

CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED FEDERATION OF NORTH HERTS EDUCATION SUPPORT CENTRE & STEVENAGE EDUCATION SUPPORT CENTRE



North Herts Education Support Centre
Stevenage Education Support Centre



24th September 2021

Dear Parent, Carer and/or Member of Staff,

CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED FEDERATION OF NORTH HERTS EDUCATION SUPPORT CENTRE & STEVENAGE EDUCATION SUPPORT CENTRE

The Management Committees of the two Education Support Centres (ECS) have recently informed you of their proposal to form a Federation between the two ESCs. The ESC's have previously worked closely together and the formalisation of this through a federation is, we believe, in the interests of the children and staff in both schools.

The Management Committees at each school are today beginning a consultation process with parents, staff and other stakeholders (such as Hertfordshire County Council) on the formation of a federation between the ESCs – a federation that would be led by a single Management Committee.

The **Consultation Paper** that accompanies this letter sets out to address three items:

- A. The nature of the consultation process and the ways in which you can contribute to it.
- B. Governance arrangements under the Federation.
- C. Recommendation of the two Management Committees and the rationale.

The consultation process begins on 24th September 2021 and closes on 14th November 2021 at midnight.

There are a number of ways in which you can participate and there will be opportunities for you to learn more about the Management Committee's proposal in face to face or remote sessions at either of the ESCs.

We look forward to your engagement in this consultation, which is important to the future development of our two ESCs.

If you have difficulty with the language in this consultation letter, please let us know and we will provide additional help.

Yours sincerely

Emma Flawn (Chair of Management Committee)
Stevenage Education Support Centre

Gordon Farquhar (Chair of Governors)
North Herts Education Support Centre

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A. The nature of the Consultation Process and ways in which you can contribute.

Summary

- As part of any move to a federation, the management committees of each of our ESCs are required to seek your views on any recommendation or proposal.
- The management committees are also required to consult with other stakeholders, including the Local Authority – Hertfordshire County Council.
- After these consultations, the two management committees are required to come to a decision. They are not bound by the responses of any one group – for instance, parents or staff – but they are required to demonstrate that they have considered these views. For this reason, it is important that you respond.
- If either or both of the management committees feel that there is insufficient support for the formation of a federation, other alternatives will be sought.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. When does the Consultation Process begin and when does it finish?

This consultation process opens 24th September 2021 and closes on 14th November 2021.

2. How can I respond?

Parents and Carers:

There are four ways on which you can make your views known:

- By raising your comments or queries at scheduled face to face meetings (see below)
- By emailing your comments or queries to kathy.dunnett@hertsforlearning.co.uk – heading your email **ESC Federation**. Kathy Dunnett is the senior governance adviser supporting us with the legal process.
- By posting your comments/queries to either ESC c/o Mrs. Kathy Dunnett.
- By sending your pupil in with comments/queries in a sealed letter addressed to Mrs K. Dunnett. Using the response form if you prefer.

Parent meetings are being scheduled to enable parents and carers to meet with the ESC and management committee representatives to discuss the federation proposal. The details are below:

Stevenage ESC – regular parent coffee meetings are held at the school and parents are welcome to ask questions anytime.

North Herts ESC – as parents from NH ESC are further afield, all parents will be offered a meeting if they would like one to specifically discuss any questions regarding this federation proposal. Do contact the Executive Headteacher to arrange a meeting/telephone discussion.

Staff

- Staff will be consulted via regular staff meetings at their respective schools. In addition, meetings specifically dedicated to this proposal are scheduled for the staff of both ESCs on 23rd September at 3.30 p.m. at Stevenage ESC and 29th September at 3.30 for North Herts ESC, Bancroft site in Hitchin.

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- Staff are welcome to consult their trade unions and professional associations should they have concerns and queries. Staff can also invite them to the special meetings above and we will ask that you inform the Executive Headteacher if they will be attending.

Children

- The federation process will feature in school assemblies and other aspects of school life during the consultation period.
- If any child wishes to express a concern they can do this via their parent or carer.

3. How will a decision be reached?

- The two Management Committees are responsible for making the final decision, However, the Committees are required to take account of the responses to this consultation process, and we shall do so.
- Once this consultation process is complete, a report setting out the consultation findings will be presented to a joint meeting of the Management Committees of our two ESC's.
- Each Management Committee will then meet on its own to decide whether or not it supports the formation of a federation.
- Both Management Committees have to independently agree to the formation of a federation for it to be created.
- As well as consulting with parents and staff, we are required to consult with the local authority (HCC) and to gain the approval of the Secretary of State for Education.

4. Communication of Outcome

- Once a decision has been reached, all relevant stakeholders will be informed.

Further Information

If you have questions about the proposed federation that we have not addressed here or the process outlined in this document, please contact the Management Committees via kathy.dunnett@hertsforlearning.co.uk

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B. Governance Arrangements under the Federation

Governance arrangements in Education Support Centres are via a Management Committee. There are specific legal requirements for Management Committees and how they are set up.

The role of governance in any education setting is as follows;

1. To set, in collaboration with the Acting Executive Headteacher, the strategic direction and vision of the school federation;
2. To hold the Senior Leadership Team, including the Executive Headteacher, to account for the achievement of any objectives set.
3. Oversee the financial management at the setting.

Under a federation, a single, newly appointed Management Committee would be established and would be responsible for both of the ESCs in the federation.

Having a single committee delivers advantages for both ESCs: it would ensure that the two ESCs move forward together with a shared vision for both communities.

If the recommendation to form a federation is accepted, the existing management committees will begin the process of establishing a new single Management Committee for the federation.

It is proposed that the new Management Committee would be constituted as below:

| Category of Member of Committee | Total Number |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Staff | 13 (including 1 Executive Headteacher) |
| Parent | 1 |
| Local Authority | 2 |
| Community | 7 |

The members of the new Federation Management Committee would be appointed/elected with due regard to:

- Best practice, current thinking and existing regulations in school and federation governance.
- The need to ensure that parents and staff and the local community, are appropriately represented.
- The skills and experience of the individuals concerned – retaining the right to ensure that the Management Committee has a broad and appropriate mix of skills and experience.
- Their commitment to education, and the success of the children as both ESCs, whatever their professional, parental or community background.

It should also be noted that:

- The new Federation Management Committee may differ in size from the envisaged number in the first instance because it is proposed that those who are currently members of either Management Committee would be offered the option of being an Associate

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Member, who are not full governors, but are brought onto a management committee (governance) for their expertise or experience.

- Any vacancies that arise for the position of Parent or Staff would be filled following an election in which all parents across the Federation, or staff across the Federation would have a vote.
- The new Federation Management Committee would be encouraged to actively explore how to best engaged the voice of our students in the governance and leadership of their ESCs.
- The new Federation Management Committee, whatever its formal constitution, would also be expected to give opportunities for all stakeholders to have a voice.

C. The Recommendation of the Management Committees

The Management Committees at both North Herts and Stevenage Education Support Centres recommend that they:

FORM A FEDERATION WITH A SINGLE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FROM

1ST JANUARY 2022

Both Committees feel that the interests of both ESCs students and staff are best served by creating a clear line of governance for the Executive Headteacher, rather than two committees, thus progressing to a federation would be the next logical step. We believe the benefits of federation are as follows;

- One clear line of governance for the Executive Headteacher
- Closer working links between the two ESCs
- Sharing of best practices between our ESCs
- Opportunities for staff development

Both committees believe that a federation offers the opportunity for a genuinely shared vision and educational philosophy across both schools, one that translate into a positive and joined-up experience for all of our children in both our school communities.

In this context, we are committed to achieving excellence through collaboration between our two vibrant and successful ESCs. We want to value, nurture and further develop the strengths and identities of both ESCs, whilst working together to enhance outcomes for our children. Our aim is to maintain outstanding provision and deliver excellent progress and achievement – and cherished and memorable educational experiences.

We want to continue to give every child in our care the opportunity to fulfil his or her potential as a confident, informed, sociable and well-rounded individual, ready for the next stage of their personal, developmental and educational journey, and for the world beyond. We believe this can be achieved more effectively by our ESCs working closely together, led by an Executive Headteacher.

In short, we believe that evolving into a federation with one Federation Management Committee, is in the interests of students, parent/carers and teaching/support staff. It would provide a shared strategic direction, strengthen ties between ESCs and enable shared approaches to assessment and curriculum.

THINGS THAT WILL NOT CHANGE SHOULD A FEDERATION BE ESTABLISHED

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Should a federation be established between our two ESC's:

- Each ESC would retain its existing character and identity but seek to join up where beneficial to stakeholders, primarily the students.
- Admission arrangements to both ESCs would remain the same (and HCC would continue to be the Admissions Authority for each ESC).
- The ESCs would retain individual budgets and keep their own clear audit trails for all income and expenditure.
- The ESCs would be inspected separately by the schools' inspectorate, Ofsted.
- The key arrangements for existing staff will continue as per current Terms & Conditions (new employees would be contracted to the Federation).

In this context, the Management Committees do not believe that a federation would have a negative impact on arrangements that are popular with children, teachers, parents/carers and which work well at present.