

The Cunningham Hill Federation Proposal

Proposal for consultation

For the attention of pupils, parents, staff and other stakeholders.

The governing boards of Cunningham Hill Junior School and Cunningham Hill Infant School propose the federation of their schools from 1 September 2020. This is an important matter and before making a final decision, the governors of each school wish to seek the views of the pupils and their families, members of staff as well as stakeholders within the wider community.

Under the Education Act 2002, schools and local authorities can propose that schools join together to create a federation. A federation is formed when two or more schools agree to work together on a formal basis, through a single governing board. Federation schools remain separate schools at their existing sites with their own budgets. They have separate Ofsted inspections and continue to report separate results.

This document sets out the reasons why the governing boards of each school believe this proposal is a good idea and the benefits for pupils, parents and staff. It also provides information about the vision that the federation has for its schools.

As part of this consultation, the governing boards invite you to attend either of the drop-in sessions where you can discuss and ask further questions about the proposal.

Consultation meetings:

Venue	Audience	Date	Time
Cunningham Hill Junior School	Parents of either school, community members	Wednesday 12 th February 2020	7.00pm
Cunningham Hill Infant School	Parents of either school, community members	Friday 14 th February 2020	2.30pm

If you have any questions about this consultation or would like to share your views, please contact any of the following governors by email with a title 'Federation proposal' in the subject line, or send your views in an envelope titled 'Federation proposal' to the offices of either the Infant or Junior schools. Please send any correspondence by **1pm on Friday 27 March 2020**.

- **Mrs Rondi Allan**, Chair of Governors of Cunningham Hill Junior School, via governor@cunninghamhill-jun.herts.sch.uk
- **Mrs Anna O'Sullivan, Mr Alex Sage**, Joint Chair of Governors of Cunningham Hill Infant School, via ao'sullivan@cunninghaminfants.herts.sch.uk, asage@cunninghaminfants.herts.sch.uk

Why Federate?

For many years, both schools have had a reputation of being great schools with strong and established teams. More recently, the schools have worked more closely together to create a smoother transition for the children as they move up the school. Over the last few years, the national and local educational landscape has changed. There has been a reduction in the external support that is available from County and there is now more focus on schools working in partnership to support each other. There has also been a big reduction in budget shares, making collaboration a necessity to maintain the levels of provision in schools.

Working in partnership has already brought benefits to both schools, such as shared staffing, service provider contracts, school holidays, etc, as well as the opportunities that come from older children mixing with younger children, for example year 6 Playleaders working with infant children. A federation structure brings with it further exciting possibilities, such as greater contract sharing, career development, shared knowledge, training, which would benefit the staff and children. However, it would also make life easier for parents e.g. through a single payment system, uniform, website, etc.

Both schools already share a similar ethos and have a similar approach to working with parents. Our vision for the future is that we will continue to work collaboratively with our shared ethos, where every child achieves success, with security for our children and staff. This proposal is not about doing everything differently; it is about doing it even better.

Benefits for pupils

- Formalising the current relationship would add to the educational opportunities of the pupils. Entering into a formal federation will provide further stability to the pupils.
- A curriculum that provides a consistent progression of skills.
- A smoother transition between schools.
- Continued cross-school relationships will provide pupils with opportunities to take part in inter-school activities, to gain broader experiences through inter-school working and to feel part of a wider school community.
- The pupils will experience a strong and consistent leadership.
- Pupils will have access to shared staffing employed across the schools, such as the family support worker, mentor, etc.

Benefits for staff

- Opportunities for staff to move between the two schools to further their career development, making the schools better employers.
- Staff networks to share ideas and develop practice.
- Shared workload e.g. subject leaders.
- Broader understanding of starting points of children.

Benefits for parents

- Security and stability for their children.
- Children will experience strong, kind and consistent leadership across the schools.
- Assurance that their children are part of a broad cross-school community, with access to greater opportunity and wider experiences.
- Thorough oversight of the most vulnerable pupils and their safeguarding ensures that children are safe throughout their time in school.
- Single access points such as payment systems and website.
- Single uniform that can be passed down between siblings.
- Smoother transition between infant and junior age, with a more aligned curriculum and working practice in classrooms.

About the federation

A Shared Vision

The schools share the federation vision and ambition to provide a high-quality education and promote success for all pupils, regardless of their background, as well as focusing on their wellbeing, safety and happiness.

We provide a well-rounded education, developing social, emotional, creative and physical skills as well as promoting academic progress. We promote a love of learning to last beyond our schools.

We do this by providing schools with great teaching, strong leadership and tailor-made curriculums that prepare our pupils to go on to be confident, happy citizens of the world.

By working together, the schools are able to share expertise, resources, and create greater opportunities and capacity, whilst at the same time allowing each school to flourish.

Leadership and Governance

If the schools were to federate, the schools would be led under a single Executive Headteacher, who would be supported by a Senior Leadership Team that would work across both schools. The schools would be governed by a single governing board.

The federation's governing board members will be selected for their skills, expertise and understanding they bring to benefit the strategic development of the federation of schools to secure the best possible outcomes for every pupil. In doing so, the governing board will look to secure a membership which has a balance of knowledge and regular interaction with both schools.

It is proposed that the new governing board will consist of 12 governors. This proposed composition reflects statutory requirements. The admissions authority for the schools within the federation will be Hertfordshire County Council.

1 ex-officio	Appointed due to the nature of their role.
2 parent governors	Elected by the parents and carers of children registered at the schools.
1 local authority governor	Nominated by Hertfordshire County Council and appointed by the governing board.
1 staff governor	Elected by staff employed across both schools.
7 Co-opted governors	Appointed by the governing board and selected for the skills, expertise and understanding they bring to benefit the strategic development of the federation of schools.

The shared governance structure of a federation will allow the schools to:

- work together efficiently and sustainably to raise standards, improve services and increase opportunities for pupils and staff;
- monitor performance across the schools;
- compare curriculum interventions across the schools and promote good practice quickly; and
- share resources, staff, expertise and facilities.

What will happen after this consultation?

The consultation period starts on **7 February 2020** and closes at **1:00pm** on **27 March 2020**.

The governing boards of both schools will meet to consider the views gathered from the consultation. They will then decide as separate governing boards whether to proceed with the proposal. If both governing boards decide to proceed, the intention will be for Cunningham Hill Junior School and Cunningham Hill Infant School to form a federation on 1 September 2020. If it is decided that no federation should take place, the schools will continue as they are currently.

Frequently asked Questions:

Why don't the schools just amalgamate?

Amalgamation is an irreversible step that involves closing both schools and re-opening as one single school. Although this option hasn't been ruled out in the future, federation enables the schools to work as if amalgamated, but without it being set in stone. In the future, the schools may choose to continue as a federation or may decide to take the next step to amalgamation.

What has driven this decision to federate now and why hasn't it been considered in the past?

Increasing pressures on school budgets has meant that schools have been looking at ways to save money on products or services. Also over the years, parents have commented that they would prefer it if they had the same systems or one system across both schools. Furthermore, more recently, a number of separate infant and junior schools have amalgamated or federated with very positive outcomes and now seems the right time for our schools to take this step.

Will the admissions process change for moving up to the junior school?

No. The admission arrangements will remain exactly as they are at present – this would only change if the schools amalgamated into one school. However, the schools are linked anyway and this is high on the admissions criteria.

Will the arrangements be fair to all schools?

Yes. Any arrangements made as part of the federation will be made with both schools' best interests in mind.

Will all the changes be made ready for September 2020?

No, we want this to be a gradual process in the most part and so most changes will be made over the next year or so, to ensure it is a smooth transition.

Will the uniform change?

We are hoping to change the uniform so that it is the same for both schools. We will consult with the children and parents before this happens but there will be a transition time to move over so that pupils can change over as they grow out of their present uniform.

Will staff have to change schools?

In some cases, staff may move between the schools to pursue their own career development and to implement specialist knowledge in the other school. However, no staff member will be made to do this against their will.

What happens if we want to de-federate later on?

If the proposal to federate is accepted, the governing board will review the arrangement in a years' time. If it is decided to end federation at any time, there is a standard process for this.

Who will have a say on this proposal?

We have published the consultation on each of the schools' websites and are seeking views from all pupils, parents and staff and any other stakeholders and the local community.

- **Mrs Rondi Allan**, Chair of Governors of Cunningham Hill Junior School, via governor@cunninghamhill-jun.herts.sch.uk
- **Mrs Anna O'Sullivan, Mr Alex Sage**, Joint Chair of Governors of Cunningham Hill Infant School, via ao'sullivan@cunninghaminfants.herts.sch.uk, or asage@cunninghaminfants.herts.sch.uk

How can I find out more and let you know what I think?

The events detailed below, designed as drop-in meetings, will provide parents, carers and the wider community with an opportunity to speak to the governors about the proposal to form a federation between the two schools. If you are unable to attend one of these scheduled dates, please get in touch with the office of one of the schools and we will do our best to arrange for someone to speak to you.

Venue	Audience	Date	Time
Cunningham Hill Junior School	Parents, community members	Wednesday 12 th February 2020	7.00pm
Cunningham Hill Infant School	Parents, community members	Friday 14 th February 2020	2.30pm