

Consultation for the Federation of: Berwick St Mary's CE, Norham St Ceolwulf's CE and Tweedmouth Prior Park First Schools

16th October 2023 to 8th December 2023



**NORHAM
ST. CEOLWULF'S
C OF E SCHOOL**



Proposal to consult on the Federation of Berwick St Mary's CE, Norham St Ceolwulf's CE and Tweedmouth Prior Park First Schools.

Consultation period: 16th October 2023 to 8th December 2023

Proposal for consultation

For the attention of pupils, parents and staff

The governing boards of Berwick St Mary's CE, Norham St Ceowulf's CE and Tweedmouth Prior Park First Schools propose the federation of their schools from 1st February 2024. This is an important matter and before making a final decision, the governors of each school wish to seek the views of the pupils and their families, members of staff as well as stakeholders within the wider community.

Under the Education Act 2002, schools and local authorities can propose that schools join together to create a federation. A federation is formed when two or more schools agree to work together on a formal basis through a single governing board.

Federation schools remain separate schools at their existing sites with their own names and own identities. It is important to note that, the structure of a federation of schools enables each school to retain its unique identity to meet the needs of their individual communities. For instance, the schools each maintain their existing names and uniforms. The Church schools retain their ties to their parish churches while Prior Park remains a community school with no change to its approach to Religious Education.

Federation is not academisation and all the schools will continue to be supported and funded through the Local Authority. With each school continuing to manage its own budget. All three schools will continue to have separate Ofsted inspections and continue to report separate results.

This document sets out the reasons why the governing boards of each school believe this proposal is a good idea and the benefits for pupils, parents and staff. It also provides information about the vision that the extended federation has for its family of schools.

The survey for providing feedback is available online at:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/TMEFRC/> or hard copies are available at the school office.

As part of this consultation, the governing boards invite you to attend drop-in sessions where you can discuss and ask further questions about the proposal. We also encourage you to share your views by completing the feedback process no later than **1:00pm on 8th December 2023**.

If you have any questions about this consultation, please contact:

- **Joyce Guthrie**, Chair of Governors Berwick St Mary's CE First School via admin@st-maryscofe.northumberland.sch.uk
- **Douglas Watkin**, Chair of Governors Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First School via admin@norham.northumberland.sch.uk
- **Isabel Hunter**, Chair of Governors Tweedmouth Prior Park Community First School via admin@tppfs.co.uk

We look forward to receiving your views on this proposal.

Message from the Chair of Governors

There are numerous benefits of federating – for example, Ofsted's report Leadership of More Than One School found that federation led to:

- o Improved governance.
- o Improvements in teaching and learning, behaviour and achievement.
- o A broader and richer curriculum.
- o Schools pooling resources and expertise, leading to financial and educational benefits.
- o Improved staffing, as schools were more able to attract and retain high-quality teachers and leaders.

For ourselves in Berwick the challenges of being small schools in an educational system currently going through a period of significant change include declining rolls and difficulties in a range of key strategic areas such as recruitment and retention, curriculum development and financing, as well as increasing costs, the option of hard federation provides us with an opportunity to future proof our local unique community offer, whilst benefiting from being part of a larger collective.

A fundamental principle of this federation will be that all our schools are determined to maintain their unique identity and community offer, whilst at the same time benefiting from cooperation and support.

About the Federation

The schools share the federation vision and ambition to provide a high-quality education and promote success for all pupils, regardless of their background.

We provide a well-rounded education, developing social, emotional, creative and physical skills as well as promoting academic progress. We promote a love of learning to last beyond our schools.

We do this by providing schools with great teaching, strong leadership and tailor-made curriculums that prepare our pupils to go on to be confident, happy citizens of the world.

By working together, the schools are able to share expertise, resources, and create greater opportunities and capacity, whilst at the same time allowing each school to flourish with its own identity and community.

Leadership and Governance of the Federation

If the 3 schools were to federate, the strategic leadership of the headteachers Mrs Currans (Prior Park) and Mr Hilton (St Mary's and Norham) will continue at their respective schools, with a single board of Governors across all three. Each school would continue to have its own leadership structure, who will work in collaboration with their counterparts at the partner schools, reporting to the respective head teacher, who will ensure strong and continuous strategic development of each school and the federation as a whole.

The federation would come into effect on 1st February 2024. Following federation there would be a single, newly appointed governing board responsible for all three schools.

The federation's governing board members will be selected for their skills, expertise and understanding they bring to benefit the strategic development of the federation of schools to secure the best possible outcomes for every pupil. In doing so, the governing board will look to secure a membership which has a balance of knowledge and regular interaction with each of the three schools.

The shared governance structure of a federation will allow the schools to:

- o work together efficiently and sustainably to raise standards, improve services and increase opportunities for pupils and staff.
- o monitor performance across the three schools, alongside honest conversations with heads of school about any differences.

- o compare curriculum interventions across the schools and promote good practice quickly; and share resources, staff, expertise and facilities.

It is proposed that the new governing board will consist of 12 governors, as set out in the table below.

The composition of the governing board of the proposed federation of the three schools is shown in the table below. This proposed composition reflects statutory requirements.

Category of governor	Number of governors in each category	Method of selection
Head teachers	2	Appointed due to the nature of their role.
Parent governors	2	Elected by the parents and carers of children registered at the schools. This is the highest number of parent governors allowed by government regulations.
Staff governors	1	Elected by staff employed across the three schools. This is the highest number of staff governors allowed by government regulations.
Local authority	1	Nominated by Northumberland County Council and appointed by the governing board. This is the highest number of local authority nominated governors allowed by government regulations.
Co-opted	3	Appointed by the governing board and selected for the skills, expertise and understanding they bring to benefit the strategic development of the federation of schools. There must be at least 2 co-opted governors but there is no maximum limit determined by regulations.
Foundation	3	Appointed by the Newcastle Diocesan Education Board (in consultation with the Parochial Church Councils linked to the Church schools) and selected for the skills, expertise and understanding they bring to benefit the strategic development of the federation of schools. This number will include at least one ex-officio foundation governor (who will be the vicar of one of the parishes including the Church schools). There must be no more than 25% of the governing body but there is no maximum limit determined by regulations.
Total	12	

Associate Governors/Members

In addition to the Governing Body, Associate Governors/Members can be appointed. Associate Governors/Members can be appointed to a committee of the governing body based on their specific expertise and experience, so that they can contribute to the effective governance and success of the school. They:

- o are appointed to serve on one or more committees by the governing body. Their roles may span a single school or the wider federation.
- o are not governors and they are not recorded in the instrument of government.
- o cannot be appointed to the governing body (they may attend full governing body meetings, but they are not governors and do not have a vote in governing body decisions)
- o may be excluded from any part of a meeting where the business being considered concerns a member of school staff or an individual pupil.

Benefits of Federation

The priority for the federation in its first year will be to secure and embed the new governance structures, while maintaining the strong academic performance currently demonstrated by each of the schools.

The schools will each retain their own identity. The teachers will remain the same and pupils will continue to learn each day at their current school site. Parents and pupils will experience no immediate impact of a decision to federate but will, in time, benefit from the links that will exist between the three schools.

The pupils, staff and wider communities have already benefited from our partnership. We want to strengthen this relationship, by establishing a permanent three-school federation.

Shared Leadership and future proofing:

- o Stability and security for everyone in the schools' communities, pupils, parents and staff.
- o Governance arrangements will reflect the reality of a leadership team that works across three schools. This will provide better support and challenge for the leadership team and will make accountability stronger.
- o Avoidance of unnecessary duplication of effort and the continued drive for more efficient and effective use of resources and better value for money, allowing the schools' teams to focus on achieving the best for the pupils.
- o Federation will enable all schools to benefit from the leadership strengths of the individual headteachers and leadership group. In terms of the head teachers the long term aim will be to create an executive headship role at the appropriate time, providing a robust succession plan that will enable all schools to benefit from a continuity of leadership and approach. This will be especially important during the current period of structural change in the partnership.
- o Research has highlighted that governing bodies cited greater strategic flexibility in terms of staffing to be a particular plus of federation. For instance, the opportunity to develop the staff's leadership skills can be hugely beneficial in succession planning.
- o In terms of middle and emerging leaders, the federation will provide enhanced professional development opportunities across the different schools. This will enhance the school's ability to recruit and retain high quality staff.
- o For governance leadership, federation will also provide similar benefits of shared expertise, as well as providing training and awareness raising through the development of associate governors, which adds to the impact of succession planning.

Staffing - 'Recruitment and Retention'

- o Federation will allow access to shared CPD opportunities, using the strengths of all staff to develop a holistic CPD offer for all schools to improve teaching and learning.
- o Shared CPD will bring significant cost savings through shared practice and collaborative work.
- o Providing enhanced CPD opportunities will also improve the ability to recruit and retain staff, as existing and new staff will see more varied career paths within the federation of schools to develop their own career aspirations.
- o Federation will enable the development of staff internally into roles, improving the sustainability of the schools, particularly with the projected issues in teacher/education staff recruitment currently being experienced locally and nationally.
- o Access to improved CPD, should also allow the leaders to have the capacity to support under-performance quickly limiting impact on teaching and learning.

Teaching and learning - 'Curriculum'

- o Shared curriculum development will allow a pooling of teaching and learning expertise to inform strategic planning for effective teaching and learning.
- o Teacher workload will be more manageable as curriculum leadership is shared across all schools and staffing.
- o Curriculum enrichment activities will benefit from shared organisation, delivery and financial support, as schools combine to create effective learning opportunities.
- o Curriculum resourcing will be financially and operationally improved as colleagues utilise the support available across all schools.
- o Curriculum development benefits from high quality CPD opportunities that can be shared across all schools, with improved impact and lower financial commitments.

Financial Savings of Federation -

- o Effective allocation of operational resources, with a reduction in the duplication of certain activities such as administration and finance, centralising roles across schools.
- o Benefits of centralised purchasing of services and products to gain economies of scale and lower unit pricing, as the federation will represent a larger purchasing organisation.
- o Reduced purchasing of resources as schools share curriculum and other resources.
- o Improved sustainability in staffing costs, as the federation will enable the schools more readily to develop staff, recruit and retain, thus reducing long-term costs associated with high levels of staff mobility.
- o Savings in time allocated to admin and preparation tasks will reduce for many staff, particularly teachers and senior leaders. For instance, adopting shared policies, budget monitoring, scrutinies, etc will all reduce time away from the core task of delivering high quality teaching and learning.

Benefits for parents

- o Security and stability for parents' children.
- o Their children will continue to experience the strong, kind and consistent leadership that the current senior leadership team provide across the schools.
- o Assurance that their children are part of a broad cross-school and cross-borough community, with access to greater opportunity and wider experiences.
- o Better oversight of the most vulnerable pupils and their safeguarding that working as a federation enables, ensuring that parents' children are safe throughout their time in school.

Benefits for pupils

- o Formalising the current relationship would avoid disruption to the education of the pupils. Entering into a formal federation will provide stability to the pupils in all three schools, allowing them to continue to feel safe and secure in their schools and with their education, whilst the Berwick school's partnership goes through a period of significant change.
- o Continued cross-school relationships will provide pupils with opportunities to take part in inter-school competitions, to gain broader experiences through inter-school working and to feel part of a wider cross-locality school community.
- o The pupils will continue to experience the strong, kind and consistent leadership that the current senior leadership team provide.

What will happen after this consultation?

The consultation period starts on **16th October 2023** and closes at **1:00pm** on **8th December 2023**.

The governing boards of Berwick St Mary's CE, Norham St Ceowulf's CE and Tweedmouth Prior Park First Schools will then meet separately to consider the views gathered from the consultation. They will then decide as separate governing boards whether to proceed with the proposal.

If both governing boards decide to proceed, the intention will be for Berwick St Mary's CE, Norham St Ceowulf's CE and Tweedmouth Prior Park First Schools to form a federation on 1st February 2024.

Alternative courses of action

After considering everyone's views, if the governing board of one or more of the schools decides not to federate, the schools will continue to operate as separate schools as at present. The respective Governing Bodies may then decide to explore other options to secure future sustainability.

Frequently Asked Questions

How would this proposal affect my child's education?

All three schools are happy, stimulating caring schools and this will not change. The teachers will remain the same and the pupils will continue to learn each day at the school site as they do now. Most will not notice this change at all.

This said, pupils already benefit indirectly from the links that our leaders and staff have established and we want these links to be maintained.

While we will not force this, opportunities for pupils at one school to collaborate with pupils and staff at the other schools within the federation may arise. This will be in addition to, and not instead of, the connections that already exist across our local area.

How will the school and children benefit from this process?

We believe that the federation of the schools will give staff at each school access to high quality collaborative professional development, offering the opportunity to share expertise and to reduce costs because of our pooled resources. This will contribute to investing in and generating better outcomes for every pupil at the schools.

Why are there only two parent governors proposed when the federation will include three schools?

Government regulations place a limit on the number of parent governors in federations. Parent governors bring a particular perspective but, like all governors, should act in the interests of all schools in their federation. They are not meant to act as representatives of a particular constituency or school.

Some of the co-opted governors within the current Governing Bodies are also parents. The restriction on parent governors hasn't stopped them from joining the governing board.

It is highly likely that this will also be the case within the proposed federation. We are fortunate to have active and skilled parents at each of the three schools and it makes sense that we would want to involve them in governance.

Will there be separate committees to consider the affairs of each of the three schools?

We have not yet decided on sub-committee arrangements for the federation. However, it is unlikely that we would allow sub-committees to focus only on one school. There are real advantages to being able to compare issues and performance across different schools and we would want to be able to make best use of these.

Will the admissions process change and could children be forced to change schools?

No. The admission arrangements will remain exactly as they are at present. Parents will apply on behalf of their children to the school of their choice.

Will children have to travel between the schools for lessons?

No. The schools may share staff on occasions to share particular expertise, but lessons for pupils will take place on their own school sites. On occasion, pupils will visit other schools to share specialist resources or take part in joint events.

Will the arrangements be fair to all schools?

Yes. Any arrangements made as part of the federation will be completely fair to all three schools. There may be some funding for innovation, which the schools can share. Obviously, the more pupils who will benefit from a project, the bigger the projects that we can consider.

Will the staffing change?

The terms and conditions for staff will not change, nor will staff policies or procedures.

In some cases, staff may move between the three schools to pursue their own career development and also to implement specialist knowledge in other schools. This will be made easier as we apply the same policies across the federation.

What changes would occur to the governing boards once the schools join the Federation?

Following federation there would be a single governing board covering all three schools. The leadership and governance arrangements for the proposed federation are explained in the earlier sections of this document.

What about cooperating with other schools?

The schools within the proposed federation remain committed members of the Berwick family of schools and we intend to continue to work together with the other schools beyond the federation group.

Are the schools merging to become academies?

No. We believe that a federation of maintained schools is the best way for the three schools to work together to provide the best outcomes for our pupils.

What happens if we want to de-federate later on?

If the proposal to federate is accepted, the governing board will review the arrangement in five years' time. One or more of the schools may leave the federation at any time if the governing board agree this and there is a standard process for this.

Who will have a say on this proposal?

We have published the consultation on each of the three schools' websites and are seeking views from all pupils, parents, staff and other stakeholders such as the local authority, diocese and others

How can I find out more and let you know what I think?

The events detailed below, designed as drop-in meetings, will provide parents, carers and the wider community with an opportunity to speak to the governors and the headteachers of the partnership about the proposal to form a federation between the three schools. If you are unable to attend one of these scheduled dates, please get in touch with the office of one of the schools and we will do our best to arrange for someone to speak to you.

Venue	Audience	Date	Time
Berwick St Mary's CE First School	Parents	27/10/2023	9:30 after Golden book
Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First School	Parents	17/11/2023	9:30 after Golden book
Tweedmouth Prior Park First School	Parents	TBC	TBC

Where will I find the schools?

- o **Berwick St Mary's CE First School**, Newfields, Berwick upon Tweed, TD15 1SP
- o **Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First School**, West Street, Norham, Berwick upon Tweed TD15 2JZ
- o **Tweedmouth Prior Park First School**, Dean Dr, Tweedmouth, Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 2DB

This consultation document is also available online on the schools' websites along with the link to an online survey form. Feedback from the survey will be collated so governors of each of the three schools can consider every response submitted.

If you need support with accessing this consultation in another language, please contact your school office who will be able to provide you with assistance.

If you have any queries regarding this consultation, please get in touch with.

- o **Joyce Guthrie**, Chair of Governors Berwick St Mary's CE First School via admin@st-maryscofe.northumberland.sch.uk
- o **Douglas Watkin**, Chair of Governors Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First School via admin@norham.northumberland.sch.uk
- o **Isabel Hunter**, Chair of Governors Tweedmouth Prior Park Community First School via admin@tppfs.co.uk

This stage of the consultation will close at 1:00pm on 8th December 2023

Thank you for taking part in this consultation and sharing your views.

Appendix 1: Vision and Values statement

The Tweed Learning Federation

Our Vision:

To inspire all children through a fully inclusive approach to learning that excites, motivates and encourages every child to be the best they can be, whatever their chosen path in their life of learning.

Our Aims:

- To provide an inspiring curriculum which stimulates and challenges all pupils and that fosters high expectations for all.
- To provide a caring, secure and supportive environment where children can develop respect and belief in themselves, others and their surroundings and feel confident to express their individuality.
- To promote and inspire curiosity, resilience and independence within the children, so all adopt an enthusiastic and positive attitude to life-long learning.
- To foster independent thinkers who care about the life of our planet and are aware of their responsibility for its long term sustainability
- To understand and promote the importance of being active and healthy, through offering a range of opportunities for pupils to develop healthy bodies and minds; taking responsibility for their own wellbeing as well as that of others
- To provide a clear moral framework which demonstrates respect, tolerance and understanding whilst celebrating diversity, so becoming caring and active members of our community at all scales from local to global.
- To build positive and equitable partnerships with parents, carers and the local and wider community.