing bodies must decide whether to proceed or not to proceed.

Full details of this process are available in The School Governance (Federations) Regulations 2012.

Will we have to change the name of our school?

No, this is not an amalgamation. Both schools would continue to keep their own names and identities but under the umbrella title of The Peake Church Federation.

What is the timeline for becoming a Hard Federation?

The consultation document is available for all parents, staff and members of the community to comment on by Monday, 13th June 2016. Following consideration of consultation responses, the Governing Bodies will make their formal decisions by the end of June. It is proposed that if a Hard Federation is approved, it would come into effect from 1st September 2016. This timetable has been approved by both the Local Authority and the Diocese.

What will happen to the individual Governing Bodies?

On the federation date, the governing bodies of each school will dissolve and a new governing body will be formed. The make-up of this governing body is required to conform to the 2012 Regulations and it is also a requirement that a 'governor skills audit' informs the process. Hard Federations have one Governing Body covering the schools that are in that Federation.

How will the two parishes be represented on the new Governing Body?

It is proposed that the Vicars of both parishes be members of the governing body, ex officio. It is also proposed that there would be a Foundation Governor appointed by each Parochial Church Council.

Who will be the Chairman of the Hard Federation?

The governing body of the new federation would elect a chairman at its first meeting.

How will the governing body organise itself?

The new governing body will organise itself to best serve the needs of both schools and fulfil its statutory responsibilities. Governors will be asked to put aside their existing school allegiances and serve both schools.

Will there be one Ofsted inspection in the future?

No. Both schools will continue to have their own Ofsted inspections.

What will it mean for members of staff?

Members of staff in both schools will receive a variation of contract as they will have a new employer. They will continue on their current terms and conditions of employment and continuity for contractual purposes will remain unchanged.

There will be no detriment to staff pay or pensions and the existing performance and pay policies and procedures will continue to apply.

All staff would TUPE across on their existing terms and conditions. Staffing structures and roles would continue to be reviewed as they are under the current arrangements, so the creation of a Hard Federation does not offer any additional 'protection'.

If staff wish to discuss any implications of a possible federation, they can either speak to their union representative or ask to speak with EPM, who are HR advisors to both schools.

Staff will continue to be represented on the Federation Governing Body.

Will staff have to work in the other school if they were appointed before the Federation is agreed?

Staff who change their location will do so voluntarily and if the opportunity arises. Through the soft federation Northill has benefited from specialist teaching of music for the past four years and PE for one year. This has enabled staff to further work in partnership on aspects of Learning and Teaching and has enhanced pupil achievement and staff professional development.

How would the two schools recruit the Federation Headteacher in the future?

The schools would advertise as normal. Past experience shows that it is potentially easier to recruit for a larger school than a smaller school due to the greater challenge and consequently a bigger pool of potential applicants would be interested.

Who will employ new members of staff?

New members of staff will be employed by the governing body of the new Federation as opposed to the two separate governing bodies. S/he will be allocated to a particular workplace but a clause in the contract could say that they can be asked to work flexibly depending on requirements.

Will the schools still have their own budgets?

Yes, Governors and staff are required to ensure best value for money and the strategic application of funding, so in practice federated schools would consider resource decisions based on overall fairness and the best outcomes for the children. There is authority for the Hard Federation to vire money from one school to another for the educational purposes of all children but the budgets of each school have to be accounted for separately.

Will the basis on which the schools are currently funded alter in any way?

Becoming a federation will not alter the basis on which the schools are funded. However, we are aware that there continue to be changes to funding for all schools on a regular basis.

18th April 2016

