



16th October 2023

Dear Parent, Carer and/or Member of Staff

RE: CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED FEDERATION BETWEEN PEARTREE SPRING AND FEATHERSTONE WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The Governing Boards of Peartree Spring Primary and Featherstone Wood Primary have recently informed you of their consideration to form a Federation between the two schools. The schools have been working together over several terms and believe the formalisation of this through a federation is, we believe, in the interests of the pupils, staff and community for both schools.

The Governing Boards at each school are today beginning a consultation process with parents, staff, and other stakeholders (such as Hertfordshire County Council) to form a federation that will result in a single Governing Board.

The **Consultation Paper** that accompanies this letter sets out to address three items:

- A. The nature of the consultation process and the ways in which you can contribute to it.
- B. Governance arrangements under the Federation.
- C. Recommendation of the two Boards and the rationale.

The consultation process begins on **Monday 16th October 2023** and closes on **Friday 1st December 2023** at midnight.

There are several options where you can find out more about the proposal, which are outlined in the consultation document below.

We look forward to your engagement in this consultation, which is important to the future development of our two schools.

We have engaged consultants from HFL Education to help us with this process – Lisa Holroyd (Business Management Services) and Cathy Irons (Governance Services).

If you have difficulty with the language in this consultation letter, please let us know and we will provide additional help.

It is also our intention to follow a formal process to appoint an Executive Headteacher to lead both schools. You will be kept informed of this also.

Yours sincerely

Mrs E Pamboris
Chair of Governors
Peartree Spring Primary School

Mr J Brown
Chair of Governors
Featherstone Wood Primary School

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CONSULTATION DOCUMENT:

A. The nature of the Consultation Process and ways in which you can contribute.

Summary

- As part of any move to a federation, the Governing Boards of each of our schools are required to seek your views on any recommendation or proposal.
- The Governing Boards are also required to consult with other stakeholders, including the Local Authority – Hertfordshire County Council (HCC).
- After these consultations, the two Governing Boards are required to come to a decision. They are not bound by the responses of any one group – for instance, parents or staff – but they are required to demonstrate that they have considered these views. For this reason, it is important that you respond.
- If either or both Governing Boards feel that there is insufficient support for the formation of a federation, other alternatives will be sought.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. When does the Consultation Process begin and when does it finish?

This consultation process opens **Monday 16th October 2023** and closes on **Friday 1st December 2023 at midnight**.

2. How can I respond?

Parents and Carers:

There are several ways on which you can make your views known:

- By raising your comments or queries at scheduled face to face meetings (see below for date)
- By emailing your comments or queries to – lisa.holroyd@hfleducation.org and cathy.irons@hfleducation.org (include 'Proposed Federation' in subject line)
- Post in Federation Consultation post box in reception marked 'FAO HFL Consultants'

Parent/carers meetings have been scheduled to enable parents and carers to meet with the school and governing board representatives to discuss the federation proposal. The dates/times are detailed below:

- Peartree Spring – 30th October – 3:00 p.m.
- Featherstone Wood – 1st November – 3:00 p.m.

Staff

Staff will be consulted via regular staff meetings at their respective schools. In addition, meetings specifically dedicated to this proposal are scheduled for the staff of both schools. The date/time are detailed below:

- 13th November – 3.30 p.m. at Peartree Spring Primary School

If you are unable to attend the meeting but have a view, please use one of the alternative options above.

Staff are welcome to consult their trade unions and professional associations should they have concerns and queries. Staff can also invite them to the meetings above and we will ask that staff please inform the Executive Headteacher if their representative will be attending.

Pupils

- The federation process will feature in school assemblies and other aspects of school life during the consultation period.
- If any child wishes to express a concern, they can do this via their parent or carer.

3. Are there any FAQs I can look at first to see if my question is covered?

Both schools have a 'Federation Proposal' link on their respective websites at:

<https://featherstonewood.herts.sch.uk/>
<https://peartreespringjm.herts.sch.uk/>

In the event your question is not answered, please see item 2 above.

4. How will a decision be reached?

The two Governing boards are responsible for making the final decision. However, governors are required to take account of the responses to this consultation process, and shall do so, via the following;

- Once this consultation process is complete, a report setting out the consultation findings will be presented to a joint meeting of the Governing boards of our two schools.
- Each Governing board will then meet on its own to decide whether or not it supports the formation of a federation. This will be voted on through a secret ballot.
- Both Governing boards must independently agree to the formation of a federation for it to be created. Majority vote wins. Votes will be counted by independent persons (HFL Consultants).
- As well as consulting with parents and staff, we are required to consult with the local authority (Hertfordshire County Council) and to gain the approval of the Secretary of State for Education.

5. Communication of Outcome

Once a decision has been reached, all stakeholders will be informed in writing and the decision posted on our respective websites.

Further Information

We have engaged 2 consultants to support this process. Lisa Holroyd is one of the Business Management Team Consultants, and Cathy Irons is the Head of Governance Services. If you have questions about the proposed federation that we have not addressed here or the process outlined in this document, please contact lisa.holroyd@hfeducation.org and cathy.irons@hfeducation.org

A. Governance Arrangements under the Federation

The role of governance in any education setting is as follows;

- To set, in collaboration with the Executive Headteacher (to be confirmed), the strategic direction and vision of the school federation;
- To hold the Senior Leadership Team, including the Executive Headteacher, to account for the achievement of any objectives set.
- Oversee the financial management at the setting.

Under a federation, a single, newly appointed Governing board would be established and responsible for both schools in the federation. Having a single board delivers advantages for both schools: it would ensure that the two schools move forward together with a shared vision for both the pupils and respective communities.

If the recommendation to form a federation is accepted, the existing governing boards will begin the process of establishing a new single Governing board for the federation.

It is proposed that the new Governing board would be constituted as below:

Category of Governor	Add number
Head	1
Staff (elected)	1
Parent (elected) <i>Must be at least 2 parent governors represented on the Board.</i>	2
Local Authority (appointed)	1
Co-opted (appointed)	5

<p><i>Important to try and appoint several persons not linked to the school who bring a different perspective and skills required for the governor role.</i></p> <p><i>Staff can be co-opted but number of staff added to 2 above, must not exceed more than one-third of agreed constitution.</i></p> <p><i>Parents can be co-opted where elected parent category filled, however a fair representation on the board should be considered.</i></p>	
Partnership (appointed)	2

The members of the new Federation Governing board would be appointed/elected with due regard to:

- Best practice, current thinking and existing regulations in school and federation governance.
- The need to ensure that parents and staff and the local community, are appropriately represented.
- The skills and experience of the individuals concerned – retaining the right to ensure that the Governing board has a broad and appropriate mix of skills and experience.
- Their commitment to education, and the success of the pupils at both schools, whatever their professional, parental or community background.

It should also be noted that:

- The new Federation Governing board may differ in size from the current boards.
- It is proposed that those who are currently local authority or co-opted members would be given opportunity of standing for appointment, or offered the option of being an Associate Member, who are not full governors, but are brought onto a governing board for their expertise.
- Any vacancies that arise for the position of Parent would be filled following an election in which all parents across both school communities would have a vote.
- Any vacancies that arise for the position of Staff would be filled following an election in which all staff across both school communities would have a vote.
- The new Federation Governing board would be encouraged to actively explore how to best engage the voice of our pupils in the governance and leadership of their schools.
- The new Federation Governing board, whatever its formal constitution, would also be expected to give opportunities for all stakeholders to have a voice.

B. The Recommendation of the Governing boards

The Governing boards at both Peartree Spring Primary and Featherstone Wood Primary schools recommend that they:

FORM A FEDERATION WITH A SINGLE GOVERNING BOARD FROM Monday 26th February 2024

Both boards feel that the interests of both school communities are best served by creating a clear line of governance for the Executive Headteacher, rather than two boards, thus progressing to a federation would be the next logical step. We believe the benefits of federation are as follows;

- One clear line of governance for the Executive Headteacher
- Closer working links between the two schools
- Sharing of best practices between our schools
- Opportunities for staff development

Both boards believe that a federation offers the opportunity for a genuinely shared vision and educational philosophy across both schools, one that translates into a positive and joined-up experience for all our pupils in both our school communities.

In this context, we are committed to achieving excellence through collaboration between our two vibrant and successful schools. We want to value, nurture, and further develop the strengths and identities of both schools, whilst working together to enhance outcomes for our pupils. Our aim is to maintain outstanding provision and deliver excellent progress and achievement – and cherished and memorable educational experiences.

We want to continue to give every pupil in our care the opportunity to fulfil their potential as a confident, informed, sociable, and well-rounded individual, ready for the next stage of their personal, developmental, and educational

journey, and for the world beyond. We believe this can be achieved more effectively by our schools working closely together, led by an Executive Headteacher.

In short, we believe that evolving into a federation with one Federated Governing board, is in the interests of pupils, parent/carers and teaching/support staff. It would provide a shared strategic direction, strengthen ties between schools and enable shared approaches to assessment, curriculum, and improved purchasing power.

THINGS THAT WILL NOT CHANGE SHOULD A FEDERATION BE ESTABLISHED

Should a federation be established between our two schools:

- Each school would retain its existing ethos, character, and identity.
- Each school applies its own admissions criteria (*currently Featherstone Wood is a community school - admissions are managed through Hertfordshire County Council, Peartree Spring has foundation status and the Governing Body is the admissions authority. The Headteacher is in communication with HCC regarding Featherstone Wood changing its status to Foundation – for which a consultation will take place*)
- The schools would retain individual budgets and keep their own clear audit trails for all income and expenditure.
- The schools would be inspected separately by the schools' inspectorate, Ofsted.
- The key arrangements for existing staff will continue as per current Terms & Conditions (new employees would be contracted to the Federation).
- The same excellent practice will continue at both schools. Parents would not, in the immediate future, notice any difference in delivery. But in time, witness an enhanced pupil provision as we are enabled and strengthened by working together.

In this context, the Governing boards **do not believe** that a federation would have a negative impact on arrangements that are popular with pupils, teachers, parents/carers and which work well at present.