

County Council – 19 July 2019

Item 7(a) - Notice of Motion by Dr O’Kelly

Small Schools Federations - Briefing Note

In 2018, West Sussex produced, with the engagement of schools and stakeholders, a School Effectiveness Strategy to drive the authority’s approach to improving the quality of education and outcomes for young people in West Sussex. Within this Strategy, a commitment was made to look at different ways of supporting small schools where there may be future risk due to enrolment, funding and the ability to deliver quality.

The Strategy highlighted the intention to work with governors and to look at consultation on any changes required including federation, merger, expansion of age groups, and also closure where schools were identified at risk. Where a school is inspected as inadequate, the options are narrowed to either academisation or closure.

The local authority has actively promoted federations between schools, to strengthen the sharing of expertise and knowledge, and has engaged schools in working together to support more formally where this has felt the most appropriate option. Significant efforts are being made to work with governing bodies interested in considering federation option. Officers from the School Improvement Service and School Organisation and Development are available to discuss federation options if governing bodies request.

The County’s Schools Forum has been advised that additional support will be offered to schools that have formally federated to support the early days of federation and to ensure that the leader and federation is supported through the first two years of federation. All schools have a link adviser who is attached to the school and is accessible to governors. Additional support to schools over and above this is available through the County Council’s traded work with schools.

It is right that the local authority keeps its schools under review where there are future risks to ensure that provision for all our pupils and young people is as strong as it needs to be. Where there are schools at risk due to different factors, the County Council will seek to ensure that broader views are taken from interested groups and individuals to determine what options would be the most appropriate for the future direction of each school.

Paul Wagstaff

Director of Education and Skills