

Proposed Federation between Harting Church of England Primary School And Stedham Community School



Federation Consultation Document

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[Background](#)

There has been considerable discussions over the future of small rural schools over the past 6 years relating to Academisation and latterly Federation, based on assumptions around finance, the ability to hire staff and curriculum coverage. This speculation has caused considerable workload for school staff and Governors. On close analysis the basic drive was to amalgamate schools into larger groupings despite many reviews proving the worth of small rural schools to communities, children and provided choice to parents and carers.

West Sussex Education Department, the Local Authority, produced a map for schools in 2017 and as part of their review process in the second quarter of 2019 entered into a closure consultation process for Stedham Community Primary School (SPS). This coincided with the resignation of the headteacher. If however SPS entered into a Hard Federation with one or more other schools or joined an Academy Trust the process could cease. For this reason the Governors of SPS sought to enter into an ongoing relationship with a similarly minded Primary School preferably within a reasonable distance of SPS.

Through the auspices of the Rother Valley Group an interim Head was appointed and a series of discussions held with the schools of the Rother Valley Group. Harting CofE Primary School (HPS) proved to be the preferred option in terms of readiness to move forward and a school with the same approach to a Hard Federation – children first and the desire to maintain the individuality and operational management of the schools, the Headships and staffing, while developing all possible synergies.

The establishment of a Soft Federation in first quarter 2020 received the support of the Rother Valley Group, the Local Authority and the Diocese of Chichester. This support was essential as HPS is a Church of England Voluntary Controlled school and the Diocese was most helpful. The support from the Education Department of the Diocese of Chichester addressing the Governance criteria that had to be met was key to the progress. (There is a plethora of legislation that has been built up since 2012 on this process and the criteria that has to be satisfied). This Soft Federation met with the unanimous agreed of both Governing Bodies and Staff, both seeing the advantages for children and Staff. This collaboration forming the basis of the proposed Hard Federation.

The formation of the Soft Federation and the outline of a plan to move to a Hard Federation enabled the Local Authority to cease the SPS closure consultation process.

The Governing Bodies formed a working Group, the Joint Strategic Development Group (JSDC) to oversee the process for moving from a Soft to a Hard Federation. The JSDC is a balanced committee of Governors from both schools that has co-opted other members of the schools Governing Bodies to enable the process to progress smoothly.

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What is a Hard Federation?

A Hard Federation is a formal agreement between two or more schools to work together on a permanent basis. The partnership of the two schools is strategically led by a single Governing Body. However, each of the schools in the federation receives their own school budget, receive separate Ofsted inspection reports and has separately published results.

HPS would remain a Voluntary Controlled Church of England School and SPS would remain a Community School, both would remain local authority maintained schools.

It is possible for a Hard Federation to be dissolved if the Governing Body decides it is in the interest of the children to do so.

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Rationale for Federation

Ofsted claims that federation is an effective way of raising standards. The Impact of Federations report published in 2011 found improved outcomes in all 29 of the federations visited as part of the study, covering 61 schools, with effective leadership the single most important factor.

The report highlighted three key reasons for federating cited by school leaders: helping a struggling school, strengthening education in the wider community, and protecting small schools.

It is the last item that should concern the communities of Stedham and Harting. The protection is built on the success and the ability to improve the outcomes for children by implementing systems that single small schools cannot afford:-

- Appointing subject leaders to drive standards
 - Curriculum coverage and lesson planning
 - Assessment process and practice
 - Moderation of work and assessment
 - Intervention techniques
- Shared Continuous Professional Development of all staff
 - Coverage while staff education is undertaken
 - Sharing of learning at staff meetings and Inset days
- Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) support
 - Identification, interventions and support for children and families
- Opportunities for children to engage in shared experiences
 - Forest schools
 - Sport – team and solo sports
 - Residential
 - Trips to educational institutions
- Staff progression in a larger employment pool
 - Career progression and staff retention
- Greater recruitment power in a 'larger' school
 - Career progression and staff retention
- Potential cost savings in shared or 'once only' work and procurement
 - Funds moved to educational needs

Undoubtedly Federations can be effective but it is just a structure, what really counts are the people that operate, manage and support that structure. That is where the staff and governors have the duty to ensure that the above benefits are achieved and maintained.

Additional reading from the National College of School Leadership:

<https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7054/1/download%3fid=17200&filename=hard-federations-of-small-primary-schools.pdf>

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Name of Federation

The name of the federation will be The Weald and Downland Schools Federation. This name will be used in formal discussions, but the individual school names will remain and be used in everyday life. The schools are defined by their villages and the association has to remain.

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Potential Impacts to the Schools of Federation

What are the risks for both schools?

There are risks involved in any change. None of the risks below are completely new. All have been tested already to some extent.

- The schools struggle to form a cohesive Governing Body covering the interests of both schools and maintaining the ethos and key attributes of one or both schools. NB. The aim is for both schools to have equal representation of staff and parents on the joint GB.
- The Hard Federation does not build strong local connections and does not meet community need.
- There is a difference of culture in the two schools which stifles or prevents effective co-operation.
- The leadership changes in the future and this changes the nature of the federation. NB this is also true if a new Headteacher is appointed to any type of school.
- The financial economies of scale do not materialise. NB This would not leave either school worse off than where it stands currently.
- One school receives more attention from the Governing Board than the other. NB It is the GB's job to ensure equality and this would be monitored by the Local Authority and Ofsted.

How similar or different are the two schools?

There are extremely strong similarities in the profiles of the schools, both are small rural schools with similar profile of pupils and families. While HPS is a Voluntary Controlled Church of England School and SPS is a Community School both schools share the same ethos in terms of the education and development of their children, a view of their websites will reinforce this observation.

Both schools have a strong sense of achievement as learning communities and the Federation aims to further enhance this.

What is the proposed structure of the single Governing Body?

The proposed size of the Governing Body of the Federation is 14 with co-Chairs representing each school. This is a manageable size and will follow the statutory requirements for the make-up of the Governing Body. The proposed new Governing Body would comprise:

- The 2 Head Teachers
- One Local Authority Governor (nominated by the LA and appointed by Governors) – this is a statutory requirement

- Two Parent Governors – elected by the parents of the schools in the Hard Federation. This is a statutory requirement.
- One Staff Governor – elected by the staff of the schools in the Hard Federation. This is a statutory requirement.
- 2 Foundation Governors – 1 ex-Officio
- 6 Co-opted Governors, appointed by the Governing Body, with the aim of:
 - Balancing the number of Governors associated with each school e.g. Staff and Parents. While:-
 - Addressing the skills and experience required of Governors and those required by the Governing Board to meet its obligations as identified via a skills audit.

The GB would establish Committees to address specific areas of the schools e.g. Resources (Finance and Premises), Curriculum and Personnel. The GB would reserve the right to appoint other Associate Members to contribute specifically on issues related to their area of expertise. The Governing Body would accord Associate Members limited voting rights on committees. Additional sub-committees would be established to address individual school needs e.g. Health and Safety.

A skills audit of the existing Governors would be carried out to help appoint the new Governing Body to ensure it is as strong as it can be and representative of both schools and both communities.

[What is the proposed Senior Leadership structure?](#)

There would be no change to the current management teams though synergies will be sought over time.

The structure of the leadership teams in the two schools is currently slightly different, based on the needs of each school. There is no proposal to change this.

[How would it affect staff?](#)

It is not anticipated that any staff members would experience significant change in their day to day work. Governors believe a new venture such as this is an attractive option for teachers and support staff looking for a new challenge while providing welcome professional development opportunities for the staff of each school. As a Federation, the schools could continue to recruit extremely well, attracting high-impact and talented staff with the added benefit of opportunities to work across both schools. The Federation also provides long-term stability in leadership and development of both schools. There will be no changes to the conditions of service for existing staff.

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Questions Answered

Is there a risk that the Church of England emphasis of Harting will affect the secular nature of Stedham? And vice versa?

No. Both schools will maintain their individuality and religious or secular character. The Instrument of Governance (IoG) reinforces this aspect of the Hard Federation.

Is there a risk that one of the schools would lose out in this arrangement?

No. The aim of the HF is for the schools to work together in a full and equal partnership to continue to grow stronger together. The structure of the HF will enable staff members' time and the benefits delivered by the HF to be appropriately and fairly shared across both schools. The single combined Governing Body would ensure each school's interests were *fully* and *equally* represented and would be better placed to serve the strategic development of both schools. It is proposed that there will be equal parent and staff representation on the Governing Body from each of the two schools.

Would the schools keep their name and identity?

Yes. Each school will keep its own name and identity but there will be a separate name for the Federation.

Would the uniform policy remain the same?

Yes. Both schools will maintain their own policy regarding uniform.

Would the admissions arrangements remain the same?

Yes. West Sussex's admissions policy will continue to apply to both schools and is on our websites.

Would pupils be registered to the Federation or a single school?

Pupils will be on roll at a single school.

Would parents and staff be equally represented from both schools on the Governing Body?

Yes. The proposal is for the Governing Body to be balanced across the 2 schools.

Would each school keep its own budget?

Yes. Each school will receive its own funding, manage separate budgets and keep

separate records of its accounts. The two schools will share the costs or combine purchasing if this means that they will be able to get better value for money.

Would the amount each school receives be affected by the Federation?

No. All school budgets are worked out using a formula based on pupil numbers for the individual school.

Would the Federation combine their SATs results?

No. Results will continue to be attributed to the individual schools.

Would the Federation be inspected by Ofsted?

Yes and No. Each school will have separate Ofsted inspections and be graded separately, as they are now. The single Governing Board would be involved with each school.

Would one school take the lead over the other?

No. The schools will continue to collaborate and work together as equal partners. The single Governing Body will have balanced representation across the two schools.

Would the Federation meet the different needs of the two communities?

Yes. As both schools will have their own Head, key staff and safeguarding team, each school's differing needs would be separately met. There would continue to be separate parent, pupil and staff voice.

Question from Consultation

Q. From the information you have provided about the impact of federation, the benefits appear to be rather theoretical. Do you have specific goals and milestones that you will be tracking?

A. We know from studies done across the country that federation tends to give rise to improved performance levels across the board. The sharing of knowledge and best practice is largely the basis for these types of improvements. This is a learning process for everyone and going forward, we will be keen to hear from pupils and parents about what's working well/less well. On the financial side, the schools have already saved money through shared procurement and other cost-savings – all thanks to our joint bursar, Nicky!

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If I have questions or wish to comment on the proposal, what do I do?

There will be multiple ways for parents to ask questions or put your views to the Governing Bodies:

1. There will be a Zoom meetings for all parents and carers on the 11th, primarily for the Harting school community, the 12th, primarily for the Stedham school community, and 13th of May as a general meeting all at 08:00 pm where there will be representation from the school leadership team and the Governing Body.
 - Full details on how to attend the meetings are on the schools' websites.
2. If you would like to make a representation in writing to the Governing Bodies, please submit it to the Offices of either school, via email or post or hand in, addressed to the Chair of Governors. All submissions should include your name and relationship to the schools.

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Appendix I – Instrument of Government

INSTRUMENT OF GOVERNMENT

1. The name of the federation is The Weald and Downland Schools Federation.
2. The names and categories of the schools in the federation are:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Category</u>
Harting Church of England Primary School	Voluntary Controlled
Stedham Primary School	Community

3. The name of the governing body is “The Governing Body of The Harting and Stedham Federation”
4. The Governing Body shall consist of:
 - a. Two parent governors
 - b. One local authority governor
 - c. Two foundation governors (including one ex-officio governor)
 - d. Two headteachers (one from each of the schools in the Federation)
 - e. One staff governor
 - f. Six co-opted governors
5. The total number of governors is fourteen.
6. The Diocesan Board of Education shall appoint one of the foundation governors on the recommendation of the Parochial Church Council of the united benefice of Harting with Elsted and Treyford cum Didling acting jointly.
7. (a) The holder of the following office shall be a foundation governor ex-officio: the Incumbent or Priest-in-Charge of the united benefice of Harting with Elsted and Treyford cum Didling acting jointly.
(b) The Archdeacon of the Archdeaconry in which Harting Church of England Primary School is situated, shall appoint a foundation governor to act in the place of the ex-officio foundation governor whose governorship derives from the office named in (a) above, in the event that the ex-officio foundation governor is unable or unwilling to act as a foundation governor, or there is a vacancy in the office by virtue of which the governorship exists, or has been removed from office under regulation 21 of the Regulations.
8. The Archdeacon of the Archdeaconry in which Harting Church of England Primary is situated may request the removal of any ex-officio foundation governor and to appoint a substitute governor.
9. There is a Trust relating to Harting Church of England Primary School of which the

trustees are the Rector and the two Church Wardens of the Parish of the united benefice of Harting with Elsted and Treyford cum Didling.

10. Recognising its historic foundation, Harting Church of England Primary School will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Church at parish and diocesan level.
11. Harting Church of England Primary School aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers all pupils.
12. Stedham Primary School aims to serve its community by maintaining an education of the highest quality independent of a religious faith or character. Stedham Primary School shares and recognises many of the same values as Harting Church of England Primary School but is itself a secular school and will remain so.
13. Both of the two schools in the Federation (Harting Church of England Primary School and Stedham Primary School) will aim to maintain, develop and respect the unique character of each school within its community, while working in partnership with the other school in order to provide the highest quality of education for all its pupils.
14. This instrument of government comes into effect on 1st September 2021.
15. This instrument was made by order of West Sussex County Council acting as the Local Authority on [DATE].
16. A copy of the instrument must be supplied to every member of the governing body (and the head teacher if not a governor), any trustees and to the appropriate religious body.

Signed by an Authorised Signatory of WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL.

Authorised Signatory

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