



A consultation with regard to formalising the partnership between The Topsham School and the United Schools Federation

8th January 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

In order to overcome the continual challenges of Education, school communities have been required to think more creatively and look to form partnerships with other schools. Such partnerships and formal collaboration between schools has been shown to have a positive impact on the quality of education and provide increased opportunities for children and the wider school community.

Over a year ago, The Topsham Primary School entered into a management partnership arrangement with the United Schools Federation, the aim of which was to provide leadership and operational support. Having considered a number of different partnership options and having monitored the success of the partnership with the USF, the Governors of the Topsham School would now like to propose to make the arrangement a permanent one, whereby The Topsham School would join the United Schools Federation.

As you may already know, a federation is a family of schools, with each school retaining its unique character, its own budget and performance tables and having a separate Ofsted inspection. The current admissions process for each school will remain the same. A federation is different from a Multi Academy Trust (MAT); the schools will remain, as they do now, in partnership with the local authority. The schools within the enlarged federation will share one governing board made up from representatives from each school's community and ensure that the Christian distinctiveness of the church schools within the federation will continue to be upheld.

As well as having representation on the USF governing body, The Topsham School will retain a local governing board.

There is no single blueprint for federation; each federation is tailored to the needs of the different schools and communities that are involved. There are a number of federations across Devon, with the first federations in Devon forming in 2006 and many others considering this to be a successful, sustainable model for their school's future.

The USF has been delighted with the success of the partnerships; in 2010 St. Catherine's joined St. Michael's and following this successful partnership Marlton, St. Mary's Brixton, Ipplepen, Stokeinteignhead and Doddiscombsleigh Schools have all gradually become part of the group.

What will the continuing benefits be for our schools?

- Sharing strong and proven leadership.
- Sharing teaching expertise.
- Availability of teaching and curriculum resources.
- Increasing opportunities for the children to mix with a wider group both academically and socially.
- Greater access to a wider range of resources (human and physical), and opportunities to make some savings to reinvest in children's learning.
- Joint planning and curriculum development opportunities for staff.
- Joint training of staff to impact on children's learning.
- Provide the children with even wider opportunities to prepare them for a more secure transition process.

How will this work?

There will continue to be one Executive Headteacher, (Martin Harding) with a Head of School within each school, just as there is now. At the Topsham School, Ms Maria White will remain as the Head of School. The Heads of School will continue to focus their energies on teaching, learning and outcomes for children.

The federation will have a governing board composed of representatives from each school community. The make-up of the governing board has to adhere to the 2012 Constitution Federation Regulations, as amended in 2016.

The membership of this governing board includes representation for parents and staff, foundation (church) governors (because United Schools Federation includes church schools), foundation (Trust) governors (because USF includes Co-Operative Trust Schools), co-opted governors and a local authority governor. Together this group of people will take overall responsibility for all schools within the federation. The proposed size of the federated governing board would be 20 and this would include:

2 Parent governors

2 Staff governors (including the Executive Headteacher)

1 Local Authority appointed governor

10 Foundation governors (8 appointed by the Exeter Diocese and 2 appointed by United Schools Learning Partnership)

5 Co-opted governors

The Governing Boards are proposing that the federation start date would be Monday 15th April 2024.

There is a federation consultation process.

The Governors of both current boards have set up a consultation process to seek the views of parents, staff, the community, the local authority, the Diocese, and other key partners. The consultation process will last 6 school weeks – excluding the February half-term holiday - starting on 8th of January 2024.

Governors would welcome your views and you are invited to comment and respond by **26th February 2024**. Comments should be addressed to 'The Chair of Governors' for your school and may be emailed to consultation@unitedschoolsfed.co.uk for any school.

If you would like to discuss the federation with your Chair(s) of Governors (The Topsham School – Leanne Smith or Alex Kumar the United Schools Federation – Mr. Nicholas Glanfield) you may contact your school to make an appointment in the usual manner.

You also have the opportunity to attend a meeting at The Topsham School on 7th February 6.00 p.m. However, please pre-book your place by emailing admin@topsham.devon.sch.uk by 2nd February 2024.

It is the Governors who will make the final decision, drawing upon a broad evidence base including the views of parents. Each governing board from each school considering federation, takes its own decision. As with any governing board decision, this is a simple majority taken at a meeting of the full governing body.

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

Yours sincerely

*Leanne Smith and
Alex Kumar*
Co-Chair of Governors
The Topsham School

Nicholas Glanfield
Chair of Governors
United Schools Federation

Martin Harding
Executive Headteacher