

Newlands Federation Consultation Report

Purpose

This report details the results and analysis of the Shere C of E (VA) Infant School and Nursery (Shere) and Clandon C of E (VA) Primary School (Clandon) consultation on the proposal to formally federate as the Newlands C of E School Federation (Newlands Federation).

Consultation period and conduct

Following the decision by Shere and Clandon schools' respective Governing Bodies to move towards a Federation, the Formal Proposal for the Newlands Federation was published on 14th December 2020. During the week following publication the required statutory parties listed in The School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2012 were informed as well as large sectors of the relevant communities. The Formal Proposal, an explanatory consultation document and a comprehensive FAQ sheet was published on both school websites for the entire period. A bespoke email address was made available for anyone to respond to with regard to the consultation.

The Regulations require that a minimum six-week formal consultation period is undertaken following the publication of the formal proposals. The consultation period ran from 18th December 2020 to 12th February 2021 a total of eight weeks, extended to include the Christmas and New Year period. All through the eight weeks the proposal documents were readily available on both school websites or upon request. At the halfway stage the consultation was readvertised via Parentmail, Googlegroups and a reminder was placed in the Shere Parish magazine.

A staff webinar was held on the 13th January 2021. This was well attended by nearly all Shere and Clandon staff and the Governing Bodies were represented by members of the Federation's Joint Working Group (JWG). Two parent webinars were planned for the last week of the consultation period but because of the lack of people registering this was reduced to one session, readvertised, and held on the evening of the 8th February 2021 where members of the JWG made themselves available for questions. Four people, including parents and members of the community, registered and participated in the session.

An informal virtual meeting was held on the 27th January 2021 at the request of the Diocese and LA with the Chairs of both governing bodies and the chair of the JWG. This gave all parties the opportunity to ask and

clarify elements of the process and federation. At this meeting both the Diocese and LA expressed their support for the federation. The Diocese Board of Education has given its full support to the Federation proposal (Appendix B)

Response analysis

There were a total of twelve responses received to the Newlands consultation email address and a further three responses received by other means.

There were no negative or unsupportive responses.

There were thirteen responses expressly noting their support. (Appendix A lists all comments)

Questions were raised on the following issues:

- The impact on the Shere Nursery.
- Direct access (feeder) from Shere to Clandon school.
- Impact on staff contracts and where staff would be required to work.
- The number of parent governors.
- The risks of federating.
- Would federating make it easier or harder to recruit staff.

All queries were dealt with to the satisfaction of the enquirer at the time they were raised but brief answers to each were:

- No impact on day to day running. It is governor led so will become responsibility Newlands Federation Governing Body.
- This cannot be achieved immediately, there are several hurdles to overcome but will be a strategic aim of the new Governing Body.
- This will be subject to TUPE regulations.
- Numbers and categories (and relative proportion of categories) of governors are regulated by statute.
- There are substantial risks in not federating. Having collaborated for many months and running shared governor committees and shared staff the schools are now very familiar with each other. This together with a slow methodical approach to the process and conducting a due diligence exercise risks have been mitigated.
- On balance and from experience of others the wider options available to staff now would make it easier to recruit staff.

The number of enquiries and responses were lower than anticipated but this was probably down to a number of reasons not least the fact that the two schools have now been collaborating for some time and people have been able to see first-hand how the two schools can work successfully together. A large amount of material was made available at the outset which provided the necessary information. The effect of the pandemic obviously played a role as parents had many other priorities to deal with. A more “normal” consultation with meetings in school halls, for example, may have encouraged a greater participation but it was reassuring that there was not a single comment made against the proposal.

Requirement to amend proposal

The consultation did not raise any issue that necessitated a change to the proposal, but the questions highlighted some areas that need to be at the forefront of a new Newlands Governing Body’s strategic thinking.

Next step

On 8th March 2021 the School Governing Bodies will jointly consider the responses to the consultation and consider whether any changes need to be made to the proposals. Each Governing Body will then separately and consider and vote on whether to Federate.

Appendix A – Comments received during Consultation Period

Comments received during consultation
(identities have been removed)
<p>I'm writing to express my support for the federation of these two village schools. As a parent of a Shere school child, I welcome any route that protects the learning environment of a small school at those young ages and hopefully protects the progression through from infant and primary school but exposing children to different locations and environments rather than developing only in a 'bubble'. I would welcome the opportunity for my Shere child to continue her education at Clandon for the older years of primary school and with two younger children, I would welcome developing transport between the schools or a setup that makes that accessible for parents of children in the Shere catchment that would like that continuity and potentially vice versa. My only alternative to schools in Clandon/Chilworth is then Dorking but I'd be keen to continue schooling under Surrey County Council rather than having my children split across districts.</p>
<p>As a benefactor, sometime governor and car park fabricator, I think the proposal is a splendid one and will benefit both Schools and both Villages.</p>
<p>Member of staff and Foundation governor at Clandon. The current collaboration between Clandon and Shere Schools, in place since September 2019, is working well and I am in favour of the proposed Federation to formalise this arrangement. Small village schools such as Clandon and Shere are likely to struggle to survive unless they group into small local hubs such as this Federation would produce.</p>

Dear James, Thank you for your e-mail of 14th Dec, alerting the village of East Clandon to the proposed school federation.

Overall, I am in favour of the proposal for a single Governing body that will reduce the amount of Governor input without impacting on the independence of the Governors.

My only concern is that there is only one parental Governor for each school on the Board of Trustees. I am not sure that the document makes it clear why parental Governors are in such a minority, but in my limited experience, they added a lot to the Trustee team. Perhaps parents do not volunteer to be Trustees these days, but I think that is a loss in Governance balance.

Just a thought,

I fully support the proposed federation of Shere Church of England Infant School with Clandon Church of England Primary School.

I am fully in agreement with the ethos of federation between the two schools.

I can see, however, that the benefits might be perceived as somewhat one-way – particularly by some parents of children attending Shere School. They have already experienced a less visible and available head teacher and the loss of two well-respected teachers. This will undoubtedly engender some negative reactions.

Parents are also less likely to find the more hidden benefits such as sharing of ideas and best practice, training and career opportunities compelling. Their view is, understandably, narrower, more insular and less concerned with the bigger picture.

In ‘selling’ the idea to Shere parents, regardless of how negative or positive they may be, one potential and vital benefit has to be the securing of a place for their child in a Junior School with a similar ethos. The geographical position of Shere has always been a problem with regard to being chosen as a feeder school. Over the 23 years I have lived in the village, the angst and drama caused by the vagaries of selection has always been a huge disadvantage. It has, on occasion, caused parents to turn their back on the benefits of a Shere Infant education in favour of the security of an all-through Primary.

Here is a golden opportunity for parents and pupils alike, the peace of mind to have just a short journey to Yrs 3-6 and the continuation of both the educational ethos and staying with friends. As a selling point it has to be a winner – and yet there is, for me, one concern in the federation document; each school is to retain its own admissions policy. What guarantee will there be that every Shere School pupil whose parents wish them to continue on to Clandon will have a place?

I think it is great that there is the opportunity to blend our precious local schools into one securing their longevity.

My 2 children attended Clandon School, they loved it and we loved it!

Good luck with making it happen, I hope red tape doesn't stifle the energy and passion.

I support the proposed Federation of Shere CoE School and Clandon CoE School. I believe that the Federation will improve the learning opportunities for the pupils, providing a fuller more rounded education and save valuable time and money.

I am writing to let you both know that I am fully in favour of this proposed federation. I feel that there are lots of positives to come from this partnership and in many aspects, it already feels like the two school communities are working as one. Small rural schools are being told they can no longer stand alone and I fear that, if this federation did not go ahead, each school could be forced into an alternative collaboration with less favourable terms.

I am writing to support the proposals which appear to improve efficiency and governance while retaining an appropriate degree of independence for the two schools. We are a very local family , living opposite the Clandon School and are very keen to see it and all its pupils flourish.

I fully support Clandon and Shere Schools federating under one shared Governing Body. It will bring many advantages to both schools, which are already happening under shared leadership. Vicky Voller has made numerous positive changes to Clandon School, which include the Nurture Room and Forest School.

1. It seems as if the two schools will joined together but not joined! Together but separate. How will Federation impact on the Nursery? Will the Admission's Policy be changed?

2. Will there be places at Clandon for Shere pupils from 7 – 11 years?

A successful period of collaboration combined with reserach done in depth, auger well for a great future for both schools which importantly, will retain their individual identities and links to their communities. I'm a great supporter of the idea that one size doesn't suit all. The schools will not be at the bottom of the food chain which they might well be in an Academy. I don't believe staying as things are is a real option these days. the improved opportunities for staff development & collaboration promise to be very valuable. The fact that both the Local Authority & the Diocese are in favour and that both Governing Bodies are unanimous in wanting to go for Federation gives me added reason to support this.

Nothing is without risk but the risks of Federating are, in my mind, substantially less than those of doing nothing.

In Vicky Voller whose track record in Shere speaks for itself, you have the est Head I can imagine to lead this.

I wish you God speed.

Dear James,

I've read through all the information about the proposed Federation to be formed between Clandon Primary School and Shere Infant School, and I am convinced that you are taking the best approach for both schools. I am pleased to read that you intend to preserve the identity of both schools whilst offering the support that both these small establishments need to stay afloat. Combining the strengths and experience of both sets of staff will give the teachers more scope for cooperation and peer-support, which will, in turn, be beneficial to everyone, including the pupils.

Speaking as both a teacher and a former Governor of Clandon School, I can see the benefits that a Federation would bring to the school, and therefore I am pleased to offer my support to the proposal.

This whole venture must have taken an incredible amount of time and effort to reach this consultation stage, and no doubt there is much more to come. Thank you for taking on this important project, and I wish you all the best for its conclusion.

Kind regards - and good luck!

Appendix B - letter from Diocesan Board of Education

16 February 2021

Mr J Culmer
Chair of Governors
Clandon CofE VA Primary School

And
Mrs M Walton
Chair of Governors
Shere CofE VA Infant School and Nursery

Dear Mr Culmer and Mrs Walton

Consultation on the proposed federation of Clandon CofE VA Primary and Shere CofE VA Infant School and Nursery

Dear Mr Culmer and Mrs Walton

Thank you very much for sending your statutory consultation documents on the proposal to set up a hard federation between your two schools to the Diocesan Board of Education and the Diocesan Board of Finance. I am sorry that it has taken us a while to respond formally; happily, you are already aware of diocesan support for your proposal from my letter to you in November 2019, officer meetings and informal communication between us.

The Executive Committee of the DBE considered the statutory proposal at their meeting on 27 January 2021 and are pleased to offer their support to the proposal and agreement to the governing body constitution. The School Organisation Strategy 'Shaping our Future' affirms the DBE's support for the vital role which small schools play in the rural communities but also encourages them to consider structural collaboration to secure a successful and sustainable future. The DBE is therefore encouraged at the careful development of the partnership between your two schools. We know that the extended period of joint working has been instrumental in building the sense of shared vision and purpose, has strengthened relationships at every level and secured strong foundations for the structural collaboration on which you are now consulting.

In my letter of November 2019 advising you of the DBE's initial response to your proposal, I raised with you two points, the first about the assessment of risks around the proposal and how

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governors had sought to mitigate them. The second was for confirmation that governors consider that the proposal is financially sound. I am confident that your governing bodies will have addressed these issues in the course of preparing for the consultation but would be grateful for confirmation that this has taken place and that you are satisfied with the outcome.

The DBE is aware that both governing bodies will need to consider the outcome of the consultation individually before deciding collectively how to proceed. However, if the two schools decide to move ahead to federation (which we hope very much you will), I would be pleased to be involved in the inauguration if I'm available. I would hope its ripples bring cause for celebration far beyond Clandon and Shere! Perhaps you could let me know as your plans emerge.

With all good wishes



Rt Rev Dr Jo Bailey Wells
Bishop of Dorking
Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education

