

Background

Winster and Monyash primary schools have been collaborating for the past two years by sharing an executive headteacher. This process has been running well, and the governing bodies of both schools wish to make this arrangement permanent by entering a formal partnership known as a federation.

This document explains the reasons both governing bodies see this as the best option to secure the future of both schools, at a time when pressures on small rural schools are intensifying.

The main change due to federation would be the amalgamation of the two existing governing bodies into a single governing body working for the best interests of the children in both schools, and answerable to both communities. There would be a single executive headteacher responsible for the running of both schools. It is not a proposal to merge or close either school. Each school would retain its own distinctive character, though there would be a common vision driving the school leadership.

We wish to consult widely with all interested parties before making any final decision, and the timetable for this is given below.

Timetable

6 th June 2017	Proposal published & consultation period begins.
4 th July 2017	Meeting for staff & parents at Monyash to discuss the proposals.
5 th July 2017	Meeting for staff & parents at Winster to discuss the proposals.
18 th July 2017	Closing date for written responses, which should be sent to your chair of governors via either school office.
19 th July 2017	Joint meeting of both governing bodies to consider responses and make final decision on whether to apply to the Secretary of State for Education to federate.
Autumn term 2017	Staff & parent governor elections to new governing body.
1st January 2018	Federation formalised under single governing body.

Reasons for federation

These are challenging times for small rural primary schools, as educational expectations rise and budgets are squeezed. It is a hard task for any small school to provide a broad, high quality education that meets the needs of all of its pupils, especially given the small number of staff employed. It has also been increasingly difficult in recent years for small schools to attract headteachers with the necessary leadership qualities. Because of this, there are clearly benefits in sharing skills and expertise of individual staff between schools, and this has been encouraged from all levels of the education system. The governing bodies believe that federation increases the opportunities to share good practice across the schools for the benefit of all their children.

The current leadership collaboration has worked well for both schools under Mrs Slack. Winster school has continued to develop and consolidate the improvements that have been made over the

past five years, and Monyash school has quickly improved from its uncertain position several years ago. Both schools have been judged 'Good' with outstanding features in recent inspections, and are expected to play equal parts in the new partnership. However, it is not sustainable to continue as we are, due to time restrictions in the statutory guidance, the duplication of governance functions, and temporary staffing arrangements.

From a purely financial perspective, having one, non-teaching, headteacher saves each school a considerable amount of money every year and there are other efficiency savings that can be achieved from working in partnership. This has enabled both schools to maintain their current staffing despite budget pressures, and will continue to help in the future.

Monyash Primary School

Monyash school dates back to around 1750 when the freeholders of Monyash provided a piece of ground in the centre of the village for the purpose of educating twelve poor children of the village. The current building was erected in 1871, from local donations, and enlarged in 1890. The school currently has 30 pupils, who mostly come from Monyash, with a few from other villages, notably Flagg. The school is at the heart of the village community and has strong links with the church. The children prepare two of the village's three Well Dressings and take part in many village activities, in particular the May Market, which is extensively supported by the thriving Parents, Teachers and Friends Association. The school has a dedicated team of staff who provide a safe, happy and caring environment where children are keen to learn.

Winster Primary School

Winster school has recently celebrated its 150th anniversary, originally opening as a church school in 1866. It currently has 34 pupils, who almost all come from the parish of Winster. The school has strong links with the village through taking part in church services, and joining in with the Winster carnival, Italian twinning association, and Secret Gardens. The school provides a very friendly environment where children are happy, respect and care for each other, and have many opportunities for learning outdoors as well as in. Winster staff are experienced, capable and committed to the school.

Implications of federation

What would change?

There will be little change to the character of each school. Teaching will continue as at present, although over time there will be a convergence of the schools' curriculum and policies, and a common vision from the governors and headteacher. Both schools already have a similar ethos.

While both schools will retain their present names, they will now be described as 'part of the **White Peak Federation**', and this will appear on the school websites and literature.

Governing Body

The biggest change on federation will be the creation of a new governing body, whose aim will be to achieve the best possible education for the children of both villages. The new governing body will consist of up to 15 governors, representing stakeholders across both communities.

- 2 Elected Parent Governors (one from each school)
- 1 Local Authority Governor
- 2 Foundation (church) Governors (one from each parish)
- 1 Elected Staff Governor
- 1 Executive Headteacher
- 8 Co-opted Governors

The new governing body will retain most of the existing governors who are keen to continue, and will co-opt additional members from amongst the parents, staff and community to give a wide range of skills and representation. There will be elections (as required by law) for the parent and staff governors during the autumn term.

The governing body will in general alternate its meetings between the two schools.

Staffing

Mrs Slack will become permanent executive headteacher to both schools. All current staff will retain their existing contracts with Derbyshire County Council. We will continue to make opportunities for joint training and staff meetings where possible, and take best advantage of the two clusters we belong to. It is possible that future appointments could be across the federation, rather than with an individual school, if there is a clear benefit.

Finance

The budgets for the two schools will remain separate, but the governors will have the option to spend funds jointly where that is to the benefit of both schools.

Admissions

The new Governing Body will set the admissions policy, which will be administered by Derbyshire County Council as at present.

What would stay the same?

Most other aspects of school life will stay the same. The governors of both schools believe that federation is the best option for maintaining the schools as we would want them in our village communities.

Next steps

We invite parents, staff and any other interested parties to meetings to discuss these proposals on Tuesday 4th July at 5pm at Monyash school, and Wednesday 5th July at 5pm at Winster school.

If you would like to make written comments, please address these to your Chair of Governors and hand them in to either school office. You are also welcome to contact any of the current chairs, or indeed any of the current governors with comments or questions.

Both governing bodies will meet on 19th July 2017 to review all the comments received, and make a final decision on whether to proceed with the federation plan, or to amend the details. A final decision will be circulated early in the autumn term.

On behalf of the governing bodies of Monyash and Winster Primary Schools

Chris Woodhouse 07528 594050 Chair of Monyash GB

Dave Robinson 01629 650395 Co-chairs of Winster GB

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Appendix – legal requirements

The governing bodies proposing to federate must publish the proposals by sending them to:

- (a) the Secretary of State;
- (b) the relevant local authorities;
- (c) the head teacher of each school;
- (d) in the case of any school with a foundation:
 - (i) the foundation governors;
 - (ii) the trustees of any trust relating to the school;
- (e) where any of the schools are designated under section 69(3) of SSFA 1998 as having a religious character, the appropriate diocesan authority in the case of a Church of England or Roman Catholic Church school, or the appropriate religious body in the case of any other school;
- (f) all staff paid to work at any of the schools;
- (g) every person known to them to be a parent of a registered pupil at any of the schools;
- (h) such other persons as the governing bodies consider appropriate.

A copy of the proposals must be made available for inspection at all reasonable times at each school.

The governing bodies proposing to federate must jointly consider any responses to the proposals and each governing body must determine whether:

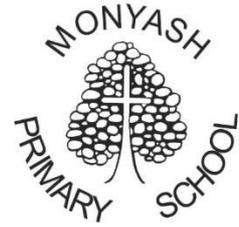
- (a) to proceed with the proposals for federation as published;
- (b) to proceed with the proposals for federation with such modifications* as the governing body consider appropriate;
- (c) not to proceed with the proposals for federation.

*The modifications may not include a change in the identity of the governing bodies proposing to federate.

All the governing bodies which determine to proceed must jointly give notice of that fact to the relevant local authority or authorities and the Secretary of State within one week of that determination.



Response to Federation proposal



Please let us have your comments on how the proposed Federation would affect:

- children's education at your school
- the staff at either school
- the running of the school

Other comments or suggestions are also welcome.

Name:

Contact details:

Please return to the Chair of Governors at either school via the school office