

***Hexham Middle School
and
Queen Elizabeth High School
Federation***

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Booklet Two

Changing to a Hard Governance Federation – Questions & Answers

Compiled from generally available official DCSF publications

What to do next

Read the document entitled **Booklet One** *Changing to a Hard Governance Federation – A Rationale* which provides an overview of the issues faced by the schools, the proposal being put forward, the implications of these proposals, and details of the timeline for consultation and what happens next. You may wish to return the response form in this booklet on pages 13 and 14 and/or attend one of the consultation meetings where we will listen to your views.

You may also want to read this document entitled **Booklet Two** *Questions and Answers* which provides a series of commonly asked questions together with answers which have been collated from the Department of Children, Schools and Families sources. This booklet can be obtained from any of the schools or from the website www.qehs.net/federation.

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1: WHO CAN BE IN A HARD GOVERNANCE FEDERATION

1.1 Can different categories of schools join the same federation?

Yes, the Regulations set out the rules concerning governing bodies in mixed federations.

1.2 Will FE colleges be able to join federations?

At present they cannot join any governance federations, though many FE colleges do collaborate with schools in Education Improvement Partnerships, particularly to provide broad 14-19 curriculum options to students. Provisions in the current Education Bill would allow FE colleges to form joint strategic committees with schools – a form of soft governance.

1.3 Can HE institutions be part of, or work with federations?

They cannot be part of any governance federation, though they can work with schools in other forms of partnership. They could also become involved in foundations or trusts and support schools in that way.

1.4 Can schools who are already involved in a federation acquire a Trust?

Absolutely. Where schools are already collaborating, a Trust could build on those arrangements to formalise the agreement and make the relationship more sustainable.

1.5 Is it possible for one school in a hard governance federation to seek Trust status without disrupting the partnership?

We expect that schools in this position would all benefit from acquiring a shared Trust to underpin the partnership. It would not however be possible for one school within a hard federation to seek trust status without the others, as all schools in such a federation share a single governing body. In other collaborative arrangements, it would however be possible for one school only to seek Trust status

2: FEDERATION OR ALTERNATIVES

2.1 What are the main differences between hard governance federation and amalgamation?

If two schools amalgamate they become a single school. Within a hard governance federation each school retains its own identity, though they share a single governing body.

Amalgamation will often reduce schools' budgets as any payments made on a 'per school' rather than 'per pupil' basis would only be paid once. This may be a particular factor for small schools

In an amalgamation, it may be necessary for the head and some other staff to reapply for posts in the new school – there would be only one head teacher, whereas schools in a federation may each have their own head.

2.2 What may influence schools in a decision whether to amalgamate or federate?

Schools would need to consider, and would wish to discuss with their local authority, which option best suits them. Federation may offer funding benefits, but in some cases amalgamation may offer more flexibility in the deployment of staff and other resources.

2.3 Should we establish a soft governance federation or an Education Improvement Partnership first as a stepping stone to hard governance federation?

Schools may want to consider a range of factors. If you create another form of partnership first, this may help to create trust and foster collaborative working that will then make it easier to move into a hard governance federation. On the other hand, it might cause suspicion – and also a lack of commitment to the initial partnership – if people feel that partnership isn't really what you want to do, but is just a means to another end.

3 GOVERNANCE ISSUES

3.1 Will the Department for Children Schools and Families relax the stipulations on the composition of governing bodies?

The Federation Regulations still apply. If a federation wishes to establish governance structures that do not comply with the Regulations, it may apply for the Power to Innovate:

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/innovation-unit/pdf/PtIGuidance2004.pdf>

3.2 Are parent governors elected by the parents from their school only or from a 'collective electorate' across all of the schools in the federation?

The governing body should take a view on the number of parent governors from each school (at least one from each), and they would be elected by the parents from their own school only.

3.3 Can we establish a joint governing body before the (hard) federation is established?

No, the federation comes into being when the governing body is created: it is what defines a hard governance federation. You may wish to establish a joint committee to take forward planning and recruitment.

3.4 What is a shadow governing body, and what roles can it perform?

The term is sometimes used, but there is no legal entity of a 'shadow governing body'; the governing bodies of the schools about to federate remain in place until they are dissolved by the creation of the new federated governing body.

To assist the transition to the hard governance federation, the governing bodies of the schools may however (under Collaboration Regulations) create a joint committee and delegate powers to that committee to ensure a joint approach.

4: RECRUITMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND LEADERSHIP

4.2 Do staff change employers when their school federates?

No, staff in a community school would still be employed by the local authority.

4.3 If staff are to work in both schools, with whom should they have a contract?

There are two main options: either the staff member has separate contracts with each school, or they have a contract with one and that school has some formal agreement with the other. When staff are employed across more than one school, agreements between the schools should cover what happens if one of the schools leaves the federation.

5: MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES WITHIN SCHOOL OR FEDERATION

5.1 Can a secondary school give priority in its admissions criteria to pupils who have attended a primary school that is part of the same federation?

An admissions authority could propose this in its annual consultation on admissions criteria for individual schools. We are not aware of any federations where this applies, but the number of primary-secondary federations is limited at present.

5.2 Could the sibling criteria in admissions be applied across schools in a federation, ie a pupil with a sibling in federated school X receiving priority for admission to federated school Y nearby?

It is not impossible for admissions arrangements – subject to consultation – to include such criteria, but we are not aware of any schools using such criteria.

5.3 What happens if a pupil is excluded from one school in a federation? Could they be placed in another school in the same federation?

Yes, though federated, the schools remain separate entities so a pupil could not be turned away by one school because he or she had been excluded from another school in the same federation

5.4 Will examination and key stage assessment results still have to be published for individual schools in a hard governance federation?

Yes, the schools remain separate entities so their individual results will be shown. We are considering how we might show federation results also, but this would be as well as, not instead of individual schools' results.

5.5 Will schools in a federation be inspected jointly or separately?

They will be subject to separate inspection reports, and will complete separate Self Evaluation Forms. Schools may however wish to ask Ofsted to inspect both or all schools in a federation around the same time.

5.6 Can we change the name of the school and/or give all the schools in the federation the same name?

The procedures for changing the name of a school in a federation are the same as for changing the name of any school. The only formal process is changing the instrument of government. The local authority has to approve that, but should only seek changes if it believes that the new name is misleading.

Schools will however wish to take the views of pupils and parents. It is possible for schools in a federation to have the same name, or similar names reflecting the federation's identity, but this is not essential and most existing federations have retained individual names for the schools.

Irrespective of the names of the schools, you may wish to create a federation identity and use this – as well as school names – in school publications, websites and marketing materials.

There are no plans to change the name of either school.

5.7 Can federated schools be treated as one entity in terms of licences with IT suppliers?

Schools would have to discuss this with their suppliers as contractual terms may vary.

6: SOURCES OF INFORMATION, FUNDING QUESTION

6.1 Where can we find examples of service level agreements between schools?

On our Innovation Unit website

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/innovation-unit/collaboration/federations/federations_inpractice/?version=1

6.2 How can I contact schools that are in hard federations or seeking to establish them?

You can find details of some existing federations (of different types) on this website at

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/innovation-unit/collaboration/federations/federations_evaluation/?version=1

You may also wish to consider joining the Partnet network. For more information, contact us at:

EIPS.Mailbox@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

DfES will from time to time run seminars or visits to federations and details will appear on this website, and be circulated through Partnet.

Where can I find a glossary of terms?

A glossary of terms can be found on the DCSF website at:

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolorg/glossary-of-terms.cfm>