Ashfield Nursery School, Newburn Manor Nursery School and Monkchester Road Nursery School Consultation Document on a proposal for a Hard Federation

Background

The above schools are all stand-alone nursery schools, offering a range of services to their local communities and rated as Outstanding in their latest Ofsted inspections. They are all extremely well regarded by parents, the local community and local authority.

All three of the schools follow the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum and deliver this through a shared ethos of free flow provision and child centred learning within indoor/outdoor environments.

Ashfield Nursery School offers 104 funded 30 hour places (some of which are up to 25 hours) for 3&4 year olds and 48 funded places for 2 year olds on a part time basis.

Monkchester Road Nursery School offers 133 part time places for 3&4 year olds and 80 places for 2 year olds. Some of these places are government funded and others are paid for directly by parents.

Newburn Manor Nursery School offers 156 part time (15 hour) funded places or 78 30 hour funded places

The schools have established a successful working partnership, sharing training and support benefitting all and it is felt that the natural progression in this challenging environment that a hard federation should be formed which would establish a structured form of collaboration enabling schools to share resources, best practice, and expertise.

The governing bodies of these schools have met and wish to request a formal partnership in the form of a “Hard Federation” between the three nursery schools.

To this end the Governing bodies of Ashfield Nursery School, Newburn Manor Nursery School and Monkchester Road Nursery School wish through this document to inform you of their proposal to establish a federation between the three schools.

Key points about a Potential Federation

- The three schools, Ashfield Nursery School, Monkchester Road Nursery School and Newburn Manor Nursery School would remain individual schools.
- The names of the schools would not change, but there would be a name for the federation –which is still to be agreed.
- There would be no change to admission arrangements. The new Governing Body of the Federation will set the criteria for admissions following guidance from the Newcastle Local Authority’s Maintained Nursery School’s Admission Procedures.
- There would be no change of employment in non-leadership staff roles. Please see attached the proposed staffing structure with the planned changes to Leadership Roles across the three schools.
- The Governing Body of each of the schools i.e. Ashfield Nursery School, Monkchester Road Nursery School and Newburn Manor Nursery School will be dissolved prior to forming the Federation and together the governors from each school will merge to form the new Governing Body of the Federation.
- The total number of governors in the Federation will be no fewer than seven at any one time and the upper limit would be set at 29 Governors altogether (although legislation states there need be no upper limit)
- The governing body of the Federation would initially be made up of:
  - 6 parent governors i.e. 2 in respect of each school in the federation;
  - The head teachers from Monkchester Road Nursery School and Newburn Manor Nursery School (unless these head teachers resign as a governor);
- 1 staff governor (elected by the staff)
- 1 local authority governor: and
- 15 co-opted governors (this could be more if needed)

- There will therefore be one governing body and two co-head teachers with strategic responsibility for all three schools and the two co-head teachers would each spend some time on a weekly basis or equivalent in all of the nurseries.
- Each school would be managed by a member of the leadership team on a day-to-day basis in the absence of a Head teacher
- There would be improved financial position through economies of scale
- There would be increased financial security in an uncertain climate

**Potential Benefits of a Federation**

**Pupils**
- Even closer links and some movement of staff between the three establishments
- Closer collaboration between the schools in terms of curriculum to ensure that the children are school ready.
- Sharing staff knowledge, expertise and ideas to improve outcomes for children.
- Increased opportunities for shared projects and activities between the schools.
- Shared resources across the 3 schools.

**Staff**
- Staff Opportunities for shared professional development between the three schools
- Further opportunities to share good practice between the three schools
- Opportunities for current staff who wish to, and for all staff appointed post federation to work across the schools, increasing their knowledge and expertise of aspects of schools work, and similar opportunities for all staff appointed post federation.
- Increased opportunities for staff progression onto the leadership scale overtime

**Governors**
- The extended remit as governors of all three schools would give increased challenge and variety and would utilise the already strong skills of all three governing bodies to provide the best possible leadership for all three schools

**In addition the federation would provide opportunities for:**
- A structured way for all three schools to collaborate
- Cost effective and coherent budget management in terms of procurement across all sites to ensure best value.

**Governance**
- In establishing the federation, one of the most visible immediate changes is to governance.
- In a federation, the current Governing body for each school would be dissolved upon federating and they will form a new single governing body for the federation of schools. This is a prescribed process and must be followed in all cases of federation.
Staffing

- Becoming a federation does not change the designation of the schools. The Local Authority will continue to be the employer of all the staff engaged in the three schools through the governing body. The movement to federation does not change this arrangement.
- Every year governors review the staffing compliment of each school to ensure the experience and expertise required is available. This will continue to be the case in each school within the federation arrangement.
- No staff member who currently works in either school can be required to work across both schools, though they may do so if they choose. However, other shared staffing arrangements may be considered in the future.

Admissions

- Parents seeking a nursery place will continue to apply directly to the individual nurseries, following the guidelines set out in Newcastle Local Authority’s Guidance for Admissions to Maintained Nursery Schools.

Additional Information

- The three schools will remain individual schools. Pupils will belong to a single school within the federation; the schools belong to the federation.
- The names of the individual schools will not be changed in any way.
- However, a name for the overall federation will be decided at a later date.

Consultation

Governors wish to consult widely with stakeholder groups associated with all of the schools. Your thoughts and opinions about the future of our schools are valued and Governors welcome comments about this exciting development. Written comments will be considered at a joint meeting of the Governing Bodies following the conclusion of the consultation period and in advance of a final decision being made by the individual governing bodies of Ashfield Nursery School, Monkchester Road Nursery School and Newburn Manor Nursery School.

All governing bodies have agreed to consult on the establishment of a federation from 3rd April 2017 to 19th May 2017 with a view to federating from 1st September 2017.

A consultation exercise is now being held with parents, staff and other stakeholders so that governors can receive feedback on the proposal.

Accompanying this paper is a Frequently Asked Questions document which governors hope you will find helpful.

Federations of Schools

Frequently asked Questions

1. Will the names of the schools change?

No. There is no requirement or intention to change the name of the Nursery schools. However, there will be a name for the federation.

2. Do the pupils belong to the federation or to a single school?

The pupils belong to a single school within the federation. The schools belong to the federation.

3. Will there be any change to admissions arrangements?
No. Parents seeking a nursery place will continue to apply directly to their chosen Nursery School who will follow the guidance set by Newcastle Local Authority regarding admissions to Maintained Nursery Schools.

4. Will pupils from both schools have opportunities to work together?

Possibly but geographically, this is unlikely. These opportunities could increase, where it is felt beneficial and appropriate for those involved.

5. Do schools in a federation have to have the same training days?

No. Such decisions will be within the schools discretion. It may be helpful for some training days to coincide so that staff training could be shared, but there is no compulsion.

6. Who employs the staff of a federation?

Members of staff continue to be employed by the Local Authority via the governors of the federation. Therefore, there is no need for TUPE transfer (Transfer of undertakings – protection of employment). This means that there will be no changes to the employment of existing staff.

7. Will there be any changes in conditions of service for staff?

No changes. All employment rights, pension arrangements etc. remain exactly as they are.

8. Can staff teach or work across the schools in a federation?

Existing members of staff cannot be directed to teach or otherwise work in a school they were not originally contracted to be employed in, although there may be opportunities to if, staff wish to do this. Future vacancies can be advertised as working across more than one school, so any new employees will know their contractual position and job roles when they accept the post.

9. Can schools in a federation share continuing professional development arrangements?

Yes, this is one of the distinct advantages of belonging to a federation.

10. Do the school day or term times of schools in a federation have to be the same?

No, this is not essential.

11. Who will be “in charge” when the Co-Head Teacher is not in school

Each school’s senior leader will make day-to-day decisions in the absence of the Head Teacher.

12. Do schools in a federation have a single governing body?

Yes, in a federation the previous Governing Body for each school would be dissolved upon federating and a new single Governing Body would be established for the federated schools. Governors will fully represent both schools. It is for the governing body of the federation to determine how they will operate, within the requirement to have at least one meeting each term.

13. How will the governing body be made up?

It is intended that all current governors of both schools would become governors of the federation if they so wish. The structure is outlined in the proposal above BUT may at a later date be subject to change if required and agreed by the Governing Body of the new Federation.

14. Do federated schools have a combined budget allocation?
No, each school separately receives its usual budget share as determined by the Local Authority formula funding.

15. Can governors combine funding from each school?

Yes, but only to an extent. Governing bodies of federations often have a relatively small proportion of funds ‘pooled’ for the benefit of all schools in the federation. The salary costs of the Head Teachers and any other shared staff would be paid equally by all schools.

16. Will a federation be inspected by Ofsted?

Individual schools within a federation will be inspected in the usual way by Ofsted. Ofsted sometimes inspect federated schools at the same time, but schools are inspected separately, and have their own judgements and their own report.

17. Can a school leave a federation?

There is a mechanism for schools to leave but the decision to federate should be seen by governors from the outset as a long-term commitment.

18. Will there be any impact upon partner schools?

None. Any successful partnership working will continue with special, primary and secondary schools as at present.

19. How will everyone be informed of progress?

Following the consultation process, ongoing information will be provided to stakeholders by letter and the school’s website.

Hopefully we have anticipated some of the questions you may have, but if not please let us know of any further questions or queries. We aim to keep everyone up to date with developments.

Please ask if you have any questions, concerns or comments. Please contact:

**At Ashfield Nursery School**

Mrs Anne Stoker Head Teacher Ashfield Nursery School

Miss Judy Cowgill Chair of governors at admin@ashfield.newcastle.sch.uk

**At Newburn Manor Nursery School**

Mrs Kay Mills Head Teacher Newburn Manor Nursery school

Clare Straughan Chair of Governors at admin@newburn-manor.newcastle.sch.uk

**At Monkchester Road Nursery School**

Ms Anne Humble Head Teacher Monkchester road Nursery School

Mrs Bernadette Matthews Chair of Governors at admin@monkchesterroad.newcastle.sch.uk
Proposal to form a Hard Federation

RESPONSE FORM

Governors from all three Nursery schools are very keen to receive feedback to the consultation from parents/carers, staff, and other key partners/stakeholders working with each school.

Please use this form to give us your thoughts and views regarding the proposal to federate the three Nursery schools, returning it by midday 19th May 2017

It would be helpful if you were able to give any reasons and/or evidence to support your views.

Many thanks.

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