



## **Proposal to Federate Consultation document**

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Consultation period

[Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2024 – Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024]

Dear Parents and Carers

Over recent months, the Governing Board of Huntingdon Nursery School and the Governing Body of Huntingdon Primary School have been exploring the option of entering a formal partnership called a Federation. This work has been led by a small working group formed of representatives from both Governing Bodies and Local Authority Officers. This has involved asking challenging questions of each other and the Local Authority to gain the best possible understanding of the context of each school and what Federation would involve.

The unanimous conclusion we have reached is that Federation would bring positive long-term benefits to both schools.

Importantly, Federation is not an amalgamation. Both schools would retain their individual and unique identities but be led and managed by an Executive Headteacher and one Governing Body that would have strategic oversight of both schools.

Attached is the information for the full statutory consultation process which will commence on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> September and last for six weeks. This process is outlined in the attached consultation document which gives greater detail of the proposal, including meetings at the respective schools, where you will be able to share your views and ask further questions. Questions and comments during the consultation period can also be submitted by contacting the relevant school's Clerk, detailed in section 4.

We believe this to be a very exciting proposal for the future of children's education in both schools and we hope that you share our enthusiasm.

Yours sincerely,

The joint working group: Jane Gedny, Neil Hateley, Maxine Howells, Sue Bowman, Chris Sutton

*On behalf of the Chairs of Governors*

**JOINT CONSULTATION BY**  
**Huntingdon Nursery School and Huntingdon Primary School**  
**ON FORMING A FEDERATION**

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This document is intended for the parents/carers and staff of Huntingdon Nursery School, Huntingdon Primary School, their union representatives, and the wider community.

**Consultees are encouraged to submit their comments either online or via the response form at the end of this document by noon (12:00) on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024.**

**Context**

Huntingdon Nursery School and Huntingdon Primary School are both maintained by Cambridgeshire County Council (the local Children's Services Authority). They are located on the same site but operate as independent establishments with separate staffing, systems, and budgets.

The Governing Bodies of both schools feel that there would be significant benefit to working in greater partnership, under one single governing body. This arrangement, known as a federation, would help to achieve a unified experience, sustaining high standards of education for children aged from 2 to 11 years old and would lead to significant cost savings which are necessary within the current climate. This is particularly acute as Huntingdon Nursery currently has a budget deficit of £268,000 and requires a viable deficit recovery plan. The Federation proposal will play a key role in deficit recovery. Without Federation alternative options for the Nursery will have to be explored including the possibility of private sector tender or closure of the setting.

Both schools already share a similar vision to ensure the best outcomes for children, and the highest quality in every aspect of provision. As the schools are so closely located, there is the opportunity to develop this further to enable joint curriculum development, opportunities for professional development and exploring innovative ways of supporting families seamlessly throughout their child's school life. Both schools have been judged as 'Good' in their recent Ofsted inspections and the reports can be found here:

[Huntingdon Nursery School - Open - Find an Inspection Report - Ofsted](#)

Within the proposed federation, each school would retain its individual identity to enable it to build upon its strengths, and suggested areas of development. This means that they would also be inspected separately by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). In addition, both schools would continue to receive their own budget allocation, calculated by the number of children/pupils on roll.

## **What will a federation look like?**

### **School name**

It is proposed that the new federation would be called 'The Huntingdon School Federation'

### **Governance**

One Governing Body would be responsible for overseeing both schools. Their responsibilities would be the same as they are now, although broadened, to ensure sufficient knowledge and expertise across the full age range.

On the date the federation took effect, the existing governing bodies would be dissolved, and the new governing body would be formed. This could contain members of the existing governing bodies, or those who are new to the role. Expressions of interest would be invited and considered but for existing governors, there is no expectation that they will transfer.

It is proposed that the new governing body would be made up of 12 members as detailed below.

- 1 executive headteacher
- 2 parent governors
- 1 staff governor
- 1 Local Authority appointed governor
- 7 Coopted governors

### **Staffing**

Governors are keen to ensure that the model is staffed appropriately for its size, whilst also recognising that cost savings must be made to ensure that both schools are sustainable. For this reason, the schools would have one executive headteacher with responsibility for both schools supported by a deputy headteacher, and two assistant headteachers.

It is envisaged that there would be one full-time Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENDCo) with responsibility across the federation, working alongside the Deputy and two assistant headteachers.

Other roles are expected to remain unchanged for now, although will form part of the larger, federated structure. There are different regulations for adult:child ratios when

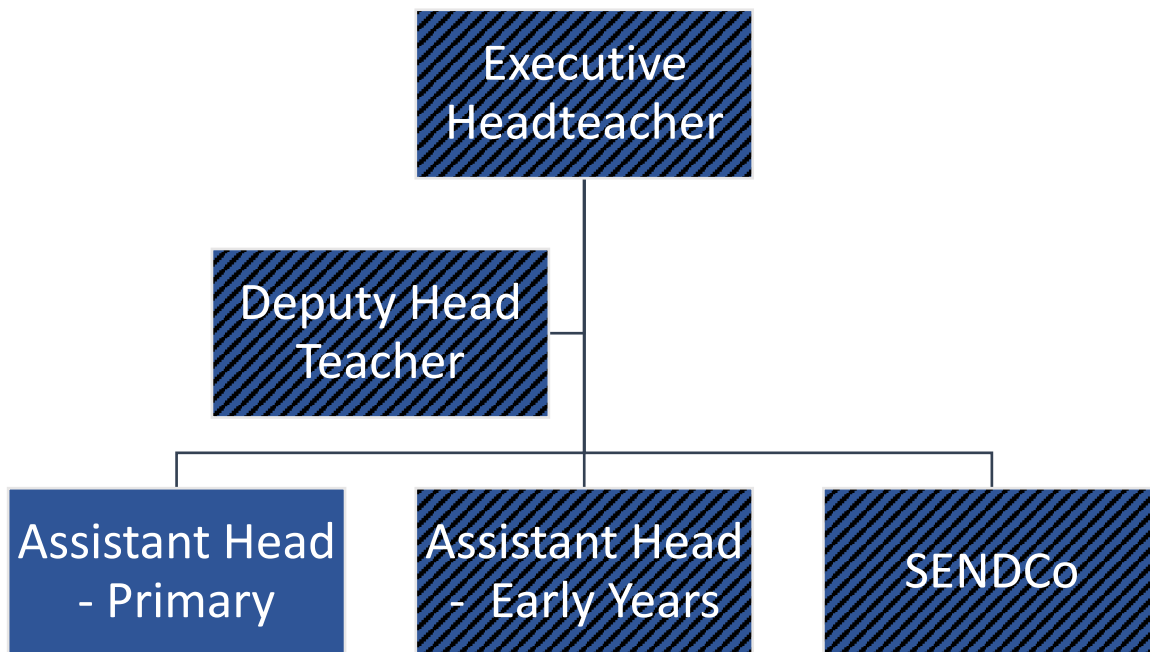
working with younger children and families so a higher number of staff are required for those who are not yet statutory school age.

It is anticipated that future changes in the structure would be made by the executive headteacher when the leadership structure is fully established, and in consultation with staff who are affected. For senior staff, it is likely that some responsibilities may be shared across the two school to ensure clear oversight, and smooth transitions.

As both schools are maintained and run by the local authority, TUPE would not apply.

Aligned with this Federation consultation is a staffing consultation that includes much greater detail on the proposed changes to staffing within both settings. This has been done to streamline the consultation process. However, both governing bodies will have to consider the federation consultation responses in full before making a final decision on whether to federate or not. If governor's decide not to continue with federation the staffing consultation will be withdrawn at that point and not implemented.

The hashed roles are intended to be shared across both settings



### Admissions

There are no proposed changes to the admissions arrangements for the two schools. This means that attending the nursery **does not** guarantee a child will secure a place at the primary school.

An application for a school place should be submitted to Cambridgeshire County Council (the admissions authority).

[Apply for a school place - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

## **What would be the benefits of a federation?**

### **Shared staffing, resources and contracts**

Nationally, schools are underfunded which has attracted a lot of media attention in recent years. As there is a national funding formula, the primary school funding is based upon the number of pupils on roll. The local authority does not have the ability to provide additional funding where challenges present.

For nursery schools, they too are funded per child, based on the number of hours for which they attend. However, with younger children, there must be a suitable number of qualified staff and the appropriate ratio of staff to children with the training and skills to meet the needs of all children on roll. This means that the number of staff necessary to meet legal requirements is higher than would be expected in a school with children of statutory school age.

These challenges mean that there are benefits for both organisations in terms of economies of scale, and the ability to use their funding to share resource. This could be in terms of staffing, as suggested with one executive headteacher across the two schools, but also with contracts and equipment too.

In addition to this, there would be the option for new staff to be employed across the federation as opposed to working at a designated school. This would help to reduce the need for agency staff to cover sickness and provide more flexibility to support one another in times of need.

### **Secure financial future of the nursery school**

Maintained Nursery Schools have higher costs compared with other early years' providers as they are required to employ qualified teachers, and a headteacher to meet the same standards and requirements as other schools. However, due to their size, they do not have the same economies of scale.

Despite concerted efforts from governors over many years, the Nursery School continues to face significant financial challenges which, unless addressed, could result in its closure or seeking private sector tender options. The difficulties in sustaining provision of this type are widespread due to lack of government funding – with the Nursery World reporting that a fifth

of those which remain expect to face closure within the next three years. The current nursery budget deficit of £268,000 would have to be repaid by the federation over a number of years.

Governing bodies of both schools are keen to ensure that action is taken at the earliest opportunity to ensure that this valued provision continues to serve the youngest children within our community.

### **Improved transition arrangements**

At present, the majority of children at the Huntingdon Nursery School go on to attend Huntingdon Primary School. Whilst staff do their utmost to ensure a smooth transition for children, they are currently run independently. This means that systems and routines are likely to differ between each school.

Under one governing body, and with staff who can work across both schools, it is envisaged that transition arrangements will be smoother for all involved. This means that progression can be planned clearly across the early years foundation stage and will facilitate mutual improvement in understanding in relation to the different school stages. This should also lead to improved outcomes by the end of Key Stage 2.

### **Effective relationships with families**

Both schools already pride themselves on maintaining effective relationship with the families of children within their schools. However, for the nursery school, these families are only with members of staff for a short while – and for some parents, it may have taken a little while for their child to settle, or for their needs to be fully understood.

Working more closely will enable us to better understand your needs as a family so that you can access support when you need it – without the need to hand over to a new staff team. This will also ensure that we can continue to work closely with our Child and Family Centre for the benefit of the whole school community.

### **Early identification of children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)**

Governors understand that assessment, and accessing the right support is crucial but can be daunting and complex.

Working in partnership will therefore help to ensure a better understanding of a child's individual needs to ensure early identification of children with SEND and suitable support throughout a child's primary education which would be facilitated by a single SENDCO across both settings.

### **Governance**

It is expected that there would be greater retention of parent governors which would lead to a stronger, and more knowledgeable, governing body.

### **Increased opportunities for Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

Both schools have their strengths and areas of expertise. Combining these will therefore enhance the opportunities for the continuous professional development of staff and will ensure a wider range of opportunities for those seeking to develop in their career.

### **What will happen next?**

The consultation period will run between Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> September to Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

We would encourage you to submit your comments online via Smart Survey. However, if you would prefer, you can use the paper form overleaf and hand this to the school office of either school.

A drop-in event will also be held for members of the community to discuss the proposal with the governing body, and ask any questions which will be held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September at 14:30 – 16:30. There will be two independent sessions held in each setting occurring simultaneously.

Once the consultation period has closed, governors will consider all comments and vote on whether to proceed. We will then write to you to inform you of our decision.

### **Nature & Scope of Formal Consultation**

Although the timing of the consultation is synchronised between the two schools, each consultation is discrete to each school. **As such, any written representations should be made to either the Clerk to Huntingdon Nursery School or the Clerk to the Governing Body of Huntingdon Primary School** and will be considered at this local level in order to maintain impartiality and reach a decision that is right for each school.

In both schools, the formal consultation will consist of:

- Publication of this proposal on the schools' websites.
- Electronic copies sent to all parents outlining the consultation. (Hard copies can be requested from the relevant school office.)
- A scheduled parents' consultation evening in each school (as detailed below).
- A scheduled staff consultation meeting in each school (as detailed below).

School	Invited parties	Date and time
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Huntingdon Nursery School	Staff and union representatives	Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup> September All Staff: 15:30
	Parents – Drop-in	Wednesday 18 <sup>th</sup> September 14:30-16:30pm
Huntingdon Primary School	Staff and union representatives	Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup> September All Staff: 15:30
	Parents Drop-in	Wednesday 18 <sup>th</sup> September 14:30 – 16:30

- Submission of this proposal to the Local Authority.
- Copy of this proposal document and the restructuring business case forwarded to all recognised teaching, support staff trade unions and trade union representatives given the opportunity to respond.
- Copy of this document along with a covering letter sent to the Secretary of State, local Members of Parliament and County Councillors within one week of opening consultation.

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<https://forms.office.com/e/01Xn6Y6f2Y>

What is your relationship to Huntingdon Nursery School / Huntingdon Primary School?

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| Member of staff at Huntingdon Nursery School       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Member of staff at Huntingdon Primary School       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Parent of a Child at Huntingdon Nursery School     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Parent of a Child at Huntingdon Primary School     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Parent of a Younger Child (under two years of age) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Parent of an Older Child (over 11 years of age)    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Professional Association / Trade Union             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Partner Organisation / Education Provider          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
- If other, please specify

**Which statement best reflects your views on the proposal for Huntingdon Nursery School and Huntingdon Primary School to form a federation?**

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| I agree with the proposed change. ☑                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I do not have a strong view on the proposed change. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I disagree agree with the proposed change.          | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please use the box below to make any comments about the proposal. We would also value any suggested changes to the model proposed, with the reasons why you feel such changes would be beneficial.

**Thank you for your feedback.**

