

Consultation document

PROPOSAL FOR A FEDERATION BETWEEN RECREATION ROAD INFANT SCHOOL AND AVENUE JUNIOR SCHOOL

– Put out to consultation on Monday 19th April 2021 –

1. A new partnership

The governing boards of Recreation Road Infant School and Avenue Junior School are proposing to federate, with a start date of 2nd September 2021. The intended name of this formal partnership between the two schools is **Heigham Community Federation**. This document outlines details of the proposed federation for staff, parents, carers and other stakeholders, and also constitutes a formal request for responses to the plan.

If you want to submit comments, your online response or letter must be received by one of the schools no later than **Monday 7th June** (six school weeks from the date of this document). Please see section 9 below ('Gathering opinions...') to access a link that will take you to an online response form, or for details of how to send responses by post. There will be two online meetings on Teams on **Wednesday 28th April** for parents, carers and other stakeholders to find out more about the proposed federation from school leaders and governors; click [here](#) for a link to the one at 11am, and [here](#) for the link to the one at 6pm.

2. What a federation is

An educational federation is the partnership created when two or more schools formally agree to work together for the benefit of their pupils and their communities. School leaders are answerable to a single governing board, can share facilities and resources, and have the flexibility to offer staff roles that operate across both schools, as well as better opportunities for professional development. The partner schools collaborate on improving aspects of teaching and learning, and set common goals. The principle is that sharing both assets and strategy allows each school in the federation to work more efficiently, and that all children receive a better education as a result. However, a federation does *not* mean that each school loses its individual identity or control over its own finances (and is not a 'runway' arrangement that will eventually lead to the schools in question forming or becoming part of an Academy Trust). Although they commit to working with one or more partners, each school continues to operate as an individual institution, and in legal terms remains an entirely separate entity.

3. Why our schools are looking to federate

There are a growing number of federations already running very successfully in Norfolk, and the local authority is actively encouraging schools to consider the benefits of this kind of partnership. For the past few years the leadership teams and governors of Recreation Road Infant School and Avenue Junior School have been looking at different ways to build on the friendly and trusting relationship that already exists between the two schools, as well as their aligned approaches to education – both emphasising the ‘whole child’, inclusiveness and opportunity for all.

After a lot of discussion, the two governing boards and senior leadership teams now see federation as the best strategic choice for both schools. Despite the fact that COVID–19 is likely to continue to present challenges for the remainder of 2021, the working party set up to move this proposal forwards (a group made up of senior leaders and governors from both schools) are confident that with so much of the strategic work already done, the best time to begin this new partnership would be in September this year. Alongside this new commitment to collaboration, governors recognise the importance of maintaining the unique identities of both schools, as well as the need to adopt different approaches in Early Years education and at Key Stages 1 and 2. Although there is a mechanism for schools to leave a federation, the governors of both schools are treating the proposed partnership as a long-term commitment.

4. The benefits of federating

Leaders are confident that a federation is the best way to improve social and academic outcomes for all pupils, allowing staff from both schools to work together to create a more coherent learning journey for children as they move through their primary education.

Federating would also allow the two schools

- To share knowledge of children and their families as the children go from infant to junior level, ensuring better pastoral provision and better school-family relationships
- To create a more flexible staffing structure; being able to offer both teaching and support staff roles that operate across both schools would mean better professional development, greater freedom of movement for staff, it being easier to attract ambitious new people to the schools, improved capacity should members of staff leave or be unwell, and enhanced leadership development and succession planning
- To share expertise (e.g. subject knowledge and special educational needs interventions), creating action plans to drive an improvement in standards across both schools
- To make significant savings by sharing the costs of, for example, specialist staff roles, professional development, joint-funding bids and certain aspects of administration

- To build on existing transition arrangements, allowing Y3 children to make the best possible start at junior school
- To streamline and focus governance so that senior leaders would have a reduced workload in terms of reporting and meetings, and would be accountable to (and supported by) the best-qualified new team

5. What would *not* change as a result of federation

The schools would both retain their existing names ('Heigham Community Federation' would simply be the name of their new formal partnership) and the children would remain solely pupils of the individual institutions. Both schools would also still be 'maintained' (i.e. funded and controlled by the local education authority), and admission arrangements would remain exactly as they are: the process would still be run by the local authority, each school would have the same catchment boundaries and accommodate the same maximum number of pupils, and a child being a pupil at Recreation Road Infant School would not grant them automatic admission to Avenue Junior School.

Given they are each an effective fit for their school, existing leadership structures would remain in place: Michael Bunting would continue as Head Teacher at Recreation Road Infant School, and Debbie Dismore would continue as Executive Head at Avenue Junior School (taking overall responsibility for the school and acting as its strategic lead) with Mike Hooper continuing as Head of School (taking responsibility for its day-to-day running). Federation would not mean changes in the rest of each school's existing staffing team, nor in their employment status: staffing levels would continue to be set by the school's budget, staff would continue to be employed by the local authority, and employment rights and pension arrangements would also remain unchanged.

In addition, OFSTED would continue to inspect the schools as individual settings, with results published for them as separate entities.

6. What *would* change as a result of federation

Federation would allow leaders to employ new members of staff to work across both schools, as well as create opportunities for existing staff to work at both infant and junior level, if they wanted to do so. Although each school would separately receive its budget allocation and keep control over its individual finances (so it wouldn't have to shoulder unexpected costs such as building repairs, or have to help sort out any budgetary difficulties in the partner school's

finances), there would be the flexibility to pool a certain amount of money to jointly fund shared equipment, resources or initiatives.

7. The constitution of the new federation

The principle of ‘working together’ to improve outcomes for children would be at the heart of everything that Heigham Community Federation does, so we would also take a collaborative approach to leadership and strategic responsibility. The federation’s leadership team would draw staff from both schools:

PROPOSED FEDERATION LEADERSHIP	
Members of the leadership team with executive responsibility	Michael Bunting (Head Teacher, RRIS) and Debbie Dismore (Executive Head, AJS)
Other members of the leadership team	Mike Hooper (Head of School, AJS), Steve Chambers (Deputy Head of School, AJS), Sheree Brock (Assistant Head, RRIS) and Susanna Manrique (Assistant Head, RRIS)

Members of this leadership team would be answerable to a new single governing board, which would be made up of the following types of governor role:

- x2 head teachers (Michael Bunting and Debbie Dismore)
- x1 local authority governor
- x1 staff governor
- x2 parent governors
- x8 co-opted governors

As each governing board currently does in its work at Recreation Road Infant School/Avenue Junior School, this new governing board would regularly review and evaluate both itself and the way the new federation was run, and make changes as necessary.

If federation proceeds, there will be elections for the staff and parent governor roles in June. Being a federation governor offers the opportunity to make an important contribution to the life of more than one school; to understand more about teaching and learning, organisational finance and strategic management; and to enhance a wide range of personal and vocational skills. (To stand for one of the parent governor roles, you would need someone to nominate you, and to then write a brief statement about why you think you’d be a suitable candidate.) More information on the election process would go out to staff, parents and other stakeholders after the consultation period.

9. Gathering opinions, and what happens next

As schools that both rely on (and are very grateful for) the support and goodwill of our staff, parents, carers and other stakeholders, we are keen to hear opinions on this proposal from the members of both schools' communities. We would be grateful, then, if you could submit a response via [this online form](#), which will be collected by the Clerk of Governors (a role that is fulfilled by the same person for both schools). Anonymous responses cannot be considered, but the Clerk will keep people's names strictly confidential – this means that governors will be able to consider comments without being in any way influenced by who sent them. If you would prefer to supply a response on paper, please put your name on your letter (as with online responses, anonymous comments cannot be considered) and post it to 'The Clerk of Governors' via either school office.

Whether submitted digitally or by post, all responses must be received at one of the schools no later than **Monday 7th June** (six school weeks after the date of this document). The working party will give all responses their full consideration, and a formal joint response from the schools' two governing boards to issues raised will be sent out to staff, parents, carers and other stakeholders by Friday 11th June.

To remind you: there will be two online meetings on Teams on **Wednesday 28th April** for parents, carers and other stakeholders to find out more about the proposed federation from school leaders and governors; click [here](#) for a link to the one at 11am, and [here](#) for a link to the one at 6pm.

Thank you for reading.