

**TITLE OF REPORT:**       **Hard Federation of Eslington and Furrowfield Schools**

**REPORT OF:**               **Steve Horne, Service Director, Learning and Schools**

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### **Purpose of the Report**

1. This report is to inform Cabinet that the governing bodies for Eslington and Furrowfield schools have met and agreed to be a Hard Federation of schools. The Cabinet are being asked by the governing bodies to ratify their decision to be a Hard Federation and to continue with their consultation with staff, parents, and interested parties.

### **Background**

2. Furrowfield School and Eslington Primary School became a Soft Federation in September 2015. The Governing Bodies of both schools consulted and a majority vote was taken to form a Soft Federation in the first instance June 2015. The Governors voted on this as a direct result of the benefits being seen to the outcomes for pupils of both schools when informal links between Furrowfield and Eslington from March 2014 were initiated through the secondment of the Headteacher of Eslington to Furrowfield School as the acting Headteacher. During this secondment of the two years of the Soft Federation, the benefits to pupil outcomes at all levels have been evidenced, documented and presented to governors, staff, pupils and parents at regular intervals.
3. By July 2016, the end of the first year of the Soft Federation, some of the governors and the school's link inspector carried out a 360 degree review across both schools. This was to investigate staff views and evidence the successful or weak areas of the Soft Federation. A cross-section of staff were interviewed. The findings were that 100% of staff interviewed recognised the benefits of the Federation and wanted the Federation in principle to continue.
4. Both schools have also been Ofsted inspected during the period of the Soft Federation and the findings of both school inspections were extremely positive. The inspection findings provided strong evidence for the Federation to convert to a Hard Federation as progress in all areas of the schools' provision had further improved over the period of soft federation. The school judgements were highly positive with Eslington remaining Outstanding in all areas, March 2017 and Furrowfield remaining Good in all areas, February 2017.
5. In January 2017, the governing bodies of both schools consulted separately and from a majority vote agreed to start the process to form a Hard Federation for September 2017.

6. In a paper on Special School provision presented to Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 March 2017 it was highlighted that the intention of the governors of Eslington and Furrowfield that the schools currently in a soft federation wished to move to a Hard Federation.

### **Proposal**

7. As part of the process to move to Hard Federation governors must begin a formal process of consultation and are formerly informing the local authority of their proposal.
8. Governors have agreed to:
  - Prepare papers to support broader consultation with staff, parents and other interested parties.
  - One governing body over both schools but keeping separate schools and their budgets. There will not be additional costs above the current school budgets as the governors are working to their allocations for both schools.
  - Advertise the new senior posts in the Hard Federation of Executive Headteacher and two Heads of schools. Governors have agreed they will advertise externally these posts to ensure the highest quality of leadership.

### **Recommendation**

9. It is recommended that Cabinet:
  - (i) Supports the governing bodies of Eslington and Furrowfield schools' decision to move to Hard Federation based on the successful outcomes from the Soft Federation demonstrated well by the Ofsted Inspections for both schools.
  - (ii) Supports the governing bodies in moving forward in their consultation and the appointments needed to establish a Hard Federation of the schools.

For the following reasons:

- (i) This will support greater sharing of curriculum expertise and skills across both schools.
- (ii) It will also provide opportunities to maximise the use of ever reducing resources to achieve best value which need to be procured for example.

### Policy Context

1. This proposal is consistent with the vision for children and young people as set out in Vision 2030 and the Council Plan 2015-2020.
2. The Hard Federation aims to strive for higher achievement, greater opportunities in the curriculum and high quality support to pupils' well-being across the schools. Providing the right support for these young people is essential so they have successful personal lives and are able to work and provide as they transfer to employment and work.

### Background

3. The schools governors are following the DFE guidance:
  - 'The constitution of governing bodies of maintained schools Statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and local authorities in England, September 2016.
  - 'Guidance on the School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2007'
  - Departmental advice for local authorities, school leaders, school staff and governing bodies on the School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2012 (7 September 2012).

### Consultation

4. In the process of Soft Federation staff and the governing bodies of both schools have been consulted. A discussion has taken place at Overview and Scrutiny as part of the Annual Special school report March 2017.
5. The Cabinet Members for Children and Young People have been consulted.

### Alternative Options

6. The schools work as separate schools and it would then necessitate advertising for a new Headteacher for Furrowfield as the acting Executive Headteacher would go back to her post in Eslington. Furrowfield would lose a highly experienced Headteacher who has made a significant impact on this provision and its staff and governors. As some governors span both schools it would maximise their time and allow more time for them for their monitoring role.

### Implications of Recommended Options

#### 7. Resources

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director Corporate Resources confirms there are no financial implications for the local authority. There may be a cost to the schools if an internal applicant does not get a post.

- b) Human Resources Implications** – The Service Director, HR and Litigation confirms that the appropriate consultation will take place with employees from both schools and the relevant trade unions regarding the hard federation and the restructure of the senior leadership team which is required to form the hard federation.
- c) Property Implications** – None.
8. **Risk Management Implications** - None
9. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – This proposal would maintain Furrowfield and Eslington’s commitment that every student is assisted to achieve their fullest potential.
10. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – None.
11. **Health Implications** – None.
12. **Sustainability Implications** – This would have a positive outcome for children and young people because of the better resourcing of expertise supporting their well-being and academic achievements.
13. **Human Rights Implications** – None.
14. **Area and Ward Implications** – None
15. **Background Information**

**Documents:**

- DFE – ‘The constitution of governing bodies of maintained schools September 2016.’
- School Governance (re Federations) (England) Regulations 2012
- School Federation papers prepared by governors.