

# Consultation Proposal for Federation of



**Otterburn First School**



**West Woodburn First School**

## To form the **River Rede Federation**

Dear School Community,

As you are aware the provision of education in the west of Northumberland has been under consultation by the local authority. One outcome of the consultation is for the local authority to support small schools with a 'resilience package'. As part of this package there is a strong emphasis on the need for small rural schools to work much closer together to strengthen the infrastructure and continue to enhance school improvement.

The governing bodies of Otterburn First School and West Woodburn First School would like to build on their existing successful links by establishing a formal federation across the two schools. This will allow for strategic investment in a forward thinking federation that has the ability to provide the highest of standards across all levels of school life.

The Governing Bodies of both schools have decided to initiate a formal consultation to seek the views of everyone that has an interest in our schools. We would like to invite you to share your views on our proposed federation. This consultation will be open for seven weeks from Friday, 11th January 2019.

We believe that federation is the key to future sustainability, not only in maintaining our schools, but helping us grow them and improve them for our children today and in years to come.

### **Our Aim**

We are very proud of our schools but always strive to do better. Our key aim is to ensure that our children will have access to successful, well-run schools that provide an excellent, well-rounded education, working in partnership with parents/carers and the wider community. We want to encourage our children to have aspirations that lead to great achievements as they learn and grow in a caring, safe and friendly community of schools.

Both schools currently have a strong ethos of care, good behaviour, creativity and hard work. The strong ethos and deep sense of community that exists within each of our schools are all things that we wish to maintain, encourage and develop further.

We would like to formalise the working relationship that has been forged between the schools by establishing a federation. We look forward to entering into a consultation period where we can tell you more about our proposals and find out your views.

### **What is a 'federation'?**

A federation is where two or more schools work very closely together under one governing body. Each school remains legally separate and parents/carers and pupils should see little change. Federation is not a merger or a conversion to an academy; it represents a stable, long term commitment to working in partnership to the benefit of children in the schools.

Federation means that schools:

- continue to be registered separately with Ofsted, retain their existing judgments and continue to be maintained by the local authority.
- continue to have their own separate budget.
- have a single governing body that would set the strategic direction across the schools and ensure educational and financial sustainability and accountability.

### **Admissions**

The current admissions processes would be retained. The admissions authority for Otterburn First School and West Woodburn First School would continue to be Northumberland County Council.

### **Our Proposal**

The proposal is to federate Otterburn First School and West Woodburn First School starting on **1st April 2019**.

By working collaboratively the schools will be able to develop consistent educational approaches and share skills, expertise and resources across the school communities. Should the federation go ahead, it will be led by Tina Henderson as Executive Head Teacher.

### **What does a federation offer?**

We are passionate about ensuring the very best education for the children in our communities. We are aware of the vulnerability of rural schools which operate as a single entity and recognise this proposed model as being mutually supportive and one which provides long term stability. It brings an opportunity to achieve economies of scale to secure financial stability and sustainability of our schools into the future. Federation has been fully discussed with governors and the Local Authority and we feel it is the best way to achieve our goals and secure a supportive future for the schools.

### **The benefits and opportunities of federating**

There are greatly improved opportunities for children and staff at all schools to interact, learn from each other and share best practice.

### **For children:**

- Children within the federation will continue to receive the highest quality teaching and learning, enriched by collaborative working and enhanced resources across the schools.

- Stability and continuity with increased opportunity to meet and work with other children in a wider community.
- Greater opportunities to socialise with a greater number of children.
- Greater opportunities to experience educational activities in year groups/key stages.

#### **For parents/carers and communities:**

- It strengthens the ability of our schools to develop and improve while maximising our ability to cope with changes in educational policy, enabling us to continue to provide excellent education in our villages.
- It extends the opportunities available to children and their families by creating a long term, stable school structure.
- Schools will be able manage tiny cohorts more effectively.

#### **For staff:**

- Leadership will be secured for the future and staff development opportunities will enable our schools to retain valued staff.
- Shared staff meetings and combined staff training have the effect of widening the circle of peers that our staff can call upon for fresh and creative ideas and support.
- Shared ideas and resources help staff avoid needless duplication of effort and materials and will allow for more time to be devoted to teaching and learning.
- Increased joint working enables us to develop our subject leads across the schools as well as giving us an opportunity to jointly develop and plan our school curriculum to the benefit of all our pupils.

#### **For governors:**

- A single governing body will be formed to replace the existing governing bodies. This new single group of governors will be able to benefit from shared experience and good practice.
- The membership of the governing body will be skills based.

#### **Possible negatives in forming the federation:**

- Drop in pupil numbers through lack of parental support.
- Parental concerns in relation to minimal shared education should the need arise in the future.
- Parental concerns in relation to the transportation between schools should the need arise in the future.
- Fear of either school losing its identity.

#### **The governing body**

The role of the federated governing body will be to:

- Ensure that the character of each school is maintained whilst moving forward as one.
- Define a shared vision and strategic direction for the schools that places the children at its heart.
- Ensure due diligence and financial probity; honest and effective financial management.
- Hold the Executive Head Teacher to account for the educational performance of the schools.

#### **Staffing**

A new single governing body would be formed as required by the School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2012, to take overall responsibility for the schools within the federation.

Staff will continue with their current terms and conditions of employment. New Staff employed by the governing body would be employed by the Federation.

### **The Governing Body**

The proposed new federated governing body would comprise 10 members. This would comprise:

- 2 Parent governors (one from each school - elected by the parents of all schools)
- 1 Executive Head Teacher
- 1 Staff governor (elected by the staff of all schools)
- 1 Local Authority governor
- 5 Co-opted governor

### **Federation Consultation Process**

The governors of all the schools have set up a consultation process to seek the views of parents, staff, community, the local authority and other key stakeholders. The consultation process will last seven weeks (incorporating half term week), starting on Friday, 11th January 2019.

Governors welcome your views and comments and invite you to any of the following meetings, regardless of which is your child's school:

<b>Day</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>
Tuesday	22nd January 2019	6:00pm	West Woodburn First
Wednesday	23rd January 2019	6:00pm	Otterburn First

If you are unable to attend one of these meetings, and would like to discuss this proposal, informal group sessions will be arranged, depending on demand. Please contact your school to make an appointment in the usual manner.

### **How do I submit my views?**

Comments and views must be received no later than 9:00am on Monday, 4th March 2019. Written responses should be addressed to the **Clerk to the Governing Body** of your school - **Mrs M Arksey**.

Alternatively, you may use the appropriate email address:

[admin@westwoodburn.northumberland.sch.uk](mailto:admin@westwoodburn.northumberland.sch.uk) or [admin@otterburn.northumberland.sch.uk](mailto:admin@otterburn.northumberland.sch.uk)

### **When will a decision be made?**

Following the consultation period the two Governing Bodies will consider the views and comments before meeting to make a final decision on this proposal. The governing body from each school will make its own decision at extraordinary meetings held at the same time.

We look forward to hearing from you and will, of course, keep you fully informed regarding our final decision by.

Yours sincerely,

**Margaret Tait**  
Chair of Governors  
Otterburn First School

**Tina Henderson**  
Head Teacher

**Tony Gibson**  
Governor  
West Woodburn First School