

**BOWES HUTCHINSON'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND (COFE) VOLUNTARY AIDED (VA) PRIMARY SCHOOL - PROPOSAL TO FEDERATE WITH COTHERSTONE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**SUPPORTING LETTER FROM MR P D NICHOLLS CHAIR OF GOVERNORS**

Simone Bennett  
Deputy Diocesan Director of Education and SIAMS Manager  
Diocese of Leeds  
17-19 York Place  
LEEDS  
LS1 2EX

Copy to:  
Darren Dudman  
Senior Adviser

Via email

23 October 2020

Dear Simone,

**Introduction**

1. The Governing Body of Bowes Hutchinson's C of E Aided Primary School propose to enter into a federation with the Governing Body of Cotherstone Primary School.

2. This subject was discussed and agreed after votes at the full Governing Body meetings of Bowes Hutchinson's School on 20 May 2020 and Cotherstone School on 9 June 2020. Both meetings took place using MS Teams and were quorate. The Consultative Document, Q&A brief and this Supporting letter from the COG were approved by the respective Governing Bodies on 14 October 2020. Diocesan approval to our proposal was given verbally on 22 October.

**Background**

3. Prior to the desire to federate, both schools agreed to an arrangement where they would be subject to a shared headship. Cotherstone school approached Bowes Hutchinson's School on 22 May 2019 because their headteacher had elected to take early retirement and the post was not to be replaced. The optimum solution was for Mrs Chris Matthewman to assume headteacher responsibilities at both schools from 1 September 2019. This was following agreement by both Governing Bodies and agreement from parents and carers after formal consultation had taken place.

4. Both schools are similar in terms of geography, size, ethos, structure, and logistics. More importantly the environment for teaching and learning to ensure our

pupils receive the best possible start during their formative years is a positive and constructive one.

5. It was agreed that a termly report as to progress would be given to the Governing Bodies and feedback from parents and carers would also be sought during the academic year. Notwithstanding the unprecedented events because of the pandemic COVID-19, the end of year report was given to the Governing Bodies at their meetings as indicated at paragraph 2.

6. Briefly the Shared headship arrangements have resulted in the following advantages:

- Staff have co-partners to work with and we have used staff meetings, training, and social gatherings (when we could) to build relationships and work together.
- We are benefiting from shared expertise, creative group working and have shared many resources, material, and digital
- The whole staff have benefitted enormously from working together and this in turn improves the educational offer and benefits the children and communities that we work with.
- Parents from both schools have been encouraging and supportive and we are pleasantly surprised at how well they have responded to this necessary change.

7. Financial savings have accrued from the shared headship arrangements:

- Shared access to subscriptions for educational and organizational websites
- A reduction in charges from Education Durham
- Substantial reduction in headteacher salary costs
- Reduction in charges for some shared training
- Sharing of resources, including transport and educational – thus financial saving in purchasing of same.
- Shared visits and trips for children

8. Much has been achieved in what has only been seven months before the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on 20 March 2020.

### **The case for Federation**

9. A federation is defined in law as two or more schools operating under the governance of a single governing body. The creation and membership of a federation is not just about structural change, however. It is also about a different mindset where the governors and school leaders share a commitment to improving the outcomes and life chances for all children across the federation, as opposed to just a single school, through a school-led system of raising standards and driving improvement.

10. Successful federation is usually preceded by a period of collaborative working between schools. In our case this has been through a shared headship. This has allowed the schools to develop a shared vision and appreciate the benefits of partnership working. Ultimately federation requires the commitment of all

parties; governors need to agree it is the best way forward and staff, parents/carers and pupils will want to understand the benefits. A strong partnership allows all of these things to develop over time.

11. Federation will allow children, staff, and the wider community to benefit from the efficiencies already achieved during the period of shared headship plus:

- Cost savings and efficiencies including the sharing of administrative functions, savings on maintenance contracts, purchasing and supplies.
- Improved opportunities for children, including a wider and richer curriculum offering often including cross-federation events in arts, sports, music etc.
- Improved attainment and greater enjoyment of school.
- Improved opportunities for staff with the sharing of good practice and expertise, joint planning and assessment, richer professional development and training, better recruitment and retention through improved career progression and opportunities to work in a range of contexts.
- Better leadership development and talent management through talent spotting and the development and support of future leaders, with the opportunity to work across the federation and be mentored by experienced leaders.
- Support through shared leadership and working arrangements leading to improvements in teaching and learning outcomes for children
- Strengthened governance, through shared governance arrangements leading to significant improvements.

12. Both schools in the federation will remain a separate entity, receive their own delegated budget, and be inspected separately.

13. One particular area of note is the school ethos. Our proposal federates a Voluntary Aided Church School with a Community School. The approach will be to retain the maintenance of a Church sponsored majority within the GB (foundation Governors outnumbering the other Governors by two) and retaining the school's Religious character, whilst ensuring that the ethos of the Community school remains unaffected.

14. In order to federate, both individual Governing Bodies (GBs) will be dissolved, and a federated GB established in their place.

It is proposed that the federated GB will consist of:

Total number of governors	<b>14</b>
Number of foundation governors	<b>8</b>
Number of parent governors	<b>2</b>
Headteacher	<b>1</b>
Number of staff governors	<b>2</b>
Number of LA governors	<b>1</b>

15. The proposed staffing arrangements are as follows:

- Shared Headteacher

- One Deputy Headteacher in each school responsible for day to day management
- Two Special Educational Needs & Disability Co-ordinators (SENDCO) across the federation
- No change to teaching assistant roles.
- The Admissions Authority for the proposed federation will be through the Local Authority - Durham County Council (Admissions Authority).

16. A consultation process of not less than six weeks will begin on Friday 23 October. During the consultation period written representations via email may be made to either Governing Body regarding the proposals at the following address/es:

Mrs C Matthewman Headteacher  
Bowes Hutchinson's C of E Aided Primary School/Cotherstone Primary School

The email address is [bhcfed@gmail.com](mailto:bhcfed@gmail.com)

17. We understand that this proposal will go to the following parties for consultation:

- The Secretary of State via [notifications@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:notifications@education.gsi.gov.uk)
- The relevant Local Authority – Durham County Council.
- The Headteacher.
- The Diocese of Leeds – Director of Education
- Foundation Governors
- Trustee Governors of any trust relating to the school.
- The PCC – St Giles Church PCC.
- All staff paid to work in either of the schools.
- Every registered parent/carer of a registered pupil at either of the schools.
- Any other persons considered appropriate.

18. A copy of this proposal will also be made available for inspection at all reasonable times at each school. The documents will also be populated onto the School websites for ease of communication. The proposed date to begin the federation is 11 January 2021.

19. We understand that the Secretary of State, Local Authority, and the Diocese of Leeds must be notified of the outcome of this proposal within 7 days of a decision being made.

20. Thank you once again for your kind support and Diocesan approval of our documentation in our desire to successfully federate with Cotherstone Primary School.

Yours sincerely,

*P D Nicholls*  
Peter David Nicholls  
Chair of Governors