School Federations

Approval to Implement Federation Proposals (Local Authority Led)

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Introduction

With the increasing need to consider more so the federation between schools as an option to address current issues, the Local Authority needs to consider in detail the federation process (for LA led proposals), in particular the determination element of federation proposals. This document sets out the powers that the Local Authority have in proposing federations; the federation process; and the options open to the Local Authority in determining the proposals.

Federating Schools

Carmarthenshire's School Federation Strategy

Carmarthenshire County Council has a statutory responsibility for the planning of school provision, a legal responsibility to review the number and type of schools it has in its area and whether or not it is making the best use of the resources and facilities to deliver the opportunities that learners deserve.

With the publication of the revised School Organisation Code in November 2018 and the addition of a presumption against the closure of rural schools, federation between schools is becoming more of a realistic option to address schools in need. The Local Authority's School Federation Strategy acknowledges that new ways of working are required to ensure sustainability and this increasingly involves collaborative working between schools and possibly other partners.

Federation process of maintained schools in Wales

As noted in the Federation process of maintained schools in Wales, schools have been able to federate since 2010 using the process set out in The Federation of Maintained Schools and Miscellaneous Amendment (Wales) Regulations 2010. The Federation process of maintained schools in Wales replaced the 2010 Federation Regulations on 22nd May 2014, and in addition, provided Local Authority's with the power to federate schools. The current guidance sets out how Local Authorities, in addition to governing bodies can federate schools and how federations may be proposed, established and constituted.

The table below sets out briefly* the steps required to establishing federations:

Step	Description	Timeline
1.	Local Authority holds early discussions with the schools identified for federation and general agreement reached to explore federation options.	
2.	The Local Authority prepares a report to seek the views of stakeholders.	
3.	Proposals are published and the Local Authority seeks the views of stakeholders	6 weeks or 20 days for federation of small schools**
4.	School leaders, the Local Authority and Governing Body start scoping leadership roles and staffing structures.	
5.	The Local Authority prepares a report providing a summary of the responses received and the Local Authority's comments, and publishes on its website.	
6.	The Local Authority makes a final decision on whether to federate or not and publishes the decision on its website and notifies stakeholders. Implementation takes place.	Must be at least 125 days from the date proposals are published Or 100 days for federation of small schools
7.	Single governing body meets and professional processes aligned.	
8.	Headteacher builds overview of federation effectiveness.	
9.	Wider opportunities of professional development for all staff implemented.	

*The full details to each step can be found in the Federation process of maintained schools in Wales guidance document.

** The Education (Wales) Measure 2011 allows Welsh Ministers to make a Small School Order (SSO) which will define the size of a small school. Such an order has been made and has defined a small school as being one with few than **91** pupils on the third Tuesday in January immediately preceding the date on which a proposal is made.

Approval to Implement

Determining the Federation Proposals

As can be seen from the federation process timetable, the Local Authority is fully responsible for completing all stages of the process through to implementation, inclusive of determining whether or not to proceed with the federation. Established processes are already in place with the Local Authority for the determination of school reorganisation proposals, however there is no process in place for determining school federation proposals.

Whilst the collation of a federation report; seeking the views of stakeholders; and the preparation of a consultation report can be completed by the Modernising Education Team, the Local Authority must decide on a process/person to determine the outcome of the federation proposals.

Possible Options

Following the preparation of a consultation report, the report could be considered and a determination made on the outcome of the federation proposals by the following (the list is illustrative rather than exhaustive):

- Head of Access to Education;
- Head of Education Services;
- Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing;
- Director of Education & Children's Services;
- Departmental Management Team;
- Corporate Management Team;
- Executive Board Member for Education & Children;
- Executive Board;
- County Council;
- Or a combination of the above.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the **Executive Board Member for Education & Children** determines the outcome of federation proposals.