



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 5TH JULY 2016

SUBJECT: FEDERATION OF SCHOOLS

REPORT BY: CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek the views of Members prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 13 July 2016.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The report provides a background to the Welsh Government's regulations introduced in 2014.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

3.1 The report considers provision of school places to ensure the Council's key strategies are best achieved.

3.2 The report links directly to the Education for Life, sustainability, regeneration and equality strategies. The report also links to the Learning theme of Caerphilly Delivers, the Local Service Board single integrated plan.

4. THE REPORT

Background

4.1 The Welsh Government's policy objective is to promote collaboration between all parts of the education system to improve outcomes. School federation is a more formal way of extending collaboration and promoting closer working relationships and is the principal initiative for achieving formal partnership working amongst schools to improve performance and narrow the attainment gap for deprived pupils.

Summary of Regulations

4.2 The federation of schools is a legal process which enables schools to work together through a formal structured process by sharing a governing body that will make decisions in the best interest of all the schools, staff and pupils in that federation.

4.3 The term federation describes a formal and legal agreement by which a number of schools (between two and six) share governance arrangements and have a single governing body.

4.4 The most important reason for considering federation must be the benefits such an arrangement would bring for children and young people in the federating schools by enhancing educational provision.

- 4.5 A federation can provide a foundation for sustainable long term development and improvement.
- 4.6 To be successful, federation needs to be based on a commitment to work as a group of schools and a willingness to do things differently for the added benefit of all pupils, their well-being and achievements.
- 4.7 One of the advantages of federation is that schools that federate remain in their communities and keep their individual identity. However the existing governing bodies will be dissolved and replaced by a new, single governing body which will have oversight of, and equal responsibility for, the work of all schools within the federation.
- 4.8 The membership of a governing body for a federation of schools is almost identical to the membership of an ordinary governing body with all stakeholders being represented although there is more flexibility in the proportions of representation of each category of governor. This means that a governing body of a federation can choose a constitution and membership which suits their particular circumstances as long as they have a minimum of 15 governors and no more than a maximum of 27 governors and adhere to the minimum and maximum numbers of governors set out in the regulations.
- 4.9 Schools in a federation will also be able to maintain their own delegated budget, name, character, school uniform and ethos, but will be able to explore the advantages of sharing resources such as facilities, IT, staff, school buildings etc.
- 4.10 A decision to federate by either schools or LAs will not override the need for a LA to intervene or act on school improvement or school organisation issues.

Key facts :

- 4.11 There will be a single governing body with strategic oversight of all schools within the federation.
- 4.12 Each school retains its name, category, budget, staff and remains in its community.
- 4.13 Each school can retain its headteacher if it wishes although if a single headteacher and deputy headteacher post is created to manage all of the schools in the federation, those posts do not have to be advertised nationally if one of the headteachers or deputy headteachers expresses an interest in the post.
- 4.14 Each school has its own Estyn inspection, though increasingly these are co-ordinated to happen at the same time for all schools within the federation to minimise stress and disruption.
- 4.15 The governing body of a federation can use budget, resources and staff across the federation to improve the educational outcomes for all pupils.
- 4.16 An audit trail must be kept and separate accounts produced for each school in the federation.
- 4.17 The governing body of a federation cannot require existing staff to work across all schools within the federation, but they can negotiate with the school staff unions over whether flexible contracts can be introduced.
- 4.18 New staff can be appointed to work across schools in the federation.
- 4.19 It is a statutory requirement to seek the views of stakeholders on federation proposals, whether the federation has been proposed by the respective school governing bodies or the LA.

- 4.20 Local authorities must allow the governing bodies and school councils of small schools, 20 school days (excluding inset days) to respond to proposals and cannot establish a federation until a period of at least 100 days has expired from the date they publish proposals.

Appendices

- 4.21 3 appendices have been attached to the report, namely:
- Appendix 1 – Benefits of federation, keys to a successful federation and disadvantages of federation.
 - Appendix 2 – Step-by-step guide to establishing federations.
 - Appendix 3 – Frequently asked Questions (extracted from regulations).
 - Appendix 4 – Draft Consultation document – Proposed Federation of Bedwas Junior and Rhydri Primary Schools.

Proposed Pilot Arrangements

- 4.22 The present position with all 6 governing bodies is as follows:

Bedwas Junior/Rhydri Primary

Agreed to proceed with formal federation proposal and a draft consultation document has been produced. This is attached as Appendix 4.

Pengam/Fleur De Lis Primary Schools

Both schools have agreed to explore moving to the next stage, i.e. consultation process. However they would like it noted that the following three caveats are included:

1. The schools retain their individual and financial identity.
2. We are not forced to federate with other schools without prior approval of the governing body.
3. The Local Authority will take full responsibility for managing the introduction and integration of the proposed federated governing body.

Cwmfelinfach/Ynysddu Primary Schools

A joint governing body meeting was convened for 24 March.

- The Director's offer to trial Federation is accepted.
- Both existing governing bodies agree that the process of Federation will be conducted in an open and transparent way to all parties that may be affected by the process (i.e. parents/carers, staff and governors).
- Parents/carers of both schools are to be provided with an information letter/leaflet explaining the process and benefits of Federation.
- The Director of Education be informed of the schools decision.

- 4.23 The categorisation of the schools is very positive with 4 categorised as green, 1 as yellow with an improving situation at Rhydri from red to amber category.
- 4.24 The proposed next stage is to commence consultation processes for all 3 groups of schools to include a consultation document in each case.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Equality impact assessments will be developed as part of the consultative processes.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 These will be dependant upon specific proposals.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 These will be dependent upon specific proposals.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The draft report was distributed as detailed below. All comments received have been reflected in the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Members views are sought on the proposals for future federation of schools to inform Cabinet in due course.

10. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

10.1 To apprise Members of proposals for future federation of schools.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014
School Organisation Code 2013 (Welsh Government)
School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013

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Background Papers:
School Places Plan 2013/14-2023/24
Starting School 2016/17
21st Century Schools Strategic Outline Programme.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - The Benefits of Federation
Appendix 2 - Step-by-Step Guide to Establishing Federations
Appendix 3 - Frequently Asked Questions
Appendix 4 - Draft proposal re Federation of Bedwas Junior and Rhydri Primary Schools.