



Proposal to Federate Eveswell and Somerton Primary Schools Consultation Report

**Formal Consultation Period:
3rd June 2019 to 14th July 2019**

Purpose

This report has been prepared following conclusion of a period of stakeholder consultation on a proposal to formally establish a school federation between Eveswell Primary School and Somerton Primary School.

This report will be considered separately by the governing bodies of Eveswell Primary School and Somerton Primary School, with each having powers under the ***Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014*** to decide whether or not they wish for this federation proposal to be taken forward.

This consultation report specifically refers to the following:

- The Proposal
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Learner Voice
- Feedback from Staff
- Consultation Responses
- Estyn
- Recommendations

The Proposal

The governing bodies of Eveswell Primary School and Somerton Primary School, together with Newport City Council, propose to use the powers granted under the ***Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014*** to formally establish **The Eveswell and Somerton Primary School Partnership** with effect from 1st January 2020.

The aim of the Federation is for the two schools to work in partnership to develop:

- excellent shared practice that guarantees outstanding experiences and increased opportunities for pupils and staff, and
- common goals and reflective approaches to teaching and learning that will ensure that both communities benefit from a quality education.

Stakeholder Engagement

An invitation to take part in the statutory consultation was issued to the stakeholders outlined below, with either a link to the consultation pack on the Council's website and an electronic version of the pack sent by e-mail, or alternatively by hard copies of the consultation material being issued:

- Teachers and staff employed at Eveswell Primary School and Somerton Primary School;
- Parents, carers and guardians of pupils attending Eveswell Primary School and Somerton Primary School;
- Pupils attending Eveswell Primary School and Somerton Primary School;
- Teaching and support staff trade unions representing teachers and staff employed at Eveswell Primary School and Somerton Primary School;
- Newport City Council elected members for the Alway and Beechwood wards;
- The Headteachers of Llanwern High School, Lliswerry High School, Alway Primary School, Glan Llyn Primary School, Llanmartin Primary School, Lliswerry Primary School, Maindee Primary School, Milton Primary School, Ringland Primary School and St Andrews Primary School;
- The Education Achievement Service for South East Wales;
- Estyn.

The proposal and consultation documents were published on the Eveswell Primary School website, the Somerton Primary School website and the Newport City Council website. Hard copies were also available at both schools. Specific separate engagement events for pupils and staff were facilitated by the two governing bodies.

Learner Voice

A pupil friendly version of the consultation document was prepared and shared with pupils across both schools. In addition, the two governing bodies arranged specific pupil engagement sessions, facilitated by the Senior Leadership Teams, where the proposal was discussed and the opportunity was offered for any questions or concerns to be raised. The Executive Headteacher has confirmed that some questions were raised relating to future Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher arrangements across both schools, and whether anything currently in place would change. Other than this, no concerns were raised and nor were any reasons expressed as to why pupils felt the proposal should not proceed.

Feedback from Staff

A specific joint staff engagement session was also facilitated by the two governing bodies. This was supported by the Senior Leadership Teams of the two schools along with a Human Resources and Organisational Development Business Partner from the Council.

All staff confirmed that they were in support of the proposal, and that this would in fact remove any uncertainty over the current temporary arrangements. Staff across the two schools now consider the collaboration to be normal practice, and any move to change this would destabilise both schools and impact on the best practice processes that have been successfully implemented over the past three years.

The only questions raised related to whether there would be any effect on existing cluster working arrangements. This issue is described in more detail in the next section of this report.

Consultation Responses

Two responses were received during the consultation period, both from Headteachers of schools within the Lliswerry cluster. Both responses supported the proposal but were keen to ensure that there would be no adverse effect on current cluster working and transition arrangements.

Geographically, Eveswell Primary School and Somerton Primary School are located only 0.7 miles apart. However, they are located in different clusters, with Eveswell Primary School forming part of the Llanwern cluster and Somerton Primary School being included in the Lliswerry cluster. The current collaborative arrangement has been in place since September 2016, and the Executive Headteacher has indicated that working across two clusters has been challenging on some occasions.

However, under this proposal, the two schools will remain in their communities and keep their individual identities. As a result, it is not anticipated that there will be any change to the current arrangements.

Estyn

The formal response from Estyn states that there is a clear rationale for the proposal, and that the assertion that federation will enhance the climate of trust, openness and willingness to work together that already exists is reasonable and valid. It also outlines that:

- There is unlikely to be any negative impact on pupil standards and that the general benefits of federation would indicate that the proposal will at least maintain current standards of education;
- The challenges related to the proposal have been considered and are not perceived to be significant barriers due to the collaborative working arrangement that is currently in place;
- The responses to general frequently asked questions regarding federation, including the likely impact on school staff, were useful.

However, the response stated that there was a lack of a sufficiently detailed analysis of the current performance of the two schools and any specific reference to the most recent Estyn reports for both schools. As a result, Estyn felt unable to judge the likely impact of the proposal on the standard of educational provision in the area.

Response

In 2019, many children at both schools achieved the expected level at the end of the Foundation Phase. Most pupils at Eveswell Primary School and many pupils at Somerton Primary School also achieved the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 2. Learner progress is strong, and whilst performance and standards at Somerton Primary School specifically have improved since the collaboration was introduced, both schools have benefitted from the arrangement. The schools have planned together to enhance the curriculum in readiness for the implementation of 'Successful Futures' and delivery of the digital competence framework. The high expectations shared across the two schools have also been developed through sharing of best practice, comparing pupils' work and agreeing how to improve standards and provision for both schools.

Eveswell Primary School was last inspected in January 2014 and considered **Excellent** in terms of *Current Performance* and *Prospects for Improvement*. Somerton Primary School was removed from the list of schools requiring Estyn monitoring in January 2013 and was most recently inspected in June 2019. The report published in August 2019 confirms that the school is now judged as **Good** in relation to *Standards, Wellbeing and Teaching & Learning*, and **Excellent** in relation to *Care, Support & Guidance* and *Leadership & Management*. This supports the fact that Eveswell Primary School has been in a "green" support category since categorisation was first introduced, and that Somerton Primary School has improved from "amber" to "yellow" since the collaborative arrangements were introduced in 2016.

Estyn also noted that the consultation document failed to provide:

- Evidence that any other alternatives were considered;
- Evidence that consideration had been given to how the proposal would impact on children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and how any disruption to learners would be minimised;
- Information about the current budget status of the two schools;
- Information as to how the proposal would impact on surplus places and travel arrangements in relation to both schools.

Response

The request to take forward the federation proposal came directly from the two governing bodies, who wished to formalise the collaborative arrangement that had been in place since September 2016, initially for a 3-year period. Given the success of this arrangement and the positive impact on both schools, the governing bodies approached the Local Authority to outline a desire to pursue a formal federation. Other options, such as amalgamation, were not considered as the governing bodies and the Local Authority were keen that the two schools should remain in their communities, keeping their individual identities. As has been outlined, whilst geographically close, the schools are located in separate clusters.

The Executive Headteacher has outlined that the collaborative working arrangements have impacted on provision for all pupils. Pupils with additional needs benefit from shared expertise, and the two Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators are jointly preparing for the new Additional Learning Needs Bill. In addition, staff at Somerton Primary School have shared their expertise in nurture provision. Both schools are now working on accreditation for their nurturing approaches and support each other to develop provision that meets the needs of all learners.

Currently, the two budgets are managed separately by the relevant governing bodies. If this proposal is approved, there will continue to be two separate budgets but these will both be managed by the same federated governing body. Both budgets are currently in surplus. As at August 2019, Eveswell Primary School is predicted to end the 2019/20 financial year with a surplus of £189,000, and Somerton Primary School with a surplus of £56,000.

The January 2019 Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) confirmed that there were 419 pupils of statutory school age on roll at Eveswell Primary School, against a total capacity of 420. This is a popular and over-subscribed school, and 10 appeals were lodged in relation to the September 2019 phase transfer admission round. All 10 of these appeals were upheld in favour of the Local Authority. The January 2019 PLASC also confirmed that there were 168 pupils on roll at Somerton Primary School against a total capacity of 203, a surplus of 35 places (17.2%). Whilst this is higher than Welsh Government's recommended surplus of 10%, the English-medium primary school surplus across the city as a whole is much lower at approximately 6.5%. The surplus across the Lliswerry cluster is approximately 7.7%. The higher surplus in Somerton Primary School is therefore necessary to support the demand for primary school places as families move into and around Newport during the course of the academic year. It is possible that demand for places at Somerton Primary will increase following implementation of the federation.

The Council's Home to School Transport policy provides free transport to primary aged pupils living two miles or more from their catchment school or their nearest available school. Whilst this position will remain unchanged under this proposal, from September 2019 there will be no pupils attending either school who qualify for this benefit. The proposal is therefore unlikely to impact on travel and transport arrangements.

Finally, Estyn noted that whilst the separate Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment (FEIA) reasonably considered that there would be no impact on the Welsh Language, there was no consideration of the extent to which the proposal supported the targets in the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP).

Response

Eveswell Primary School and Somerton Primary School are English-medium schools. Whilst they both follow all aspects of the national curriculum in relation to Welsh as a second language, the proposal is unlikely to make a meaningful contribution to Newport's 5-Year Welsh Language target of increasing the number of Welsh speakers across the city. The FEIA will be updated shortly, and this will be reflected accordingly.

Recommendations

The governing bodies of both schools are asked to individually consider the content of this report and decide whether they wish to proceed with the proposal. If both governing bodies agree, the final decision will be taken by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills through the Council's agreed democratic process. The target implementation date for the federation remains 1st January 2020.