

PROPOSAL TO FEDERATE

Background

Bamford and Grindleford primary schools (*'our schools'*) have been collaborating since September 2022 by sharing an executive headteacher. This process has been going well, and the governing boards of both our schools wish to make this arrangement permanent by entering a formal partnership known as a federation.

This document explains the reasons both governing boards see this as the best option to secure the future of both schools, at a time when pressures on small rural schools are intensifying.

The main change due to federation would be the amalgamation of the two existing governing boards into a single governing board working for the best interests of the children in both schools, and answerable to both communities. There would be a single executive headteacher responsible for the running of both schools. It is not a proposal to merge or close either school. Each school would retain its own distinctive character, though there would be a common vision driving the school leadership.

We wish to consult widely with all interested parties before making any final decision, and the timetable for this is given below.

Timetable

19 April 2023	Proposal published & consultation period begins.
24 April 2023	Meeting for staff & parents at Grindleford Primary School to outline and discuss the proposals. Starting at 8.30am, 2.30pm and 7pm (maximum of one hour).
25 April 2023	Meeting for staff & parents at Bamford Primary School to outline and discuss the proposals. Starting at 8.30am, 2.30pm and 7pm (maximum of one hour).
9 June 2023	Closing date for written responses.
26 June 2023	Meeting of both governing bodies to consider consultation responses.
4 July (Grindleford) 5 July (Bamford)	Separate meetings of the two school governing bodies to make the final decision on whether to apply to the Secretary of State for Education to federate.

Should the decision be made to federate:

Autumn term 2023	Staff & parent governor elections to new governing board.
1 January 2024	Federation formalised under single governing board.

Reasons for federation

These are challenging times for small rural primary schools, as educational expectations rise and budgets are squeezed. It is a hard task for any small school to provide a broad, high-quality education that meets the needs of all of its pupils, especially given the small number of staff employed. It has also been increasingly difficult in recent years for small schools to

attract headteachers with the necessary leadership qualities. Because of this, there are clearly benefits in sharing skills and expertise of individual staff between schools, and this has been encouraged from all levels of the education system. The governing bodies believe that federation increases the opportunities to share good practice across the schools for the benefit of all their children.

The current leadership collaboration has worked well for both schools under Mrs Gemmell, enabling both schools to continue to successfully develop in a financially sustainable way. From a purely financial perspective, having one, non-teaching headteacher is a way to save money every year and there are other efficiency savings that can be achieved from working in partnership. This has enabled both schools to maintain three classes with good levels of staffing despite budget pressures and will continue to help in the future.

Implications of federation

What would change?

There will be little change to the character of each school. Teaching will continue as at present, although over time there will be a convergence of the schools' curriculum and policies, and a common vision from the governors and headteacher. Both schools already have a similar ethos.

While both schools will retain their present names, they will now be described as 'part of The Peak Federation, and this will appear on the school websites and literature.

Governance

The biggest change on federation will be the creation of a new governing board, whose aim will be to achieve the best possible education for the children in both schools. The new governing board will consist of up to 13 governors, representing stakeholders across both communities:

- 2 Elected Parent Governors (max permitted by regulations)
- 1 Local Authority Governor
- 1 Elected Staff Governor (max permitted by regulations)
- 1 Executive Headteacher
- 8 Co-opted Governors

The new governing board will retain most of the existing governors who are keen to continue, and will co-opt additional members from amongst the parents, staff and community to give a wide range of skills and representation. There will be elections (as required by law) for the parent and staff governors during the autumn term.

The new governing board will in general alternate its meetings between the two schools.

Staffing

Mrs K Gemmell will become permanent executive headteacher to both schools. All current staff will retain their existing contracts with Derbyshire County Council. We will continue to make opportunities for joint training and staff meetings where possible and take advantage of the valley cluster we belong to. It is possible that future appointments could be across the federation, rather than with an individual school, if there is a clear benefit.

A senior teacher at each school will be responsible for the day - to -day management of the school when the Executive Headteacher is not on site.

Finance

The budgets for the two schools will remain separate, but the governors will have the option to spend funds jointly where that is to the benefit of both schools.

Admissions

The new governing board will set the admissions policy, which will be administered by Derbyshire County Council as at present. We envisage no change to the current admission process.

What would stay the same?

Most aspects of school life will stay the same. The governors of both schools believe that federation is the best option for maintaining the schools as we would want them in our village communities.

Consultation:

The consultation period will run for 7 weeks and 2 days from Wednesday 19 April to Friday 9 June 2023.

We invite parents, staff and any other interested parties to meetings at the dates stated in the timeline above.

A consultation response form will be sent electronically (or click this link) to all consultees for completion. Alternatively, if you would like a paper copy please contact one of the school offices. Once completed these can be handed in to each school's reception or emailed to info@grindlefordprimaryschool.co.uk or info@bamford.derbyshire.sch.uk

Grindleford Primary School, Sir William Hill, Hope Valley, Derbyshire, S32 2HS.
Bamford Primary School, Fidler's Well, Bamford, Hope Valley, Derbyshire, S33 0AR.

When will a decision be made?

Consultation feedback responses will be reviewed by governors in June.

Both governing bodies will meet on 26 June to jointly consider the feedback received. The governing bodies will then meet separately on 4 July (Grindleford) and 5 July (Bamford) to make a decision whether:

- (a) to proceed with the proposals for federation as above.
- (b) to proceed with the proposals for federation with such modifications as the governing body consider appropriate.
- (c) not to proceed with the proposals for federation.