

GOVERNANCE

Developing your federation

Federation is 'happening' in Devon. There are 13 federations, involving 33 schools (Sept 2010), already in place, with a number of others currently in consultation or about to get off the starting blocks.

This leaflet seeks to take the learning experience of governors and heads involved in our federations to date. It aims to share both the good practice and some of the frustrations with colleagues who are embarking on the federation journey.

As Devon's Local Area Review process gathers pace and completes next summer (2011), the over-riding outcome has been a clearer understanding by schools and governors involved that a change to our existing pattern of schools in Devon is inevitable. As the key decision-makers in many of these change processes it is imperative that all governors become well acquainted with the current debate and possible options. Our greatest champions are those governors who have warmed to the process and been crucial to the successful implementation of an organisational change.

Federation is not the only option available to governing bodies prepared to embrace change, but it has proved the overwhelmingly preferred model for the following reasons:

- All schools in a federation retain their own individual identity, character and ethos;
- All schools retain their individual budgets but are able to use their budgets strategically across the federation;
- A federation can have as many headteachers as it decides. A federation does not necessarily deliver a single Executive Headteacher model;
- Each federation is different and dependent upon local context and drivers;
- Governing bodies are the decision makers following local consultation;

- The opportunities for children across a federation are increased, for example access to a wider range of professional input and expertise, shared sporting and cultural activities, shared trips and residential;
- The opportunities for staff across a federation are increased, for example shared CPD, shared planning and assessment opportunities, different roles to aspire to;
- Federation is seen as a long-term commitment to partnership set within a legal framework;
- Last, but by no means least, the very positive messages, outcomes and experiences being recorded by our existing federations. Take a look at the Ofsted report for West Alvington (October 09), or the most recent Ofsted report for St Rumons Infants, Tavistock (April 10) where the inspectors said, 'the benefits of the federation are already clear; team leadership and staff sharing expertise during training sessions has strengthened provision and monitoring the schools' effectiveness'.

Devon has built a lot of expertise and experience around federation. The DfE and National College (NCSL) flag Devon as a national leader in this field and highlight to other Local Authorities the range of advice, support and information that Devon has to offer. This publication is the latest in a series, taking real experiences from 'live' federations, and taking governors on the next step of the journey by examining how best to set up a federated governing body that works well.

There are many other publications available on the Governor Support website, including *Partnership Pathways* (www.devon.gov.uk/j4s-partnershippathways.pdf), which suggests how to take the initial steps when you are interested in exploring a more formalised partnership.

Current federations (as of 1 October 2010)

Children First Federation	Hemyock Primary School Sampford Peverell Church of England Primary School Wilcombe Primary School
Chulmleigh Community Schools Federation	Chulmleigh Community School Chulmleigh Primary School
Federation of Stoke Hill Schools	Stoke Hill Infant & Nursery Community School Stoke Hill Junior Community School
First Federation (Devon)	Blackpool C of E (VC) Primary School Chudleigh Knighton C of E (VC) Primary School Lady Seaward's C of E (VA) Primary School Newton Ferrers C of E (VC) Primary School Salcombe C of E (VC) Primary School
Kingsbridge Area Federation	Charleton C of E (VC) Primary School West Alvington C of E (VC) Primary School
Moorsway Federation	Cornwood C of E (VC) Primary School Shaugh Prior Community Primary School The Erme Community Primary School
Our School Federation	Blackawton Community Primary School East Allington Community Primary School Stoke Fleming Community Primary School
South Hams Federation	Stokenham Area Primary School Malborough with South Huish C of E (VC) Primary School
The Chittlehampton & Filleigh Federation	The Chittlehampton C of E (VA) Primary School Filleigh Community Primary School
Tavistock Church Schools Federation	St Rumon's C of E (VC) Infant School St Peter's C of E (VA) Junior School
The Tamar & Torridge Federation	Bradford Community Primary School Bridgerule Church of England (VC) Primary School
The Tarka Federation	Dolton C of E (VA) Primary School The Clinton C of E (VA) Primary School, Merton
West Exmoor Federation	Kentsbury Community Primary School Lynton C of E (VA) Primary School Parracombe C of E (VC) Primary School

A number of other schools are currently in the process of consultation.

Contact Information

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Finance 01392 382784
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Church of England Schools

C of E Diocesan Education Officers have worked very closely with church schools and the Local Authority around federation.

The Diocesan preferred position is that church schools federate with other church schools wherever possible, preferably VA with VA, VC with VC. However Devon does have a number of mixed category federations that work very well.

We would advise church schools seeking a federation partner to make early contact with Diocesan Education Officers on **01392 294950** or email ccyp@exeter.anglican.org

This leaflet has been commissioned by DCC CYPs Achievement Through Collaboration and produced in association with Devon Governor Support (LDP), and Devon's Federation Network (October 2010)

“ Give careful thought to the size and make-up to ensure the governing body is large enough for fair representation but not too unwieldy
South Hams Federation ”

The LA will be able to continue to provide support in the future though this is likely to be a purchased service through Devon Learning and Development Partnership.

How will academies impact on federations?

Current legislation enables federations with at least one 'outstanding' school to submit an application to convert to academy status which will cover all the member schools in the federation even where some or all of the other schools are not 'outstanding' in their own right. Academies cannot federate.

For further information go to www.education.gov.uk/academies/faqs and other documentation on the Devon Governor Support web pages: www.devon.gov.uk/governors

Different governance models

The legal make-up of the federated governing body can be accessed via the 2007 Federation Regulations (see DGS website). The categories of governors you need to include will depend on the types of schools within the federation. The responsibilities of the governing body of a federation are the same as those of individual schools.

Each federation needs to establish a governance structure to manage responsibilities that suits their own context. It is vital to ensure that lead governors and their committees are well trained, have clear terms of reference with delegated powers to avoid duplication at full governing body meetings.

There are many different types of federated governing body structures. Below are four examples from Devon:

Example 1

- ~ Full Governing Body
- ~ Teaching and Learning Committee
- ~ Resources
- ~ Premise, health and safety committee
- ~ Ethos group – to uphold the Christian distinctiveness of the church school
- ~ Working parties as required
- ~ Standing committees in place as required – all governing bodies must have these in place

Example 2

- ~ Full Governing Body
- ~ Finance and premises committee
- ~ Curriculum committee
- ~ Pupil and personnel committee
- ~ Ethos group(s)
- ~ Standing committees

Example 3 – Cabinet Style Structure

- ~ Full Governing Body
- ~ 5-6 portfolios with a Lead and Shadow governor with skills to match the portfolios, e.g.
 - Standards and Improvement/Teaching and Learning portfolio
 - Finance portfolio
 - Personnel portfolio
 - SEN and inclusion portfolio
 - Marketing and PR portfolio
 - Premises with health and safety portfolio
 - Parents and the community portfolio

- ~ Ethos committee(s) in addition to the portfolios
- ~ Chair has a two-year term of office with a maximum of two terms
- ~ Full Governing Body – six meetings a year – portfolio update at each FGB
- ~ Standing committees
- ~ Lead governor partnership board for each school (with staff and parent governors from other schools)
- ~ HT report reflects the structure of the portfolios

Example 4 – Federation that includes a Community College

- ~ Full Governing Body
- ~ Finance committee
- ~ Personnel committee
- ~ Learning committee
- ~ Facilities committee
- ~ College status committee
- ~ Standing committees

“ Hold what is best for the children at the heart of all change
Tavistock Church Schools Federation ”

“ All our governors undertook roles and responsibilities training together
Moorsway Federation ”

“ The difficulty of reducing the number of governors was not as great as anticipated. Some have become associate governors and others have become helpers in the school
Tavistock Church Schools Federation ”

It is very timely for all governing bodies to ask the questions:

- Where do we see our school in five years time?
- Do we have a succession plan in place for our headteacher?
- How could a formal partnership arrangement deliver better opportunities and outcomes for our pupils and staff and better ???

Devon's publications on federation can be accessed via the website: www.devon.gov.uk/governors

This guidance, in the format of frequently asked questions (FAQs), is designed to enhance the practice of federated governing bodies.

Our thanks go to the Federated Governing Bodies in Devon and to the Devon Federation Network who contributed to the guidance notes.

What enabled the development of your federated governing body?

Governors said:

- Strong governors, who are very clear on their strategic role
- Clarity of vision and values
- Governors' integrity and foresight in securing a stable future
- Willingness to listen and to seek and take advice
- Co-ordinate an 'away-day' style of session to discuss and agree the vision and values. Consider using an external facilitator
- Ensure you listen to parents through a Parent Forum or similar channels
- Quality of leadership from the chair of governors is essential
- In an all-through environment ensure an equitable mix of governors with experience of each phase (primary and secondary)
- A governing body with an ethos of keeping themselves well informed, up-to-date and who are regular attendees on training events
- Short, sharp, strategic meetings of two hours maximum

- Using maximum delegation for effectiveness and time management
- Careful thought went into the formation of the governing body, size and structure
- Run a second 'away-day' style of session to discuss and agree the structure of the governing body and governor roles and responsibilities. Consider using an external facilitator
- Succession plan before you have even started!
- Governors need to be people with dedication, a commitment to wanting the best for all children in all the communities involved
- Federated governors need energy and personal drive
- The governors need an overall view of all the schools in the federation
- Governors with skills in business management, finance, personnel, health & safety and building this enabled them to become lead governors in these areas
- Clear communication, transparent and open culture
- Be prepared to read, reflect, discuss, reflect again and understand federation is not always an easy option
- Using the model job description for a federation Governor (on Governor Support website)
- Effective communications between committees or portfolio governors and the full governing body
- Understand that federation is a process and does not provide all the answers!

What were the blockers to developing an effective federated governing body?

Forming an effective federated governing body is a challenging task. Our thanks go to Devon's existing federations for their advice and honesty on the pitfalls to try and avoid!

The bullet points below contain useful hints of what hindered the process:

- Expecting the federation to solve all of the school's problems
- Expecting the federation to bring savings to an already difficult budget
- Reluctance to open the doors of communication

- Reluctance to step away from the norm and tradition
- People with bias and ambition
- Constantly looking to the past
- The culture of one head per school and one school for every village
- The level of governance required was very challenging
- The need for governors to get to know three schools offered challenges of time
- Our portfolio style of governance is effective but at times is not inclusive – have we created an inner circle?
- We spent too much time re-writing policies, attach a federation front page instead
- Governors not engaging with the other schools sufficiently
- Governors not understanding their role and not participating in training
- Parent governors perceiving their role was solely to be the voice of parental opinion.

“ Develop a vision for the whole federation whilst considering the individuality and needs of the member schools
Chumleigh Schools Federation ”

What have been the main benefits for children in federations?

Governors said:

- Our children have attended a residential together with all the schools
- Federated schools drama production
- Shared worship
- Shared sports days
- Shared arts week
- Combined curriculum events
- Shared after-school clubs and extended services activities
- Shared federation transition sessions and events at both Foundation and Year 6
- We now share transport to attend events
- We share equipment and books across the schools.

What have been the main benefits for staff in federations?

Both children and staff need to benefit from being part of a federation. Below are examples of immediate gains from working in a federation.

- Cascading the learning from training courses to all staff in all the schools
- Shared resources and lesson planning
- We share our ICT support person, MFL teacher and caretaker
- Shared subject leadership (e.g. SENCOs)
- Shared TAs
- Shared Administrators
- Teachers have opportunities to teach in different schools across the federation to disseminate good practice and for personal career development
- Shared INSET and ICT training
- We have been able to negotiate federation discounts
- Effective procurement
- Using staff and services across phase
- Staff in small schools now have colleagues working with the same age groups to share and exchange

What changes to staffing have fostered an effective federation and federated governing body?

Federations have developed and utilised staff in a number of different ways; however, the points below are vital for success:

- An exceptional clerk
- An effective and respected senior leader in each school
- A senior level business development manager whose role includes finance, premises, personnel and health and safety and who attends the appropriate committees
- Our three administrators each have an individual area of responsibility for personnel, finance, premises with health and safety and attend the appropriate committees.

“ Our children and staff have benefited from being part of a larger whole – the federation!
Chair of West Exmoor Federation ”

How does the federated governing body continue to engage with parents and the community?

After the initial consultation period, established federated governing bodies are clear about the importance of maintaining a constant flow of information to parents and the community. In addition, there is a need for ensuring a forum where parents can discuss, be listened to and feel they are participants in the federation.

- Organising parent and community forums in each school
- Federated school website – e.g. www.kingsbridgearea.com
- Text, email and Twitter
- Federated governor newsletters
- Through a governor with a parent and community portfolio
- Through the Partnership Boards
- Holding joint activities which can also be used for consultation and feedback (e.g. use a graffiti wall)
- Having 'give us your feedback' postcards and/or a suggestions box
- Arranging federation learning walks
- A federation party at a central venue
- Sports and drama activities for the parents and community to attend
- Federated family learning workshops.

How did you use the expertise of your former governors?

Federation will see an inevitable reduction in the number of governors required on the new federated governing body. This has been viewed as an obstacle, however established federations have found innovative ways of retaining ex- governors. Some governors have been very happy to retire after years of service, confident to leave the federation in safe hands. Below, federations have shared some solutions to this issue:

- Enough of our governors were willing to resign and not be part of the federated governing body
- Appoint associate members where individuals hold specific skills across the federation
- Appoint ex-governors as members of the ethos committee

“ We constantly asked ourselves “How will our children's education benefit from this change?”
First Federation ”

- Some parent governors were happy to join the parents association committee
- Devon Association of Governors (DAG) is interested in experienced governors becoming governor mentors
- Devon Governor Support can nominate experienced and committed governors to schools with governor vacancies.

What support was helpful in developing your federated governing body?

Existing federation governors stated the following:

- Attending the DCC federation network meetings
- Governors learning from and linking with other federations and visits during 'Federation Open Week'
- The services and experience of the Governor Support Team
- The advice and experience of a range of Local Authority Officers in finance, HR, curriculum
- Executive Heads training programme
- Training and networking courses for governors
- Using an external facilitator to ensure agreement and decisions for the way forward.

What support will be available in the future?

Governors said:

To date, officers from Devon County Council have provided a comprehensive package of advice, guidance, training and officer support at meetings.

The learning from the existing federations is documented in a number of papers and guidance leaflets which are available on the federation pages of the Governor Support website. In addition there are examples of documents from a number of federations, e.g. terms of reference for committees and model job descriptions.

Devon County Council will continue to organise regular Federation Network meetings. There is an exchange of good practice at these sessions within a climate of peer to peer support.