



6th March 2023

Consultation on the federation of Iford & Kingston C of E Primary School with Skylark Federation

Consultation start date: Monday 6th March 2023

Consultation end date: Monday 1st May 2023

The governors of Iford & Kingston CE School believe that federation is the key to future sustainability, not only maintaining our school but helping us grow it and improve it for our children today and in years to come.

Our aims

Our key aim is to ensure that our children will have access to an outstanding, well-run school that provides them with an excellent, well-rounded education, working in partnership with parents/carers and the wider community. We want to encourage our children to have aspirations that lead to great achievements as they learn and grow in a caring, safe and friendly community of schools.

Our school currently has a strong ethos of care, good behaviour and hard work. We wish to maintain and develop this ethos and strong sense of community, building on the success of our existing collaboration with Skylark Federation.

We would like to formalise the closer working relationship that has been forged between the school and Skylark by joining the federation. We look forward to entering into a consultation period where we can tell you more about our proposals and find out your views.

What is a federation?

A federation is where two or more schools work very closely together under one governing body. Each school remains legally separate and parents/carers and pupils should see no change. Federation is not a merger or a conversion to an academy; it represents a stable, long-term commitment to working in partnership to the benefit of children in all schools.

Federation means that all schools:

- retain their own character and identity,
- continue to be registered separately with Ofsted, retain their existing judgments and continue to be maintained by the local authority,
- have a single governing body that would set the strategic direction across all schools and ensure educational and financial sustainability and accountability,
- continue with their current admission arrangements which would remain the responsibility of East Sussex County Council.

Our proposal

The proposal is for Iford and Kingston CE School to federate with Skylark Federation, starting on **1st September 2023**. Skylark Federation currently consists of Barcombe CE, Plumpton and Hamsey schools.

Iford and Kingston CE School entered into an official collaboration with Skylark in September 2022. By working collaboratively, we been able to develop consistent educational approaches and share skills and expertise across all the school communities.

Should the federation go ahead, it will be led by an Executive Headteacher, who oversees all schools, with a Head of School in each school to oversee the teaching and learning and day-to-day management. The Executive Headteacher will spend a portion of their week in each of the federated schools whereas the Head of School would be permanently based at Iford and Kingston.

Why form a federation?

We wish to sustain and continue to improve education for children in our communities. We are aware of the vulnerability of rural schools which operate as a single entity and recognise the federation model as mutually supportive. It brings an opportunity to achieve economies of scale to secure financial stability and sustainability into the future.

Federation has been fully discussed among governors and with the local authority and we feel it is the best way to achieve our goals and secure a supportive future for our school.

Why choose Skylark?

There are various reasons why we believe Skylark is the right federation for us to join:

- It is local to us and has similar communities, both geographically and demographically.
- The Federation's stated mission is to preserve and strengthen rural primary schools.
- The three existing schools are thriving and expanding, with Good or Outstanding Ofsted ratings.
- Skylark successfully incorporates a Church of England school (Barcombe) alongside two Community schools (Plumpton and Hamsey). As a second CE school, Iford and Kingston's Christian values would be respected and retained.
- The Federation is well respected by the local authority.
- We were impressed in our meetings and visits by the Federation's leaders and schools.

The benefits and opportunities of federating

There are greatly improved opportunities for staff and children at each school to interact, learn from each other and share best practice.

For children:

- Children will have greater access to specialist expertise from each school's current staff and a wider range of resources to broaden their curriculum (eg. in-school forest school and other non-core activities).
- Children within the federation will continue to receive even more effective teaching and learning, enriched by collaborative working and enhanced resources across both schools.
- Children will have increased opportunity to meet and work with other children in a wider community.

For parents/carers and communities:

- It strengthens the ability of our schools to develop and improve while maximising our ability to cope with changes in educational policy, enabling us to continue to provide excellent education in our villages.
- It provides the opportunity to develop the relationship between our village communities, to the benefit of all.
- Communities benefit from a long-term, stable school structure.

For staff:

- Leadership will be secured for the future and staff development opportunities will enable our schools to retain valued staff.
- Shared staff meetings and combined staff training have the effect of widening the circle of peers that our staff can call upon for fresh and creative ideas and support.
- Shared ideas and resources help staff avoid needless duplication of effort and materials and will allow for more time to be devoted to teaching and learning.
- Increased joint working enables us to develop our subject leads across all the schools as well as giving us an opportunity to jointly develop and plan our school curriculum to the benefit of all our pupils.
- It will enhance our capacity to respond effectively to the changes in assessment and curriculum.

For governors:

- A single governing body will be formed to replace the existing governing bodies. This new single group of governors will be able to benefit from shared experience and good practice.
- The membership of the governing body will be skills based, with appropriate representation from all schools.

The governing body

The role of the federated governing body will be to:

- ensure that the character of each school is maintained whilst moving forward as one,
- define a shared vision and strategic direction for the schools that places the children at its heart,
- ensure due diligence and financial probity, and honest and effective financial management,
- hold the Executive Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the schools.

There would be a maximum of 18 governors, of which there would be:

- 2 x parent-elected governors (elected across the 4 schools)
- 1 x Executive Headteacher
- 3 Diocese representatives (Foundation Governors)
- 1 x local authority governor
- 1 x staff-elected governor
- Up to 10 x co-opted governors (elected for their skills, knowledge and expertise)

This structure complies with Department for Education regulations regarding the constitution of governing bodies.

Staffing

Joining Skylark Federation in itself will not imply any change in the schools' current staffing teams. The Executive Headteacher, supported by the leadership team, will lead and manage the Federation. Staffing levels will continue to be determined by each school's need and budget.

Federation will allow employment of specialists and new staff across all schools when vacancies arise.

What are the timescales?

Governing Bodies of Skylark Federation and Iford & Kingston CE School are bound by Department for Education regulations that dictate the process to be followed.

Stage	What will happen?	When will it happen?
6-week stakeholder consultation	During this stage the consultation document is widely circulated for comment.	Monday 6th March to Monday 1st May 2023
Decision	The Joint Executive Committee of the collaboration meets to discuss the consultation responses and makes a recommendation to the two governing bodies whether to proceed with federation.	Tuesday 9th May 2023
Notification	If both governing bodies agree to federate, parents/carers and other key stakeholders will be advised in writing of the governing bodies' decisions.	w/c Monday 22nd May 2023
Outcome	If both governing bodies agree to federate, a new governing body will be formed and federation will take place on 1st September 2023.	June/July

What do you think?

We would like to hear your views.

Please complete the accompanying response form and return it as requested by 1st May 2023.