

# Consultation Document

## Proposed Federation of Hamsterley, Rookhope, St John's Chapel and Wearhead Primary Schools from 1 September 2023

This document outlines the proposal to federate Hamsterley, Rookhope, St John's Chapel and Wearhead Primary Schools in order to strengthen all schools involved.

Rookhope, St John's Chapel and Wearhead Schools successfully federated in January 2021 to form the Upper Durham Dales Federation, and now Hamsterley Primary School have expressed an interest in joining this Federation. We wish to keep our schools as strong, independent community schools and believe federating is the best way to achieve this. Please read the document below carefully and we welcome any feedback.

### **What is Federation?**

A federation is a governance structure whereby two or more schools share a single Governing Body under Section 24 of the Education Act 2002. Federations allow schools to share best practice, facilities, expertise and to learn from the strengths of excellent teaching in different phases to enable them to raise standards. A shared Governing Body provides an effective and accountable mechanism for schools to pool resources and staff, release strategic capacity in the senior management team, and gain economies of scale and efficiencies.

Working together in a federation can enable those schools in it to co-ordinate either curriculum, teaching or learning strategies relevant to specific communities and localities and can also facilitate inclusion and diversity. The ability to federate under a single Governing Body could also benefit small schools or schools in more isolated rural areas, opening up opportunities to share management and Governing Body responsibility and curriculum expertise.

### **So what would be different if our primary schools federated?**

- The main difference would be that all schools would have one shared Governing Body containing representatives from all schools - the separate Governing Bodies would be dissolved and replaced by a single, newly appointed Governing Body with responsibility for all schools. This means that the current Upper Durham Dales Federation would be dissolved, along with the Governing Body of Hamsterley Primary School and replaced with one single Governing Body for the new Federation. Further details of the composition of the Governing Body are set out later in this document.
- The federation would need to have a name as it is a separate legally constituted corporate board.
- The new Governing Body would be responsible for all school budgets and would determine how expenditure could be most effectively used across the federation.
- There would be a single shared senior leadership structure – the current Executive Headteacher will lead all schools, with the support of the Upper Durham Dales Federation's Executive Deputy Headteacher and the Deputy Headteacher of Hamsterley Primary School. .
- Any staff appointed after the federation has formed would be employed by the federation, rather than an individual school.
- Closer working between schools would provide opportunities for career progression and professional opportunities.

## What would remain the same?

- Each school would retain its own identity and name, would retain its own budget, and would be inspected separately by OFSTED. It is not a merger of schools.
- Admission arrangements would remain the same and current arrangements for children to be taught at each site would continue, but with further opportunities for joint activities that would benefit all children.
- Although it is possible to undo a federation, it would be intended that a federation between these schools would be long-lasting, thus bringing certainty and commitment to all schools.
- Children would continue to be taught in their school although some activities may be shared as at present, e.g. family services, professional services, out of school provision, provision for children with special educational needs or disabilities. The arrangement for Wearhead and Rookhope pupils to work with their peers at St John's Chapel for part of the week is expected to continue (it is unlikely that Hamsterley pupils will join this arrangement on a regular basis due to the distance between the two sites).
- Each school would continue to receive its own budget and be subject to all current funding protocols, reporting mechanisms and financial regulations.
- Existing members of staff would remain employed by Durham County Council on the same contract of employment.

## What are the benefits of federation?

### For Children & Families:

- They would benefit from a greater variety of teaching expertise, resources, facilities and additional specialist provision which would be shared across all schools.
- Their own school would continue, but with access to a larger range of opportunities.
- They would have increased opportunities to work with children from other schools, for example to participate in team sports with peers from the same year groups, improved group interaction and discussion across curriculum areas, more opportunities to develop social skills and friendship groups - all of which will enhance the pupils' readiness for transfer to secondary school
- Confidence that strong and proven successful leadership is being utilised and strengthened for the benefit of all the schools and their communities.
- In times of curriculum/school change, a strong federation would be much better placed to manage those changes thus enabling children to receive maximum benefit.
- The education provision for children in the Durham Dales will be retained, stabilised and secured for current and future generations.

## For Staff:

- Increased opportunities to observe, build upon, and share best practice through innovative and reflective approaches to education.
- Develop mutual support across schools.
- An enhanced Continued Professional Development (CPD) programme.
- Wider career opportunities and progression at all levels.
- Access to a greater range of resources and professional support.

## Federation Wide:

- Improved opportunities for the recruitment and retention of outstanding staff; maintaining and developing high quality teaching and learning.
- The development of a collaborative culture supported by Federation leadership, which builds on current strengths and is sustainable in a climate of ongoing change.
- A sustainable model with schools remaining at the heart of their local community.
- An opportunity to rationalise and reduce duplication across the four sites thereby increasing leadership capacity to further develop quality provision for our children

## Proposal

This document outlines the proposal made by the governing bodies of the Upper Durham Dales Federation and Hamsterley Primary School, that all schools enter a federation agreement from 1 September 2023.

The term “Federation” describes a formal and legal agreement by which a number of schools share governance arrangements. The key elements are:

- There will be a single governing body with strategic oversight of schools within the Federation, which would replace the current individual governing bodies.
- The membership of the governing body of a federation must contain as a minimum the headteacher of the Federation; one staff governor; one LA governor and a maximum of two parent governors from across all four schools.
- If the establishment of a School Federation is agreed following the consultation, the individual governing bodies of each school will be dissolved and replaced by a single governing body (the “Federation Governing Body”) which must be given a name.
- Each school retains its own name, budget, staff and remains in its own community.
- The Federation Governing Body can use budget and resources across the Federation to improve the educational outcomes for all pupils. An audit trail must be kept.

## Background and Drivers for Change

- Nationally the Government is committed to the collaboration agenda as it has the potential to improve school performance and raise standards of attainment by offering schools the opportunity to develop and share good practice and to access and share resources.
- Pupil numbers in the schools have fluctuated over time, as the table below illustrates:

Whole-school pupil numbers from October census data.				
	Hamsterley (2301)	Rookhope (2321)	St. John's Chapel (2322)	Wearhead (2324)
Oct. 2013	29	13	44	17
Oct. 2016	42	10	23	32
Oct. 2019	37	9	12	23
Oct 2022	36	9	19	18

- Current pupil numbers show that there are several year groups with only one child and some with no children:

Year	Hamsterley	Rookhope	St. John's Chapel	Wearhead
R	7	0	2	3
1	4	1	4	2
2	5	1	4	2
3	3	1	3	2
4	4	0	3	5
5	7	2	1	2
6	6	4	1	2
1 <sup>st</sup> preferences for Sept 2023	6	0	3	2

- A further key benefit is that schools have added security, using the resource efficiencies unlocked by collaboration to deliver provision more efficiently and so remain in their community serving the pupils and parents.
- Hamsterley Primary School has a temporary shared headteacher in place until 31 August 2023, her substantive post is at another local primary school however this arrangement cannot continue past this date. The Upper Durham Dales Federation has an Executive Headteacher who will take over as permanent Headteacher of Hamsterley Primary School. All current arrangements for pupil organisation will remain unchanged.

- The Governing Bodies jointly agree that this is a timely opportunity to consider Federation between the four schools as this would lead to enhanced opportunities and outcomes for learners whilst maintaining stability in these challenging financial times.
- We have therefore agreed to carry out a consultation to find out the views of the parents/carers, staff and other members of our communities about the proposal.

### Overview of Hamsterley, Rookhope, St John’s Chapel and Wearhead Primary Schools

The Schools are all located in rural communities in County Durham

Hamsterley provides education for 4-11 year olds

Rookhope, St John’s Chapel and Wearhead provide education for 2-11 year olds

Hamsterley currently shares a Headteacher with another Durham Primary School and the schools share some staff training, policies and procedures and good practice. The contextual backgrounds of the two schools are very different and this is therefore a limiting factor in terms of the schools working together collaboratively as a permanent arrangement.

Rookhope, St John’s Chapel and Wearhead federated as the Upper Durham Dales Federation in January 2021 and currently collaborate through:

- Shared Executive Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher
- Single Federation Governing Body
- Shared teaching for part of the week with different teaching groups
- Shared planning
- Shared policies and procedures
- Shared Subject Lead roles
- Shared SENDCO
- Joint visits/trips
- Shared staff training
- Sharing good practice
- Sharing resources

### Composition of the Governing Body

Below is a potential Governing Body structure for the Federation.

Type of Governor	Number
Parent Governor	2
Staff Governor	1
LA Governor	1
Co-opted Governor	7
Headteacher	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>

### What happens next?

We want to hear your thoughts and views on the proposed Federation. You are encouraged to come to a Consultation Meeting at your school where we would be able to explain the proposal in more detail and answer your questions. These are “drop in” sessions so you can arrive at any time.

At the end of the document a confidential Response Form is provided for you to share your thoughts. We really want and need to know what you think, so please share your thoughts with us.

**The consultation period for the Federation of Hamsterley, Rookhope, St John’s Chapel and Wearhead Primary Schools Primary Schools will be from Monday 6 March- Friday 28 April 2023.**

### **Consultation Drop in sessions**

Stakeholders are welcome to drop in to either of these sessions for further information. Alternatively, you are welcome to email any questions you may have to your child’s school and we will be in touch.

Venue	Date	Time
Hamsterley Primary	Monday 13 <sup>th</sup> March	3:30-5:00
St. John’s Chapel Primary	Thursday 16 <sup>th</sup> March	3:30-5:00

### **Proposed Timetable**

Monday 6 March 2023 Commence Statutory Consultation Period

Friday 28 April 2023 Closing of Statutory Consultation Period

WB 2 May 2023 Governing Bodies of all schools decide whether or not to enter a Federation Agreement

1 September 2023 (If a Federation Agreement is agreed)  
Federation of the 4 schools formally commences

### **How to Respond to the Consultation**

The Governing Bodies of the schools would really like to hear your views. If you have any comments please let the Governing Bodies know by the deadline, which is Friday 28 April 2023

#### **You can share your comments by:**

Completing the attached response form; writing a letter; or writing an email.

You may hand in the response form, or a letter, in an envelope marked FEDERATION RESPONSE to the School Office at your school. Or you may post your response form, or a letter, in an envelope marked FEDERATION RESPONSE to the respective schools.

Each Governing Body will individually meet to review consultation responses to decide whether their school will proceed or not with this proposal.

Both Governing Bodies aim to reach a decision by the end of May 2023.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Would the name of the schools change?**

No. Each school would keep its own name but there will be a separate over-arching name for the Federation and a single Governing Body.

### **Would school uniforms and logos change?**

No. Each school would keep its current uniform and logo and unique identity.

### **Who would lead the new Federation?**

Our proposal is for an overarching senior leadership structure working across all schools which the Federated Governing Body would strategically lead.

### **Who would lead each school?**

The current Executive headteacher of the Upper Durham Dales Federation, Mrs Hodgkinson, would lead all 4 schools.

### **Would there be any change to admission arrangements?**

No. The current admissions policy would continue to apply for each school.

### **Would school start and finish times change?**

In the short-term NO but they could be reviewed in the light of experience.

### **Would children be registered to the Federation or a single school?**

Children would be on roll at their individual school within the Federation.

### **Would the schools share a single budget?**

No. Each school would continue to receive its own funding, manage separate budgets and keep separate records of its accounts. However, there may be occasions when the schools share costs or combine purchasing if this means that they would be able to get better value for their money to continue to ensure good opportunities for children.

### **Would the Federation be inspected by OFSTED?**

No. Each school would have separate OFSTED inspections and be graded separately, as they are now.

### **Would there be any changes in the conditions of service for staff?**

No. There would be no changes and staff would continue to be employed on the same conditions of service as defined by Durham County Council contracts. This means that, for example, all employment rights and pension arrangements would stay as they are now.

### **Would staff work across all schools in the Federation?**



Existing members of staff would continue to work in the school as they presently do. However, there may be opportunities for staff to work across schools. We hope that staff would be able to take these opportunities as Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and sharing of good practice to improve the pupil outcomes.

Newly appointed staff would be expected to work across all four schools

### **Would the schools have the same Training Days?**

Yes, wherever possible. Each school would be able to choose when to hold these days, as they do now, and it is likely that they would take the opportunity to have the same Training Days to maximise professional development opportunities for staff.

### **Do schools in a Federation share a Governing Body?**

Yes. The previous Governing Bodies of the current Upper Durham Dales Federation and Hamsterley Primary School would be dissolved and a new single Governing Body would be set up.

### **Would one school take the lead over the other?**

No. The schools in the Federation would collaborate and work together as equal partners. We would try to ensure that the single Governing Body has representation from all schools, although the reconstitution would be skills-led.

### **Is there any research on the impact of Federations?**

OFSTED has reported that, where schools work together and share leadership, standards have been raised and there have been improvements in children's achievement and behaviour. (Leadership of More than One School; OFSTED, September 2011). There is a growing body of other evidence.

### **If Federation of the schools goes ahead, when would this happen?**

If a decision is made to federate, the proposal is that this would take effect from September 2023.

### **Can a Federation be dissolved?**

Yes. The Governing Board can choose to end a Federation if it is believed that it is no longer in the best interests of the children and stakeholders. This is not an action that would be taken lightly or without due diligence and consultation.

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## Confidential Response Form

In response to the consultation document outlining the proposal to form a Federation between Hamsterley, Rookhope, St John's Chapel and Wearhead Primary Schools from 1 September 2023.

All responses will be treated in the strictest of confidence, however we will not be able to take anonymous comments into consideration.

Responses must be received by 10.00am on Friday 28 April 2023. Governing Bodies will not be able to consider any responses received after this deadline.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

I am a (please select):

Tick	
	Parent/Carer of a child at Primary School
	Member of Staff at Primary School
	Other interested party (please specify):

Your response (please select):

Tick	
	I support the proposal
	I do NOT support the proposal
	I am not sure

Please give your reasons/view if you wish. (If necessary use the reverse side of this form):