

A proposal that Church Hill Nursery and Low Hall Nursery Schools form a Hard Federation from 1 February 2015

A consultation document produced jointly by both Nursery Schools

The governing bodies of Church Hill Nursery School and Low Hall Nursery School are consulting on their proposal to establish a Hard Federation between both schools from 1 February 2015.

Church Hill Nursery School and Low Hall Nursery School:

- Both Church Hill Nursery School and Low Hall Nursery School are schools maintained by the local authority and are based in different parts of Walthamstow.
- Church Hill Nursery School is a local authority nursery school provision for 3-5 year olds of 60 full-time equivalent with 16 full-time day-care places. It is developing early educational provision for 2 year olds on a separate site, which will open in 2015. Low Hall Nursery School is a nursery school provision for 2-5 year olds of 60 full-time children, including 15 full-time day-care places.
- Both schools have been judged as providing outstanding (Church Hill – July 2012 and Low Hall – November 2011) early educational provision to three–five year olds in their most recent Ofsted Inspections.
- Both schools offer additional Extended Services and manage Children’s Centres that provide multi-professional services based on several sites for children from birth to five and their families.
- The Children’s Centres have been judged to be good in the most recent Ofsted inspections and the local authority’s annual reviews.
- Waltham Forest Nursery Schools have a well-established commitment to working in partnership and in the past have been formally linked through the Nursery Schools’ Forum. Through this partnership work the schools’ leaders have been able to deliver on borough-wide training and professional development across the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors. There has also been a pattern of collaboration in the development of the Children’s Centre programme.
- In Waltham Forest there is strong evidence that children attending its Nursery Schools make very good progress in all areas of learning and manage the transition to full-time statutory education well.
- In working collaboratively the 2 schools have been able to develop consistent educational approaches and share skills and expertise within the 2 school communities and beyond.
- Both schools are well placed to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of the diverse multi-lingual communities in Walthamstow, and have a long history of promoting early bilingualism in high-quality educational provision. There is excellent support for children who are new to communicating in English.
- Both schools have embedded specialist knowledge of planning, assessment, teaching and playful learning within the birth to five EYFS framework. Both have a strong track record in setting high standards in early years education and in securing good quality inclusive practice where children achieve well and make good progress. Children leave the schools ready and well prepared for the transition into full-time education.

- Both schools have developed strong professional links with the primary schools which children move on to, so that their transitions are supported and their early achievements are sustained. The schools are already working together to develop consistent transition records of achievement.
- The schools are noted for the support given to children with special educational needs and/or disabilities that might influence their progress and educational achievements.
- Throughout the UK, nursery schools have been recognised for decades as an excellent model of early education provision. Nursery school staff are well-qualified educators and teachers who have specialist knowledge of child development and early learning and teaching. Where partnerships between schools and other early years settings develop more children benefit from expertise being shared. Both Church Hill and Low Hall Nursery Schools have developed links with their communities, parents, carers and local childcare providers in order to promote the best possible educational experiences for young local children.
- Both schools are engaged in educational approaches and programmes that give young children a voice in how they are assessed, taught and supported to learn and develop.

Why collaborate?

- Even closer collaboration between the two schools has been put in place since the resignation of the substantive headteacher at Low Hall Nursery School when the headteacher at Church Hill Nursery School took on an interim headteacher role at Low Hall in autumn 2013. During the year 2013-14 there has been regular co-operative work between managers, administrative and teaching staff from both schools. Members of both school Governing Bodies have met and worked together to develop an overview of high-quality early years education in the Walthamstow context. There are strong signs that this interim arrangement is having a good impact.
- In working collaboratively the 2 schools have been able to develop consistent educational approaches and share skills and expertise within the 2 school communities and beyond.

What is a Hard Federation?

- A hard federation means Church Hill Nursery School and Low Hall Nursery School come together under a single Governing Body, rather than the current two. Both schools retain their existing names and Department for Education (DfE) numbers.
- Each school would have distinct legal identities with regards to matters such as admissions, Early Years Foundation Stage assessment and Ofsted inspections. Each would continue to manage children's centre services and offer extended childcare and two year old educational provision for the area.
- The single Governing Body would contain parent and staff representatives from both schools and meet each term to plan and monitor the strategic use of resources across both schools, e.g. finance, staffing, premises and children's centre services. Separate committees would be tasked with holding each school

to account for the quality and standards of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision and extended services for the local community.

- By entering into a formal partnership through a federation the nursery schools are able to retain their separate and unique identities and pool their wide-ranging knowledge, skills and experiences of good quality early years education. Together governors, staff and parents can strengthen their advocacy for school-based education for children under five and ensure there is consistency in the high quality of the educational offer at both schools.
- Governors and staff at both schools want to build on past successes and ensure the schools have a future in a national climate of change and challenge.

The most important reasons for federating are set out below. Other reasons and possible concerns about creating a Hard Federation are covered in the main text of the Consultation Document in the Question and Answer section.

The benefits and opportunities of federating:

For children:

- Both schools are proud of their long history in serving their local communities and this is reflected in the character and ethos of the two schools, which have always taken a child-focussed approach to education. The needs, interests and views of young children are always the first priority of staff, governors and parents as they plan and review provision. The two schools will be able to work together to strengthen this 'child-first' ethos and a single Governing Body will secure consistently high standards of education for all children.
- The good links established with key workers will be maintained and managers will continue to ensure children learn, develop and achieve to their best potential in the company of experienced early years educators and teachers. There will be greater opportunities for the 2 schools to share resources and to budget together to bring in more specialists and performers for example for Music, Art and Dance. The two schools will be able to organise combined educational visits and events so children can broaden their knowledge of other communities living in Walthamstow.
- As the young children become more technologically competent they can form digital links with children in the other nursery school. This will help their language, communication and early literacy skills to grow.

For parents and communities:

- Both schools will continue to offer free early education to children after their third birthday and through closer collaboration will be developing other playful learning childcare services run by well-trained and experienced staff.
- Parents can be confident that their children's needs are being addressed by a fully-qualified and experienced early years education team in each school. The federation is building on current interim arrangements and will not affect existing key worker parent partnerships.
- The outstanding educational provision will be continued and enhanced with stronger links between the two schools. The links will encourage further sharing of good practice and pooled budgets will enable both schools to invest in more educational resources, specialists/performers and educational events.

For staff:

- The two nursery schools, together, will educate annually over 200 children aged 2-5 and employ some 35 teachers, early years educators and administrative staff (does not include the children's centres). By federating both schools can collaborate on managing their budgets in order to maintain well-qualified members of staff who are experienced in delivering and administering the Early Years Foundation Stage framework to a high standard. Federation also allows us to sustain the current high levels of performance management and professional development.
- There will be more opportunities for staff from both schools and children's centres to meet and work together and share expertise. The current partnerships will be formalised so that training and professional development will be planned and delivered across the two schools.
- Federation enhances our buying power, through a pooled budget, for specific resources, enabling the purchase of goods and services that would otherwise be too expensive for either school to purchase. As both schools have to look for economy savings each year for the foreseeable future it is crucial that savings from a pooled budget are considered.
- In coming together as a federation the two schools can preserve their unique identities as Nursery Schools and continue to raise the profile of early years education. Staff at both schools will have career-enhancing opportunities from formal partnership work across the schools and the distributed leadership model that will be developed through the federation.

The changes and challenges that federation presents:**For children:**

- No significant changes to current outstanding educational provision are anticipated. The key worker system will continue at both schools and children will still have access to the same teachers and early educators.
- Staff teams are already well experienced in implementing changes to assessment and planning processes in a smooth and graduated way. So should it be necessary to amend current practice the children's key workers will keep parents well informed.

For parents and communities:

- The main changes for parents will be in terms of the establishment of a new Governing Body and Executive Headteacher. The proposal allows for existing governors from both governing bodies to be elected or co-opted into the new Governing Body.
- There will always be locally-based managers, teachers and early educators at each school and these will be people from the existing school teams. There are no major staff changes anticipated.

For staff

- A new Executive Headteacher post will formalise the interim headteacher arrangements that have now been in place for a year.
- Staff roles and responsibilities will be maintained as they are in most cases. Where some members of staff have taken on interim responsibilities across the

two schools the annual performance review process will be used to update and amend job descriptions.

It is important that all those people with an interest in Church Hill Nursery School & Walthamstow East Children's Centre and Low Hall Nursery School & Walthamstow West Children's Centre fully understand what Hard Federation means and the potential benefits it would bring for both Nursery Schools. We have arranged a number of consultation meetings at both Nursery Schools so please come along and meet with us.

The rest of this document outlines the consultation arrangements, timescale and the formal process for its implementation, should the two governing bodies decide to proceed.

Pauline France
Chair of Governors
Church Hill Nursery School &
Walthamstow East Children's Centre

Daniel Edelstyn
Chair of Governors
Low Hall Nursery School &
Walthamstow West Children's Centre

The Consultation Process in respect of federation:

The statutory consultation on federation will begin on Monday 13 October 2014 for **six** weeks until Sunday 30 November 2014 at 5pm. The following are being consulted:

- The Secretary of State
- The London Borough of Waltham Forest as the education authority
- The Executive Headteacher and all paid staff working at either school and children's centre
- All persons known to be a parent/carer of a registered pupil at either school
- Other local primary and secondary schools
- Parents/carers of children due to transfer to either of the two nurseries in September 2014
- Waltham Forest Admissions Forum
- Neighbouring schools and LAs that may have an interest

We will also be consulting with the trade unions and the general public, as far as is practicable.

There is a form at the back of this document for you to give your views.

The following consultation meetings have been arranged:

Date	Venue	Time	Audience
Monday 3 November 2014	Church Hill Nursery School	4.00pm	Staff & Trade Unions (Church Hill Nursery School)
Thursday 6 November 2014	Low Hall Nursery School	4.00pm	Staff & Trade Unions (Low Hall Nursery School)
Friday 14 November 2014	Church Hill Nursery School	1.15pm	Parents & members of the public (Church Hill Nursery School)
	Church Hill Nursery School	6.00pm	
Monday 10 November 2014	Queens Road Community Centre, Queens Road E17	1.15pm	Parents & members of the public (Low Hall Nursery School)
Thursday 13 November 2014	Low Hall Nursery School	6.30pm	

All responses received by the deadline of Sunday 30 November 2014 will be compiled in a summary report, and will be considered at a joint meeting of the two governing bodies on Wednesday 10 December 2014. The meeting will determine whether:

- a) To proceed with the proposal for federation as published;
- b) To proceed with the proposal for federation with such modifications as the governing bodies each consider appropriate; or
- c) Not to proceed with the proposals for federation

The Formal Proposal in respect of Hard Federation

This section tells you in more detail about the proposal so that you can fully understand the proposed federation. If you have any questions or comments you are welcome to come along to a meeting and / or put your questions down on paper or send them to our Federation Task Group via Sue Gill's email. Please see the end of this document on how this can be done.

The School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2012 set down what must be contained in this proposal and the process to be followed, along with details of the composition of the federated Governing Body. These regulations are simply referred to as "The Regulations" throughout this document.

1. The Governing Bodies involved

The Governing Bodies of Church Hill Nursery School and Low Hall Nursery School propose to federate to form a new single Governing Body, with one Executive Head Teacher.

Resolutions to consult on a proposed federation were passed by the Governing Body of Church Hill Nursery School on 22 May 2014 and the Governing Body of Low Hall Nursery School on 6 May 2014.

The content of the consultation document was agreed by the Governing Body of Church Hill Nursery School on 9 September 2014 and by the Governing Body of Low Hall Nursery School on 10 September 2014.

2. Proposed size of the Federated Governing Body

Governing bodies should be no bigger than necessary to secure the range of skills they need. Smaller governing bodies are likely to be more cohesive and dynamic. The Regulations have an explicit requirement that all appointed governors have the skills required to contribute to effective governance and the success of the school.

The Regulations stipulate that governing bodies constituted after 1 September 2012 must have a minimum of 7 members.

The proposed constitution of the single Governing Body reflects the need to ensure that the Governing Body does not become too large and the fact that it is possible to appoint Associate members to the proposed committees for each school who attend full Governing Body meetings but without the power to vote.

The table below shows the current constitution of both governing bodies and that being proposed for the single Governing Body.

The Regulations 2012 allow some flexibility on the breakdown between the various categories of governors but stipulate that this must include:

- At least TWO parent governors
- The Headteacher unless the headteacher chooses not to be a governor
- ONE (and only one) staff governor
- ONE (and only one) local authority governor.
- Any number of co-opted governors

Parent governors are elected by other parents at each school in the federation, but Staff governors are elected by all the staff in all schools in the federation.

Co-opted governors are those that the Governing Body believes have the skills required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school(s). A governing body may appoint as many co-opted governors as it considers necessary but the total number of co-opted governors who are also eligible to be elected as staff governors when counted with the staff governors and headteacher should not exceed one-third of the total membership of the Governing Body.

The Governing Body can also appoint Associate members as a member of any committees established by them but they are not governors.

The proposed constitution of the single Governing Body reflects the need to ensure that the Governing Body is a skills-based body that is able to ensure the young people at Church Hill Nursery School and Low Hall Nursery School achieve the highest possible standard of learning.

Proposed numbers of governors for each category of governor

Category of Governor	New Federated GB Proposed Nos.	Church Hill Nursery (current)	Low Hall Nursery (current)
Parent	4 (2 from each school)	4	5
Local Authority	1	2	1
Co-opted	8	3	5
Head Teacher	1	1	1
Staff	1	2	1
Total	15	12	13

Co-opted governors could include additional parents and staff where they can demonstrate they have relevant skills. However, the Regulations limit the number of co-opted governors who are members of staff to one third of the total membership.

Local Authority governors are nominated by the local authority but appointed by the Governing Body. The local authority can nominate any eligible person as a Local Authority governor, but it is for the Governing Body to decide whether their nominee has the skills to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school and meets any other eligibility criteria they have set.

The Federated Governing Body may choose to elect Associate Members to committees of the Governing Body.

The proposed arrangements for staffing the schools within the federation

It is proposed that all existing staff employed by both schools will become employees of the federated Governing Body. TUPE arrangements do not apply as the Local Authority remains the legal employer.

The proposed Federation date:

It is proposed that the Federation between the two schools will commence on 1 February 2015.

The identity of the admission authority for the schools within the Federation:

The Local Authority is the Admissions Authority for both schools and this will not change.

Additional Information for children, parents, staff and members of the local communities on concerns often raised when schools consider forming a Hard Federation:

Q. Surely this means more work for the single Governing Body?

This need not be the case. The proposal will be to combine committees, which would require more meetings. But if the new Governing Body decide to retain the current annual cycle of governor's visits to school there will be a good flow of information about school performance and improvement matters through virtual links. This will help to streamline meetings.

Q. How will the single Governing Body be accountable to the communities of both schools and how can we avoid governors having less knowledge about their school when taking important decisions?

The proposed role of the two school committees is to ensure a greater local presence and the extra Associate members will ensure that there is greater local representation. This local knowledge will therefore be reflected at the meetings of the single Governing Body which Associate members can attend.

Q. Will staff be expected to work across both schools?

It is likely that the senior leadership team will share some responsibilities across both schools. There may be some specialist appointments across both schools but that will be made clear when posts are advertised. The single Governing Body may wish to give opportunities for staff to work in both schools e.g. spend a year working in the other school as part of their career development but such arrangements would be consensual and negotiated.

Q. What is to stop the single Governing Body allocating resources to one school at the expense of the other?

Whilst the new funding regulations enable the single Governing Body to combine the delegated budgets for both schools, the emphasis will be upon using resources more effectively so that in real terms the value of resources for both schools is increased.

Q. Can another school join the Hard Federation?

The Regulations allow for the Governing Body of another school to seek to join the Hard Federation. It would be for the single Governing Body to determine the relative merits of expanding the Hard Federation to a third school. There are examples of some Hard Federations in the country that have 5, 6 and 7 schools. However, as membership gets larger leadership and governance arrangements tend to become more complex.

Q. What if parents, staff and members of the local community at one or both schools express significant concerns about forming a Hard Federation between the two schools?

The two Governing Bodies have looked carefully at the merits of forming a Hard Federation and believe it is in the best interests of both schools to proceed. However, any representation received during the consultation period will be looked at and discussed before a final decision is taken on whether or not to proceed. Both Governing Bodies will review feedback obtained from this consultation before taking a final decision for the Hard Federation to take place.

Q What evidence is there that Hard Federations work?

The DfE have reviewed the effectiveness of Hard Federations in assisting school improvement and this report is on the DfE website (see below). There have been a number of Hard Federations established in Waltham Forest. The best known is that between St Mary's C of E Primary and St Saviour's C of E Primary established in September 2011 which collectively provides primary education for 1050+ nursery children. St Marys C of E was a good school with outstanding features and St Saviours C of E was judged by the Secretary of State to be one of the top 100 primary schools in the country for improvement in the rate of progress made by pupils, having previously been in Special Measures.

Q. How can I be involved in this process?

- a) By attending any of the meetings outlined earlier in this document;
- b) By asking questions at the meetings;
- c) By submitting any questions you may have to either school in advance of the meetings

Q. What do I do next?

If you would like further information, the following website may prove useful:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-of-federations>

RESPONSE FORM

Proposal to federate Church Hill Nursery and Low Hall Nursery from 1 February 2015

Name:

Address:

.....

.....

I am a: -

Member of staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent/Carer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Governor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local resident	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please tick all that apply

.....

I wish to make the following comments about the proposal to federate Church Hill Nursery and Low Hall Nursery from 1 February 2015.

Signed:

Date:

Please return this form by Sunday 30 November 2014 (5pm) to Harvey House, 1A Harvey Road, Leytonstone, London E11 3DB or place in the marked box in the reception area of either nursery. Alternatively, you may email your response to: sue.gill@walthamforest.gov.uk

Thank you for your response!