

Proposal to Federate

Soudley Primary School, Steam Mills Primary School and Woodside Primary School

Since September 2022, the Steam Mills and Woodside Primary Schools Federation has provided leadership and management support to Soudley Primary School. A successful partnership has grown over the past 14 months, in which we have seen Steam Mills and Woodside Schools retain their unique identities and the children continue to make very good progress in their learning and Soudley retain its unique identity, develop its curriculum, and the staff benefit from stable leadership and working alongside curriculum specialists from Steam Mills and Woodside.

The teaching staff at the three schools have moved to single subject leadership, under a framework set up and monitored by the Federation's curriculum leader, co-ordinating and monitoring their subject areas and working with colleagues across the three schools. The determined leadership of our Executive Headteacher, the Senior Leadership Team and the hard work and commitment of all our staff at the three schools has provided stability and has maintained high standards of provision across the three schools.

The Governing Board of Soudley School at an extraordinary meeting on the 23rd of October 2023 approved a proposal to apply to join the existing Steam Mills and Woodside Federation. The Governing Board of the Steam Mills and Woodside Federation, at an extraordinary meeting held on 6th November 2023 approved the application from Soudley to join the Federation.

The support of parents and the wider school community is valued and both Governing Boards will consult with staff, parents and carers about the next step to consolidate our successful partnership, by proposing to form a Federation of Soudley Primary School, Steam Mills Primary School and Woodside Primary School.

This is your opportunity to let us know what you think about the proposal.

This paper contains:

- A definition of the term 'Federation'.
- An outline of the proposal.
- A response form for you to complete and return.

Please see the accompanying FAQs

We are holding the following online consultation drop-in sessions for parents/carers and any other interested parties to have the opportunity to ask any questions you may have and that have not been answered in this document to speak to governors and staff about the proposed federation.

Online Consultation Drop-In

Weds 13th Dec at 6:15 pm to 7pm

Thurs 14th Dec at 5:15pm to 6pm

You are welcome to attend either of the above online sessions. If you do not have access to a device, please do not hesitate to contact the school. Please contact the school office to access the Teams meeting link if you would like to attend one of the sessions.

The governing boards of Soudley, Steam Mills and Woodside Primary Schools have decided that they want to federate from 8th April 2024, to be known as **The Forest Federation of Soudley, Steam Mills and Woodside Primary Schools**. This was a decision reached by both governing boards after

discussions with representatives from the Local Authority to discuss the federation and Governing Board meetings of Soudley Primary School on 23rd October 2023 and of The Steam Mills and Woodside Primary Schools Federation on the 6th of November 2023. The decision of both Governing Boards is supported by the Local Authority.

What is a Federation?

A Federation is where two or more schools share a governing board.

- The schools will remain independent; they will not merge into one school.
- Pupils will not change schools.
- The names of the schools will not change, nor will the uniforms.
- Admission arrangements will not change for either school.
- The schools will continue to receive individual budgets.
- The schools will continue to serve their respective communities and retain their catchment areas.

Vision for the Federation

The Federation's aim is to ensure that the unique identity, visions and values of both schools and their communities, are maintained.

The success of our partnership over the past fourteen months is due in a large part to the similar values, aims and attitudes of the three thriving small schools, which we have used to form our vision for the Federation.

Vision

We nurture a love of life, love of learning and mutual respect. We aim to provide a stimulating and challenging environment where everyone is happy, valued and every voice is heard. We want children to leave our schools equipped with the skills to become valued and responsible members of the community.

What will happen to the current Governing Boards?

If this new federation goes ahead, the governing boards of the Steam Mills and Woodside Primary Schools Federation and of Soudley Primary School will be dissolved, and a single, new governing board will be formed. In accordance with legislation the governing board will consist of 15 governors comprising of:

Governor	No.	Details
Staff Governor	1	Elected across all schools
Parent Governors	2	Elected across all schools (not ring fenced)
LA Governor	1	Nominated by the LA
Headteacher	1	This will be the executive headteacher
Co-opted Governors	10	Co-opted governors are appointed by the federated governing board and have the skills required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the schools.
Total	15	

What are the benefits for our children?

By federating our children will continue to benefit from:

- The opportunity to secure the highest possible standard of education for our children by combining the skills, knowledge and expertise of the three staffs to improve the quality of teaching and learning for our children.
- A wider range of learning opportunities can be offered by sharing facilities, resources and teacher expertise.
- Enhanced learning provision through joint educational visits, visitors, workshops and resources.
- To extend the opportunities available to all pupils so that they can access the benefits of a larger school within a small school setting.

Proposed Staffing Arrangements

The terms and conditions of current staff in all three schools would remain the same and could not be changed without agreement. It would be at the discretion of the Federated Governing Board to make new appointments, teaching and non-teaching, to the Federation or to individual schools. One of the benefits of schools wishing to federate is that it is possible to deploy new staff across the Federation. Federation provides the opportunity to work at either school within the federation with agreement.

How will Federation continue to benefit our staff?

- To provide a challenging and rewarding environment in which to grow professionally, giving opportunities that might not otherwise exist in the current small school setting.
- Staff will be able to share knowledge and expertise over a wider colleague base and share best practice across both schools; broadening skills and dialogue across the range of curriculum areas.
- Maximise the sharing of resources across both schools to enlarge the range of resources for all staff to use in their teaching.
- Reduction of workload by sharing planning, curriculum leadership etc. across the three school staffs.

What are the benefits to parents and the local community?

- To secure the schools as vibrant and innovative centres of learning within their local communities, helping to protect the future of the three schools and villages in which they lie.
- Provide increased opportunities for a quality education for every child.

The next step...

This document is the start of a six-week consultation period on the proposal to federate, which will close on 26th January 2024. The consultation process is a statutory part of the procedure for forming a federation between the schools governed by regulation, and the governing boards of the schools proposing to federate must consult with:

- Gloucestershire Local Authority (FAO Director of Education)
- Staff paid to work at the schools, and their unions
- Parents/carers of registered pupils at the schools

- Any other persons the governing boards consider appropriate

A letter will be sent to the Secretary of State within one week of publication of this document informing the DfE of the start of consultation by the governing boards of Soudley Primary School and the Steam Mills and Woodside Primary Schools Federation on Soudley joining the existing Federation.

A response slip is attached to this document. Please complete and place in the box at each school or send to the clerk to the governors at either school:

clerktogovs@smwf.org.uk

clerk@soudley.gloucs.sch.uk

Closing date for the return of the response form is 26th January 2024

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Consultation Response Form

Please give us your views on the proposal for the federation. If you have any questions, please include them in the comments box.

Name (optional).....

Please tick the boxes that apply. I am:

	Soudley	Steam Mills	Woodside
A parent/carer of a child or children at one of the schools			
A governor of one of the schools			
A member of staff at one of the schools			
A parent of a pre- school child			
Some other link to one of the schools	Please give details:		
Someone else with an interest	Please give details:		

Comments: (Please use the other side of this sheet if required)

Please tick below in the appropriate box.

I support the federation	I do not support the federation	I am undecided

Please complete the form and place in the box at school, or return by post or email by 26th Jan 2024

Clerktogovs@smwf.org.uk

clerk@soudley.gloucs.sch.uk

Clerk to the Governors
Steam Mills Primary School
Steam Mills
Cinderford
Glos
GL14 3JD

Clerk to the Governors
Woodside Primary School
Denehurst
Ruardean
Glos
GL17 9XP

Clerk to the Governors
Soudley Primary School
Church Road
Soudley
Glos.
GL14 2UA

Federation – Frequently Asked Questions.

What is a Federation?

A Federation is a partnership between schools sharing one Executive Headteacher where the Governing Boards of each individual school are dissolved, and one Governing Board is formed to oversee the schools involved.

What is the role of the Governing Board?

1. Ensuring clarity of the vision, ethos and strategic direction.
2. Holding the executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the school(s) and its pupils and the effective and efficient performance management of staff.
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school(s) and making sure that its money is well spent.

Why are the governors of the three schools proposing Federation?

The governors the three schools are proposing Federation:

- *To improve the learning experience and educational opportunities for the children of the schools by combining the knowledge and skills of the staffs.*
- *To increase the opportunity for the staff to work collaboratively to improve their knowledge and skills.*
- *To provide a clear management structure for the Executive Headteacher and staff to work within.*
- *To share the best practice of the schools for the benefit of the children.*
- *To help ensure the long-term viability of the schools.*

Does this mean that we will be part of an academy?

No, the schools will remain as local authority, maintained community schools, operating under the control and guidelines of Gloucestershire County Council.

Will Mrs Davis be based at one school full time?

No, Mrs Davis will continue to share her time between the schools.

Will the name of the school change?

No. The names of all three schools will stay the same.

Will the school uniforms change?

No. The school uniform and colours will remain the same.

Will existing staff have to move between the schools?

No. This has been discussed by governors with the HR Department at GCC and existing staff will continue working under their current terms and conditions and will not have to move between schools.

What will be the status of new staff joining after Federation?

New staff will be employed by the Federation and could be deployed where the Executive Headteacher identifies need in either school.

Will the school budgets be merged together into one budget?

No. Each school will retain their own budget and the Governing Board of the Federation will be legally responsible for all three budgets.

Will School Policies be identical for both schools?

Yes and No. Legally required policies, such as Health and Safety, Data Protection etc. will probably be the same for each school, whereas curriculum- based policies eg. Homework Policy and curriculum subject policies, which are compiled after staff and Executive Headteacher discussions, will be school specific, as the needs of each school will tend to be different.

Will Admissions Arrangements for both schools change?

No. The Admissions Arrangements for each school will remain the same.

Will both schools teach exactly the same curricular?

The schools currently teach very similar content as they follow the National Curriculum and have embedded good practice from local and national initiatives. All schools are able to design their programmes of delivery and therefore science and the foundation subjects are taught in a different order, according to a two-year rolling programme. Each school will continue with their current rolling programmes and overarching topics, so that there is no disruption to the children's learning.

Will there be a joint Ofsted inspection?

No, the schools will retain their separate DfE identities and be inspected separately.

What will be the main difference if the schools federate?

The main difference will be at Governor level, where the existing separate Governing Boards will dissolve, and one Governing Board will be formed.

Why would there be only one staff governor and only two parent governors?

DfE's School Governance (Federations) Guidelines 2012 stipulates that federated governor boards may only have one staff member and two parent governors. We are, however, able to co-opt governors onto the board ensuring balance across the schools.