



Consultation on the proposal to form a governance federation of Burley and Sopley Primary Schools

Introduction

Recent changes to education legislation and to the way schools are funded have prompted many schools to investigate and adopt new ways of working together. The governors of Burley and Sopley Primary Schools have been investigating how our schools could benefit from working together in a formal partnership. We are very interested in the idea of “federating” both schools.

This consultation document is designed to let you know what federation would involve, why we think it would benefit both schools, how you can find out more and how you can share your views. We want to know what you think about the proposal and the governing bodies will consider the responses before making a decision about whether or not to go ahead with federation.

Section headings	Page
What is a Federation?	1
Why are the governing bodies looking at this idea?	2
What are the potential benefits for our children?	3
What are the potential benefits for our staff and the wider community?	3
What changes are the governing bodies proposing?	3-4
What would happen to the existing staff?	4
How will parents, staff and members of the community have the opportunity to find out more, discuss the proposals, ask questions and share their views?	5
What happens at the end of the consultation process?	5
Consultation response form	7
Deadline for responses mid-day Tuesday 12th April 2016	

What is a Federation?

The School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2012 allow for two or more schools to join together under one Governing Body.

This is not a merger into one school; each school remains separate with its own school buildings, identity and character, budget, and admissions criteria. Hampshire County Council would remain as the admissions authority for both schools.

Hampshire and other counties already have a number of successfully federated schools – if you would like to find out more about these schools, we have included a few links to federation websites on our ‘new ways of working’ pages on our respective websites <http://www.sopleyprimaryschool.org/new-ways-of-working/> <http://burley.hants.sch.uk/governors/new-ways-of-working/>



Why are the governing bodies looking at this idea?

The governors at Sopley and Burley schools strongly believe that federation would enable both schools to:

- **Move towards our shared vision of an outstanding education for our children by:**
 - sharing good practice
 - finding ways to work more efficiently so that our resources are more focussed on teaching and learning
- **Retain and build on the unique individual identity and character of each school by:**
 - maintaining the ability of local families to choose a small village school
 - allowing pupils to experience a small school primary education but use the link to build relationships that would help with transition to secondary school
 - offering a collective voice for small schools within our local group of schools
- **Be stronger together by:**
 - creating greater financial sustainability
 - being better able to attract, develop and retain high quality staff
 - developing opportunities for further improvement

The governing bodies of both schools decided to begin investigations and discussions into new ways of working together for the following reasons:

- **Education** – We want to improve learning opportunities for our children.
- **Economic** – School funding is becoming increasingly difficult and, like many other schools, our budgets are looking unsustainable within three years. These difficulties are especially challenging in a small school because we have so little flexibility within our budget, the vast majority of which is spent on staffing. Many schools are having to identify new ways of working. We have investigated and considered different options; collaboration, federation and multi-academy trusts. We believe that federation is the right model of partnership for our schools. This is because federation offers a good balance of commitment and flexibility which is not offered by either collaboration or multi-academy trusts. We feel that federation would offer the ability to retain the individual character of our schools and the strengths of our small school approach within a stronger economic framework.
- **Leadership** – Martin Sheret, Headteacher at Sopley, is due to retire at the end of the school year in August 2016 so this has given the opportunity to look at other models of leadership structure.
- **Strong similarities between the schools** – We share many similarities in character, organisation and practice. These include: our school size and pupil intake; age of pupils; organisation of classes; values, approach, budget and secondary school links are all very similar indeed – the list goes on. This would provide a firm foundation for working together as a federation.
- **Other challenges within the education sector** - There is a national shortage of teachers and head teachers and individual small schools are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit, develop and retain high quality staff. We know of several ‘good’ and



‘outstanding’ local schools that have had difficulty in attracting suitable candidates, especially for leadership roles.

What are the potential benefits for our children?

- Both schools are currently graded by Ofsted as ‘Good’ in all areas; by sharing knowledge and expertise we want to be moving towards ‘Outstanding’.
- Sustaining and improving our high quality teaching and learning, for example, by sharing planning, ideas, expertise and resources.
- Enhanced learning opportunities for our children, for example, the sharing of expertise to meet the needs of all.
- Access to a wider range of facilities, activities and shared resources, which may not otherwise be available to a small individual school.
- Giving the opportunity for our children to get to know children from a linked school could help with their confidence on transfer to secondary school.
- Enhanced business/office and other support functions would release senior staff to focus on more teaching and learning.

What are the potential benefits for our staff and the wider community?

- Families would continue to have the choice of sending their children to a small school. We believe that it is important to safeguard this choice – by working together we would improve financial stability and sustainability for both schools. Small standalone schools are more vulnerable to financial difficulties and risk losing control and identity if they become part of a multi-academy chain.
- The provision of a greater range of leadership possibilities and continuing professional development for staff would help us to retain and attract high quality staff and leadership.
- More opportunity to share functions across both schools would improve efficiency and could reduce some of the challenges faced by subject leaders and other staff in small schools who carry multiple responsibilities.
- Improved economies of scale through sharing resources offers more value for money – a good use of the public funding used to run our schools.

What changes are the Governing Bodies proposing?

Governance

At the end of the consultation period we will consider the position and should we decide to go ahead with federation then, from 26th May 2016, both schools’ Governing Bodies would cease to exist and a new Governing Body would be formed for the Federation. This would involve elections and appointments, any existing Governors who wished to serve on the new governing body would be required to stand for re-election/re-appointment.

A new Governing Body for the “Federation of Burley and Sopley Primary Schools” would be made up of 15 governors, comprising:



- 1 Headteacher;
- 1 Local Authority governor – nominated by the Local Authority;
- 1 staff governor – elected by staff from both schools;
- 2 parent governors – 1 elected from each school; and
- 10 co-opted members – appointed based on skills and experience. A number of current governors are interested in serving on a new governing body if federation goes ahead.

Leadership and management

The current leadership and management arrangements in each school would remain in place until 31.8.16.

During the summer term the schools would begin to work together more closely. The new federation governing body would appoint leaders to the new leadership and management structure to start from the beginning of the school year in September 2016. We feel that we can fill the leadership roles from within our current teams.

From September 2016 the leadership and management arrangements would be;

- An Executive Headteacher - overall responsibility for both schools and with a strong focus on improving standards and strategic matters.
- A Head of School in each school - responsible for the day to day leadership and with a strong focus on teaching and learning.

The Executive Headteacher would spend time in both schools.

There would be opportunities for each Head of School to work with the Executive Headteacher and each other.

Within this arrangement we can share and develop leadership across the federation by using skills and experience flexibly across both schools, so that each school could benefit from a wider pool of talent and expertise.

What would happen to the existing staff?

- There are no planned changes to the contracts of existing staff due to the possibility of federation, unless staff choose to apply for a new role or express a willingness to work in either school. If there were a need or desire to change an employment contract then the process is the same whether or not federation goes ahead i.e. founded in negotiation and consultation and following the procedures that both schools already follow because they both subscribe to Hampshire Education Personnel Services and adopt the Hampshire Manual of Personnel Practice.
- Both schools would continue to be Hampshire County Council maintained schools. Pension arrangements would be unchanged.



How will parents, staff and members of the community have the opportunity to find out more, discuss the proposals, ask questions and share their views?

There is a dedicated page 'new ways of working' on each of the school websites <http://www.sopleyprimaryschool.org/new-ways-of-working/> <http://burley.hants.sch.uk/governors/new-ways-of-working/> where this document and other information can be found. We will keep you updated throughout the process and publish any further information on our websites - printed versions will be available at the schools' receptions.

Governors have arranged for 2 'drop-in sessions' where Governors and officers from Hampshire County Council will be on-hand to provide more information and answer any questions you may have. **Parents and members of the local community will be welcome to come to a session at either school.** These sessions will be held on: -

- **1st Drop-in session - Weds 24th Feb 2016 4.00pm – 6.00pm (Sopley Primary School)**
- **2nd Drop-in session - Mon 21st Mar 2016 9.00am – 11.00am (Burley Primary School)**

There will be separate sessions for members of staff at each school.

The Chairs of Governors for each school can be contacted via the schools' offices should you have any questions or comments. All questions and comments will be collated and considered at a joint governing body meeting at the end of the consultation process.

It is important for us to know what you think about the proposal and we would like to hear your views, either using the form at the end of this document or by writing to the chair of governors at either school – we will also be listening to the feedback we receive at the 'drop in' sessions. If you are unable to attend either 'drop-in' and would like us to consider running another session then please get in touch and if there is sufficient demand we will organise further sessions.

What happens at the end of the consultation process?

- The responses to this consultation will be carefully considered by the Governing Bodies of both schools and fully taken into account before we decide whether or not to proceed with the initiative.
- A decision will be made in the week commencing 25th April 2016 - if we do decide to proceed then the 'Federation of Burley and Sopley Schools' would be established on 26th May 2016.
- Having made a decision, this will be communicated to parents, staff and other interested individuals as quickly as possible.



Many thanks for taking the time to consider this proposal

Linda Mail – Chair of Governors

Sopley Primary School
South Ripley, Off Derritt Lane
Bransgore, Nr Christchurch
BH23 8ET
Email c/o adminoffice@sopley.hants.sch.uk

Michael Lester – Chair of Governors

Burley Primary School
Church Lane
Burley, Nr. Ringwood
BH24 4AP
Email c/o adminoffice@burley.hants.sch.uk



Consultation Response Form

Please return to either school office by mid-day Tuesday 12th April

Envelopes should be addressed – ‘Federation - to the Chair of Governors’

The proposal is that Burley Primary School and Sopley Primary School should enter a federation with one Governing Body with effect from 26th May 2016. The federation would be named ‘The Federation of Burley and Sopley Primary Schools’.

Comment/s:

Which of the following best describes your connection with the school?

(Please tick one only, which should be your main interest)

- Parent**
- Member of teaching staff**
- Member of support staff**
- Member of the community**
- Other (please state)**
