

26<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

As you are aware there have been a lot of changes within education recently which have challenged school communities to think more creatively to ensure that we are best placed to keep our thriving village schools open for children in future years. Financial pressures are forcing schools to look at innovative and cost effective solutions, and the strains placed on schools during the pandemic have demonstrated the benefits of working in partnership. Some years ago Doddiscombsleigh Primary School entered into a long-term management partnership arrangement with the United Schools Federation, the aim of which was to provide experienced leadership and operational support. Governors have monitored the success of this partnership and would now like to propose to make the arrangement a permanent one whereby Doddiscombsleigh would join the United Schools Federation. The enlarged federation will continue to share the Executive leadership of Martin Harding.

As most of you 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 processes will remain the same. The schools within the enlarged federation will share one governing board made up from representatives from all school communities and ensuring that the Christian distinctiveness of the church schools within the federation will continue to be upheld.

There is no single blue print for federation; each federation is tailored to the needs of the different schools and communities that are involved. There are currently approximately 30 federations across Devon involving over 80 schools, with the first federations in Devon forming in 2006 and many others considering this as 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. Marys Brixton, Ipplepen and Stokeinteignhead 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 with a Head of School within each school as there is now. The Heads of School will continue to focus their energies on teaching, learning and standards. The federation will have one 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 single governing board includes representation for parents and staff, foundation (church) governors (because United Schools Federation includes church schools), foundation (Trust) governors (because USF includes a Co-Operative Trust School), 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, 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 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

### **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 May half-term holiday - starting on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

Governors would welcome your views and you are invited to comment and respond by **Monday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021 at 3-30 p.m.** Comments should be addressed to 'The Chair of Governors' for your school and may be emailed to [usf@stmichaels.education](mailto:usf@stmichaels.education) for any school.

If you would like to discuss the federation with your Chair of Governors (Doddiscombsleigh – Mr. Simon Gray or 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 (socially distanced) meeting at Doddiscombsleigh Primary School on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 6.00 p.m. However, in order that places can be allocated safely we would ask you to pre-book your place by emailing [usf@stmichaels.education](mailto:usf@stmichaels.education) by Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

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 June.

Yours sincerely

Mr. Simon Gray  
Chair of Governors  
Doddiscombsleigh Primary School

Mr. Nicholas Glanfield  
Chair of Governors  
United Schools Federation

Martin Harding  
Executive Headteacher