

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What would the Federation Leadership Structure look like according to the new proposal?

Federation Executive Leadership Team

It is proposed that this would be made up of two Heads of School, a Head of Sixth Form, a Federation Business and Resources Manager and the Executive Headteacher. This team would lead on the strategy for the Federation and co-ordinate actions within the schools, responding to the needs of each school as they arise.

Executive Headteacher (EHT)

The EHT position would be open to internal and external applicants and the appointed person would:

- Provide strong strategic leadership for secondary education in Whitby – someone who has time for planning/evaluation at Federation level. The EHT will also lead on the development of wider educational opportunities and partnerships and ensure that decisions are taken in the interests of all secondary students.
- Support and hold Heads of School accountable.
- Spend a proportion of their time in both schools supporting the work of the Heads of Schools.
- Remove the current vulnerability that exists within the Federation structure, as true collaboration currently depends on the relationship between the two Headteachers.
- Lead an executive team which can develop the Federation in a fair and collaborative way.
- Develop partnerships and develop the use of Scoresby site.
- Bring in funding and investment.
- Bring coherence to the overall educational offer.

Heads of School (HoS)

The Heads of School would hold the day-to-day responsibilities of running a school. They would be the public face of the school in interactions with parents. They would work with the Executive Head on strategic aspects and would also work together with the other HoS through the Executive Leadership Team.

Recruitment

The posts of Executive Headteacher and Heads of School would all be advertised internally and externally. Governors would use the discussions held this term with staff to inform recruitment and shape the interview process for the Executive Headteacher. It is also the Governors' intention that staff, students and the community would have a role to play in the interview process.

Why do we need an Executive Headteacher?

At the moment, the success of the federation is dependent on having a consistently good working relationship between the two Heads. This is a situation which poses a significant risk to the federation as collaboration is not actually built into its structure. That is why previous pre-federation collaborations between the schools have come and gone depending on who was in charge.

A federation that functions badly poses a significant risk to all of us. Poor communication, misunderstandings, competing interests could soon damage relations between the schools, despite our best intentions. Furthermore, in the current difficult economic climate, the two schools need to

work together to support each other. An Executive Head would see that efficiencies are realised in a fair and effective way.

The federation needs someone who has overall responsibility and accountability for driving it forward, someone who can take decisions in the best interests of all Whitby students, not of just one particular school

2. Can we afford the new structure?

Yes, we can as the changes would be covered to a great extent by money in the 'leadership pot'. There would be some savings on current Headteacher salaries and through changes within the senior leadership teams. We also intend, in due course, to create some opportunities for Middle Leaders by extending their roles. The cost of the EHT would be shared proportionally between the two schools. This post would not be funded by other staff cuts – staffing levels are determined by the number of pupils in the school.

The Business and Resources Manager and Head of WSF posts are not brand new posts and are therefore not part of this consultation. We will be seeking to work with the staff undertaking those duties at the moment to adjust their roles and responsibilities accordingly.

The Governors have worked closely with the Local Authority (LA) to explore the opportunities and implications of several financial scenarios and to use those scenarios as a guide in shaping the development of these proposals. The LA consider that this proposal is both strategically and financially sound.

To have an EHT is an investment for the future; it will allow leadership time for the development of educational initiatives within the curriculum and develop links with the community.

An EHT would seek to bring in additional funding and to develop new income-generating initiatives

An EHT would lead on ensuring the most efficient use of resources across the Federation. Governors are very conscious of the talents and aspirations of staff in both schools and will be seeking to give opportunity to staff in both schools to enhance and develop their careers.

3. Will funding for this post be achieved through other redundancies?

The Governors have no plans to make redundancies elsewhere in order to pay for this post. The situation is complex, with many other considerations about current and future needs to be taken into account. Governors are committed to taking approaches that increase rather than reduce capacity and opportunities within the Federation.

4. Is this a merger?

No, this is not a merger. The Governors wish to make the current federation structure work and we are committed to retaining the two schools. The individual identity of a school is made up of the people in it, its particular ethos and history. The governors have no intention of imposing uniformity on the two schools. There will be some commonality in the way the schools are expected to report to the Executive Headteacher and the Governing Body, but this will not impact on how teaching and learning happens; nor will it impact on the curriculum in a wider sense.

The schools will still have separate DfE numbers and admissions processes and each school will have its own Head, responsible for day-to-day running of the schools. The two schools will continue to maintain separate budgets.

Each school will continue to have its own uniform, mission statement and ethos. These are currently different in the two schools but are also aligned and reflect the values of the Federation.

5. Is there a plan to create one school?

No, there is no plan to create one school. The previous answer shows some of the many ways in which the schools are separate and unique. Even if they wanted to, it would be very difficult for the governors to close one of the schools, particularly if they are both rated good, have healthy rolls, are financially sound and popular with their local community.

Whilst this is not our plan, we need to acknowledge that external drivers could force such a change at some point in the future. However, the Governors are committed to the current Federation structure as the best solution for Whitby. That is why the changes proposed for this year are necessary, in order to make the Federation sustainable in the long-term.

6. Why not create one school?

There are sound financial reasons for creating one school and in 2015/16 the Local Authority consulted for closure of Eskdale. Due to the strength of feeling amongst the Eskdale community this was not carried through and it was incumbent on the Governing Bodies of both schools to accept and respect that decision.

However, both schools and especially the Sixth Form, were left extremely vulnerable and it was recognised that both schools needed to collaborate more, in order to keep a quality Sixth Form for all Whitby students and to enable both schools to be sustainable in the long-term. It was also recognised that competition and hostility between the two schools is detrimental to students' education. Therefore, in November 2018 the Governors of Eskdale School and Caedmon College consulted on the formation of a Federation and this was formally implemented on 7th July 2019.

The commitment made by the two Governing Boards and the new Federation Governing Body was to the maintenance of two schools and a shared sixth form. This model can work and does work and the governors believe that an Executive Head is the essential step in stabilising this system. Furthermore, closer working will help us to resolve the financial problems of the last five years. We believe that we are putting in the solid foundations for education here in Whitby - whether it remains a Federation or becomes one school is for another generation to decide.

7. Do the two schools need to compete for numbers?

As a Federation, it is really important that both schools thrive. It is no longer acceptable for one school to seek to prosper at the expense of the other school.

We need to ensure that there are adequate numbers of pupils in both schools – this is important for their financial viability.

We also need to ensure that there are reasonably stable numbers year on year in each school – this allows for future planning and the best use of resources. The Governors and LA may consider, at some point in the future, making adjustments to the Planned Admission Numbers (PANs) of both schools so that they reflect changing demographics in terms of recent and future numbers.

In this, as in all things, we need to work together and not compete. From now on there will be joint communications and visits to primary schools by Heads and staff and coordinated open days/transition processes.

8. Whitby Sixth Form

The Governors are committed to making the Sixth Form the best it can be, serving the needs of as many young people as possible.

Developing the Sixth Form to meet the needs of students over the next generation needs time and energy and will be one of the tasks of the Executive Headteacher together with the Head of Sixth Form.

One frequently asked question surrounds the viability of maintaining three sites.

It is true that the reduction in CCW's numbers has made Scoresby a greater drag on its finances. Governors have considered the option of moving the Sixth Form back onto the Normanby site. This would mean that the Sixth Form would have a smaller, more academic offer, and many students, including some of our most vulnerable, would have to travel about twenty miles for their Post 16 education.

Governors believe that that option does not serve the needs of Whitby students. We believe that we should be more ambitious and work to expand the current Sixth Form; catering for a wide range of abilities and needs. We need to encourage as many students as possible to stay in Whitby for their P16 education. We should build upon our current offer by looking to increase our vocational pathways. We should also build on the current pastoral care, enrichment opportunities and other post-16 pathways which make our Post-16 offer so special. This is the Governors' vision for Whitby Sixth Form, it is what the Federation was founded on.

The Governors also wish to develop the Scoresby site as a hub for the community with other activities such as adult education, initiatives with local businesses and other education partners. We would like to increase facilities for local groups and potential income-generating schemes such as increased camping facilities.

12. What is the long-term vision for the Federation and for each individual school? Do the two schools have to have the same values and ethos?

Governors began working with the two Headteachers nearly two years ago on establishing the vision and values which underpin the Federation. We very much regret that the Covid crisis made it very difficult for us to involve the wider school community as much as we hoped.

We worked together to agree our vision for 2024 and to set the priorities that will get us to where we need to be. The Headteachers have taken on the responsibility for working together to prepare an operational plan for the federation. Each Head then works with their own teams to translate that into the school development plans.

Governors believe in the need to achieve consistency across the Federation through a shared vision and common values. However, we do not believe that consistency is the same as uniformity or that uniformity necessarily achieves consistency. We expect some things to play out differently in the schools. What is most important is for us to be travelling in the same direction, towards the same ultimate destination, where there is plenty of room for two good schools and a sixth form working together at the heart of the community.