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Althorp Partnership of Primary Schools

Consultation Document

Proposal to Federate Brington and Harlestone Primary Schools

Consultation Period: 8th June - 20th July 2011

Dear parents, carers and other friends of Brington and Harlestone Primary Schools,

The existing Governing Bodies met separately earlier this year and decided to propose a formal federation between their two respective schools – Brington Primary School and Harlestone Primary School.

Since September 2010, both schools have already been working in partnership under the leadership of Jan Abrams, the Executive Headteacher. Staff from both schools have benefited from this joint working, as have the children, by improvements in their learning experiences and joint working opportunities. Both Governing Bodies see that a federation is a positive plan to secure the future of these two small rural schools. We believe it will make the schools more cost effective, attract more pupils and enable us to recruit high quality staff when required.

Both Governing Bodies believe that it is up to us to make sure the schools remain distinct and we make the most of their differences as well as their similarities. We are both keen for this to be the case as each school has unique characteristics and it is important that these remain.

As Chairs of the current Governing Bodies, it is also up to us and other governors to make sure this works for the benefit of the children and families we serve. It is also very important that any parent who wants to make a comment does so. We want your views and will make sure that all views are considered. Overall, parents will not notice a difference in the day to day working of the schools. Becoming a federation, however, could make a big difference to how the schools can build upon their current successes and ultimately how well all the children progress and achieve at both Brington and Harlestone Primary Schools.

Ruth O'Donnell, Chair of Brington Primary School Governing Body

Liz Ashton Davies, Chair of Harlestone Primary School Governing Body

June 2011

Working together in the present

Our two schools have been actively working together as a partnership since Mrs Abrams' arrival as Executive Headteacher in September 2010, to the great benefit of the children and with very positive feedback from yourselves.

Key aspects of this partnership work have been:

- sharing pupil tracking systems which will help to improve results
- increasing the number of children available has enabled new activities to take place
- joint staff development
- flexibility of staffing deployment
- sharing staff expertise and creating curriculum leaders
- learning from each other
- community events which have heightened our profile locally
- improved viability (small schools like ours could be vulnerable in these times of financial constraint)
- pooling resources for purchasing, including services such as HR, Finance and Legal support.
- positive feedback and support from Ofsted and the Local Authority for our initiative to work in partnership.
- the adoption of a partnership name (The Althorp Partnership of Primary Schools - APPS), to be used alongside the name of each individual school.

Our proposal for the future is...

- to have one single Governing Body over the two schools instead of the two separate Governing Bodies
- to offer more and greater opportunities for our children and staff to work and learn together
- to create one strong strategic plan for securing the future and continued improvement of the Partnership, encompassing both schools
- to reduce the duplication in Mrs. Abrams' work .
- to continue to buy into certain services at a cheaper rate (option not available to us unless we are formally federated)

We believe we will have the best of both worlds under these arrangements because each school will remain a distinct individual school with its own name but will enjoy the benefits of working together under the expertise and skilful leadership of the Executive Headteacher and joint Governing Body.

Federation: Frequently asked Questions

To find out more about federations, you can visit the Department for Education website: <http://www.education.gov.uk/search/results?q=federation>

Will the pupils keep changing schools?

No. The children will still go to one of the schools just as they do at the moment but there will be opportunities to work together in each other's school.

And the staff?

No. The class teachers will work at one of the schools as they do now. There could be some opportunities for teachers to do some work across both schools, but they will not have to keep changing from one to the other.

Will the schools keep their current names?

Yes. It is important to recognise that although they will be working together and will share some ways of working, these two schools have their own characters and their own communities. The federation will be called The Althorp Partnership of Primary Schools.

Will applying for my child to start at one of the schools be any different?

No. You would still apply to the school of your choice just like you would do now. The admissions authority for the two schools is still Northamptonshire County Council and the process for applying would be just the same.

What about the staffing?

No staffing changes will take place as a result of this proposal to federate. Any changes that are proposed further down the line will involve prior consultation with the members of staff affected and, if necessary, the unions.

Could the federation get bigger?

The rules around federation would mean that other schools could join the federation in the future – subject to consultation and the agreement of the Governing Bodies.

However, there are no plans for this at the moment.

Will the two schools keep their own budget?

Yes. The schools are still two separate schools and will be funded exactly as they are now. Where the two schools want to club together they would work under the principle that neither school would be subsidising the other.

Will the two schools share an Ofsted inspection and will they appear together in the league tables?

No. The schools will have a separate inspection and will be judged separately just as they are now. They will also appear separately in the league tables just as they do now – only based on the results of the pupils on roll in that school.

Will this affect the local community in any way?

No

How will it affect the Governing Bodies?

The two Governing Bodies will cease to exist on 31st October 2011. A new single Governing Body will come into being on 1st November 2011 which will work across the Partnership. The proposed structure for the new Governing Body is presented in the Appendix.

What happens if the federation does not work?

Federation can be reversed if for some reason it is not working as well as it should. The Governing Body could decide to stop the federation and go back to having completely separate Governing Bodies and completely separate leadership teams.

The process

It is very important that everyone has the chance to find out more about the proposal and let us know their views.

2011

8th June to 20th July Consultation period. A specific email address has been set up for you to ask questions or post comments on the proposal apps2@hotmail.co.uk

Any updates or new FAQs will be posted on the schools' websites and on the notice boards at the schools.

Staff at the schools will be invited to a meeting and we will be holding meetings to get the views of the pupils.

20th June A governor will be in each school from 9am – 10am on 20th June to listen to comments and answer any questions you may wish to raise.

20th July All email comments and / or comment forms (see back of this document) to be submitted by today. All responses will be collated and taken into consideration.

19th September Governing Bodies meet together to discuss responses to consultation. Each Governing Body will then meet separately to decide whether to proceed towards federation or not.

If the decision is “yes”, then arrangements will be made immediately for elections for Parent Governors.

31st October Existing separate governing bodies will cease to exist.

1st November New federated Governing Body comes into existence.

If the decision is made not to federate, then a status quo will exist and the two Governing Bodies must plan for the future of two entirely separate schools.

Appendix: Proposed Governance Structure

Composition

| | | |
|----------------------|-----------|---|
| Parent governors | 6 | 3 from each school – voted for only by parents from that school |
| Staff governors | 3 | 1 from each school, voted by staff from that school, plus 1 Executive Headteacher |
| Community governors | 5 | Representing the whole Althorp Partnership of Primary Schools |
| LA / other governors | 4 | |
| TOTAL | 18 | |

Federated Governing Body of the Althorp Partnership of Primary Schools (APPS)

Responsible for:

Standards & Progress
Strategic Direction
Financial Stability
Safeguarding

Federation Wide Sub-Committees

Finance &
Personnel

Curriculum

Policies

Premises
Management

Pupil Discipline/ Appeals

Statutory Committees

Pay Matters

Other stakeholders and people with specific expertise could be co-opted onto the various sub –committees, as appropriate.

The composition and structure of the Governing Body will be reviewed in the first year of federation.

Comment Form

Please complete the form below and return it to either school by 20th July 2011 FAO Chair of Governors.

Do you think the federation of Brington and Harlestone Primary Schools is a good idea?

Yes / No / Don't mind (circle as applicable)

Comments:

Do you have any further questions?

Connection to school (e.g. parent / staff / local community)
