



**JOINT CONSULTATION BY
LONGSANDS COLLEGE AND ST NEOTS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ON FORMING A FEDERATION**

AND

**CONSULTATION BY
ST NEOTS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ON CHANGE OF STATUS FROM A
COMMUNITY SCHOOL TO A FOUNDATION SCHOOL**

This document is intended for the students, parents/carers and staff of the two schools, the governors, staff and parents/carers of their partner primary schools and the wider St Neots community. All are invited to submit comments as indicated towards the end of the document.

15 March 2010

Introduction

Our two secondary schools, St Neots Community College and Longsands College, serve St Neots and the surrounding area including several villages. St Neots Community College is a Community school and Longsands College is a Foundation school.

The catchment area for St Neots Community College comprises those of its partner primary schools: Barnabas Oley Church of England Voluntary Controlled (Great Gransden), Bushmead, Eynesbury Church of England Voluntary Controlled, Middlefield, St Mary's Church of England Aided and Winhills. The school has capacity for 232 young people entering Year 7 each year and 1,160 young people aged 11-15.

The catchment area of Longsands College comprises those of its partner primary schools: Great Paxton Church of England Voluntary Controlled, Great Staughton, Little Paxton, Newton (Eltisley), Overhills (Kimbolton), Crosshall Infant, Crosshall Junior, Priory Park Infant, Priory Junior and The Round House. Longsands College has capacity for 290 young people entering Year 7 each year and 1450 young people aged 11-15.

Both schools have sixth forms.

Context

St Neots Community College is currently designated as a National Challenge school by the Government's Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) because of the low percentage of young people attending the school who achieved 5 A*-C grades at GCSE including English and Mathematics in exams taken in 2008. It receives additional funding and support as a result.

In the summer of 2009, the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) undertook an inspection of the school and judged it to require Special Measures. As a result, it is subject to additional scrutiny by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and support from Cambridgeshire County Council, the Local Children's Services Authority.

In addition, for some time, the school has been spending more money than it receives from the Local Authority and has built up a significant budget deficit. One of the contributory factors to the school's financial difficulties is that many parents from the school's catchment area are not choosing to send their children to the school.

Longsands College was judged by OfSTED in November 2009 to be a good school. The inspectors' report noted that it also had several outstanding features. The College's financial situation is secure.

Proposal to Federate

In response to a review undertaken by the Local Authority in the autumn of 2009, both schools' governing bodies indicated their support for the Local Authority's identified preferred option, which was to establish a Federation between the two schools.

On 26 January 2010 the Council's Cabinet, its decision-making body, gave approval to proposals that the Authority should work with our two schools' governing bodies to:

- establish a Federation between the schools to be operational from 1 September 2010; and
- change the status of St Neots Community College from a Community to a Foundation school with effect from 1 September 2010.

Key Decisions

On 1 February 2010, Longsands College's Governing Body met and passed a formal resolution to undertake joint consultation with St Neots Community College on proposals to establish a Federation between the schools to be operational from 1 September 2010.

On 4 February 2010, St Neots Community College's Governing Body met and passed formal resolutions to undertake joint consultation with Longsands College on proposals to:

1. Establish a Federation between the schools to be operational from 1 September 2010.
2. Change the school's status from a Community to a Foundation school to be effective from 1 September 2010.

This document sets out in more detail the proposals which have been made jointly by the two governing bodies and also explains the meaning of some of the technical terms used.

Consultation

This consultation document is about two interrelated issues:

1. Longsands College and St Neots Community College forming a Federation and establishing a single federated Governing Body to oversee the two schools.
2. St Neots Community College changing its status from a Community to a Foundation school.

It has been split into two sections. **Section 1** will be of interest to everyone involved with either or both schools whilst **Section 2** is of direct relevance to the St Neots Community College community only.

The consultation period runs from **15 March to 26 April 2010**. You can let us know your views by:

Completing and returning the short questionnaire at the end of this document.
Sending an email with your comments to stneotssecondary@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

In addition, if you are a parent/carer of a child attending either of our schools or one of our partner primary schools, you are invited to attend one of the following meetings:

Parents/carers of pupils and students attending Longsands and/or one of our partner primary schools:
6.00 pm on 29 March 2010 at Longsands College

7.30 pm on 29 March 2010 at Longsands College

Parents/carers of pupils and students attending St Neots Community College and/or one of our partner primary schools:

6.00 pm on 31 March 2010 at St Neots Community College

7.30 pm on 31 March 2010 at St Neots Community College

There will be representatives from both schools senior leadership teams and governing bodies at each of these meetings. The main purpose of which will be for us to explain why we see Federation as the way forward for our schools and how we see this developing for the benefit of the young people we serve and the wider community.

We are conducting this consultation in accordance with DCSF guidance. Our aim is to

- Consult **widely** with all interested parties
- To be **clear** about our proposals, who may be affected, what we are asking and our timescales
- To ensure our consultation is **clear, concise** and **widely accessible**

We also intend to give **feedback** on the process through posting an analysis of the consultation on our schools' websites and making hard copies available as well.

Any information provided by you in response to this consultation will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations, which allow public access to information held by public institutions. This does not necessarily mean that any response you choose to make can be made available on public request because there are exemptions to information provided in confidence and to which the Data protection Act 1998 applies.

If you are responding on a personal basis you do not need to give your name and address unless you wish to. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation then it is helpful if you do provide details of that organisation and the capacity in which you represent them.

Please tell us if you want your response to remain confidential but please do note that making such a request does not automatically exclude a right of public access.

At the end of this document you will find a list of the people with whom we are sharing our proposals and consulting.

SECTION 1 – FEDERATION

What Is A Federation?

A Federation involves two or more maintained schools agreeing to enter into a formal statutory partnership in line with the provisions made by the Government in the 2002 Education Act.

Normally, it is for the governing bodies of the schools concerned to decide whether or not this is the right thing for their schools to do. However, where a school is part of the Government's National Challenge programme and has been judged by OfSTED to require Special Measures as has happened to St Neots Community College, then the local Authority is required to agree plans for the improvement of that school with the DCSF. Those plans include interventions in relation to the school's status and governance arrangements.

In these circumstances, the initial purpose of our proposed Federation would be to achieve and sustain school improvement at both schools, for the benefit of the whole of the area we serve. Cambridgeshire County Council supports this proposal, and at a meeting of its Cabinet on 26th January 2010, authorised County Council officers to work with our schools to help effect this change.

Under a Federation, instead of the two existing school governing bodies there would be a single governing body acting in the interests of both schools' pupils, staff and communities. As with all governing bodies, governors would provide challenge and support, ensuring that standards are improved in each school, budgets are managed effectively, resources are deployed appropriately and staff are supported and enabled to develop. The single governing body would have full responsibility for both schools. Each school would receive its own budget allocation from the Local Authority via the federated Governing Body.

We feel it is very important to stress that a Federation is *not* a merger, it is a partnership. Both schools would retain their individual identities and we would be able to build upon their respective strengths to the benefit of all the young people that our schools serve. Each school would be subject to a separate OfSTED inspection. In addition, parents would still be able to express a preference as to which school they would like their children to attend. Priority for admission would be determined in accordance with the published admission criteria for each school.

Why Should Our Schools Federate?

Despite, or perhaps because of, their close proximity, there is an entrenched history of actual or perceived competition between our schools of an unhelpful kind. This is a long-established issue that predates St Neots Community College encountering its current difficulties, but at present can best be illustrated by the number of parents choosing to send their children to each of our schools.

For September 2010 entry, only 73 families named St Neots Community College as their first choice preference. In contrast, 336 families named Longsands College as their first choice for the 290 places available.

We are concerned that, as more parents are expressing a preference for Longsands for their children's education, there will be a greater number of parents and children whom we will disappoint because the school is simply not able to keep taking more children.

Neither school wants this situation to continue. We want St Neots Community College to become the first choice school for more parents and children in their catchment area and for there to be excellence in provision and outcomes for the young people we serve.

We feel that Federation provides the best means of achieving these aims.

Parental Concerns

We know that the proposed Federation is not supported by some parents, who fear that it will result in two average schools rather than two good or outstanding schools. We also know that others feel that St Neots Community College has not been given enough time or support to effect the improvements necessary to enable it to move out of special measures. These are natural and understandable points of view. We recognise, and are ready to meet, the challenges of ensuring that:

- standards continue to rise at Longsands;
- the strengths of St Neots Community College are built upon to deliver further and sustained improvements in teaching and learning;
- the proposed Federation would not place additional burdens on staff.

Both governing bodies are determined to ensure that there is no 'averaging out' process. Our belief is that Federation provides opportunities for making the best use of our collective skills, knowledge and experience.

A key belief of the Longsands Governing body and Principal is that Federation can be pursued without damage to Longsands College's achievements and characteristics and, indeed, could support the progress of the school towards an overall OfSTED rating of outstanding.

The processes of securing improvement in each school have similarities as well as differences. There are areas of expertise and development that could be shared and taken further far more effectively by working in partnership than is currently the case. A new and more profoundly positive vision for the St Neots locality should be developed and implemented.

This kind of approach will enable a wider range of opportunities for all students. As an example, by planning post-16 provision across the Federation we would be able to deliver a broader curriculum to the benefit of all students.

What Would Be The Proposed Staffing Structure?

There would be an Executive Principal with responsibility for leading and managing the schools, supported by a fully co-ordinated senior leadership team, which would operate across the two schools as well as sustaining a strong and permanent presence in each.

You will be aware that Mr Forrester recently resigned from his post as Principal of St Neots Community College. Mr Preston, the school's Vice Principal, is now Acting Principal for the interim period to 31 August 2010.

In addition, in order to help us prepare for this major change for our two schools, Mr Whatmough, the Principal of Longsands College, will now develop a three year plan for the proposed Federation in consultation with staff and governors from both schools. This is in preparation for Mr Whatmough's formal appointment as Executive Principal of the Federation, which has the full support of the Local Authority.

On the assumption that St Neots Community College would change its status from a Community to a Foundation school, the Federated Governing Body would employ all the staff at each school.

Existing staff would continue to be employed to work in one or other school in line with their current contracts. Staff could not be 'forced' to change their assigned school. However, opportunities could exist for those staff who wish to work in both schools to do so but only where this would not diminish the quality of outcomes in either establishment.

Staff would work to common policies and structures in respect to students' conduct, attendance, access and inclusion (gifted and talented, special needs, ethnic minority groups).

Delivery of learning would, where appropriate, be planned across the two schools although each institution would continue to have its own distinctive features. This is not unlike what already happens at 14-19 level (KS4 and KS5) through our schools' membership of the Huntingdonshire Secondary Education Partnership.

Who Would Govern The Schools?

On the implementation date for the Federation, our existing governing bodies would be replaced by a new Federated Governing Body.

Under statutory regulations, the membership of a Federation Governing Body must comprise of **at least:**

- one third of parent governors, with at least one parent governor from each school;
- two, but no more than one third, staff governors;
- two, but no more than one quarter, partnership governors;
- one, but no more than one fifth of governors, appointed by the Local Authority;
- one tenth or more community governors.

We have begun to discuss the size and allocation of places to the Federation Governing Body which would oversee our two schools should we decide to proceed with this proposed change. We want to draw on the knowledge and experience of governors at each of our schools and, therefore, to differing extents, existing serving governors will be able to transfer across to the Federated Governing Body. We have also taken account of the respective sizes of our schools.

With this in mind, consideration is being given to whether we should have a Governing Body of 27 members, made up as follows:

Parent governors 10 (6 from Longsands and 4 from St Neots Community College)

Staff governors 5 (3 from Longsands and 2 (one teaching and one support staff governor) from St Neots Community College) plus the Executive Principal

Partnership governors 5 (from Longsands)*

Local Authority appointed governors 3

Community governors 3 (2 from Longsands and 1 from St Neots Community College)

The Local Authority will appoint the Local Authority governors.

* Partnership is governor category which forms part of the composition of Foundation school governing bodies, but not Community school governing bodies.

In addition, we see benefit in inviting other people to become associate governors. These people would be able to attend and contribute to meetings of the federated Governing Body but would not be able to vote on any issues.

What Does This Mean For Admissions?

On the basis that both schools would become Foundation schools, the Federation Governing Body would operate as the admissions authority for each school, in accordance with the statutory School Admissions Code.

As indicated above, parents would continue to be able to express a preference for one or both schools within the Federation. Where possible those preferences would be met but, if more parents/carers were to apply for a place for their child than there were places available, then places would be offered in accordance with each school's admission criteria.

The Federation Governing Body would be asked to inform the Local Authority of the criteria it intended to operate to determine priority for admission to each of the schools with effect from September 2011 entry. These criteria would be subject to consultation as part of the Local Authority's statutory consultation on admission arrangements which takes place each spring term.

How Will The Federation Develop?

We see Federation as a structural change which has a future that goes well beyond addressing some immediate issues at St Neots Community College.

We are confident, as is the Local Authority that, the combination of a Federated Governing Body, Executive Principal and strong senior leadership team will enable best practice to be applied

consistently across the two schools and secure improvement in both of them. We also believe that it will lead to improved recruitment and retention of high quality staff.

By 2012/13, we expect the Federation to consist of two strong and effective 11-19 schools. Both schools will receive a high number of applications for their Year 7 places as a result of their proven high standards in learning and teaching. Both will add real value to pupils' progress and achievement.

Our ultimate aspiration is for both schools to be judged outstanding by OfSTED even if the timescale for securing this judgement may have to be different in each case.

SECTION 2 - FOUNDATION SCHOOLS

WHAT IS A FOUNDATION SCHOOL AND HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT TO A COMMUNITY SCHOOL?

Foundation schools are not a new model of school. There are many such schools in Cambridgeshire already; Longsands College is one of them. The main difference between Community and Foundation schools is the extent to which powers are delegated directly to the schools' governing bodies. In a Foundation School, the Governing Body owns the land and buildings; the Governing Body employs the school's staff and is the admissions authority i.e. is responsible for setting the admission criteria and determining which children have priority for school places in accordance with the statutory School Admissions Code and agreed local arrangements.

HOW ARE FOUNDATION SCHOOLS FUNDED AND HOW ARE THEY ACCOUNTABLE?

Like Community schools, Foundation schools are maintained by the Local Authority. They receive their funding from the Local Authority, are accountable to the Local Authority and are entitled to the same levels of support; they are part of the family of maintained schools. The Local Authority has the same powers to intervene in a Foundation school as in a Community school. This can include the Local Authority appointing additional governors to strengthen a Governing Body and, ultimately, suspending a Governing Body and putting in place an Interim Executive Board. In certain circumstances the Local Authority can also exercise powers in relation to a school's delegated budget.

WHY IS THE CHANGE TO FOUNDATION STATUS BEING PROPOSED FOR ST NEOTS COMMUNITY COLLEGE?

Whilst it is not a legal requirement of establishing the proposed Federation between our schools that St Neots Community College becomes a Foundation school, if this change does not take place, it would mean that the Federated Governing Body would act in a slightly different capacity in relation to each school. For example, it would continue to be the employer of the staff at Longsands College whilst the Local Authority would continue to be the employer of the staff at St

Neots Community College, albeit that the Governing Body would manage that employment. This would make things complicated for the Federated Governing Body.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR STAFF AT ST NEOTS COMMUNITY COLLEGE?

When a school changes status from a Community to a Foundation school, current teaching staff transfer from the employment of the Local Authority to the employment of the Governing Body. They continue to be employed under the national School Teachers' Pay and Conditions and to be eligible for the Teachers' Pension Scheme. New teachers would be employed on those same national conditions. Existing non-teaching staff would also transfer under their current terms and conditions. Foundation schools do have the ability to set different terms and conditions for non-teaching staff appointed after the school changes status but this is not the intention of the St Neots Community College's Governing Body and is not the current practice of the Governing Body of Longsands.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PUPILS AND THE CURRICULUM?

Foundation schools are required to deliver the National Curriculum. Changing to Foundation status does not mean there have to be curriculum changes although through the Federation that is proposed with Longsands there will be opportunities to look at the delivery of the statutory curriculum, to improve outcomes for both schools' students.

WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES TO CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND HOW DOES THE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT (DDA) AFFECT FOUNDATION SCHOOLS?

Foundation schools have the same obligations to children with Special Educational Needs as Community Schools. The statutory code of practice on special educational needs applies to all maintained schools.

There is a duty on all schools not to discriminate against disabled students or prospective students on grounds of disability. Foundation schools must comply, therefore, with the Disability Discrimination Act in the same way as any other maintained school.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR GOVERNANCE?

When a school changes status from a Community school to a Foundation school the composition of the Governing Body changes to allow for partnership governors to be appointed. Because this change to Foundation status is proposed in conjunction with a Federation with Longsands we propose changing the composition of the Governing Body only once. This will mean that if the Federation is established then the governing bodies of St Neots Community College and Longsands College will be replaced by a new Federated Governing Body.

WHAT ABOUT THE SCHOOL LAND AND BUILDINGS?

At the moment, the County Council owns the land and assets that make up St Neots Community College. On change of status to Foundation that land and those assets pass, under statute, to the Governing Body of the school. Before that date the school and the County Council will need to agree the land and assets that will transfer. Because this change of status to Foundation is proposed in conjunction with a Federation with Longsands we propose that the land and assets that comprise St Neots Community College should transfer directly to the Federated Governing Body.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR ADMISSIONS?

For Foundation schools the Governing Body is the admissions authority for the school rather than the Local Authority. This means the Governing Body are responsible for setting the admissions criteria for the school and for making sure those criteria are properly exercised. However the Governing Body must operate in accordance with the national legal framework on admissions and agreed local arrangements. Because this change of status to Foundation is proposed in conjunction with a Federation with Longsands College responsibility for admissions would transfer directly to the Federated Governing Body.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT IN THE PROCESS?

We would like to hear from you. The closing date for receipt of comments is **26 April 2010**. You can complete the attached questionnaire or email us at stneotssecondary@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

On 29 April we will hold a joint meeting of our two governing bodies with representatives from the Local Authority to consider the outcomes of the consultation and the make-up of the proposed Federated Governing Body. The Governing Body of St Neots Community College also needs to consider and pass a formal resolution to publish statutory proposals to change the school's status from a Community to a Foundation school.

On or around 4 May, the Local Authority would arrange to publish a statutory public notice on behalf of St Neots Community College in the Hunts Post setting out the proposal to change the school's status from a Community to a Foundation school.

There would then be a four week period for anyone who wished to do so to send a representation to the school's Governing Body in respect of this proposed change.

In the week beginning 7 June we would each hold a Governing Body meeting at which we would decide whether or not to proceed with the establishment of a Federation between our schools and St Neots Governing Body would simultaneously consider the question of change of status to a Foundation school. Subject to the outcome of those meetings, the Federation would be established on 1 September 2010 and the existing governing bodies would cease to operate.

If both schools take the decision to proceed with the proposed Federation, the Local Authority would help us set up a temporary Federated Governing Body in line with the composition set out above. This temporary Governing Body would then meet to confirm the appointment of Mr Whatmough as Executive Principal of the Federation and consider and approve the admission arrangements for entry to each school in September 2011.

It is important to note that the proposed Federation could not be implemented until St Neots Community College achieved Foundation status.

Consultees

Parents/carers of students attending St Neots Community College
Parents/carers of students attending Longsands College
Parents/carers of pupils attending partner primary schools
Longsands College and St Neots Community College staff
St Neots Town Council
Huntingdonshire District Council
Samuel Pepys School
Local County Councillors
Local MP
Trade unions and associations

St Neots Secondary Schools' Federation Proposal

Consultation Response Sheet

Please place a tick in the appropriate box to indicate if you are a:

Member of staff * _____

Governor * _____

Parent of a Child at St Neots Community College

Parent of a Child at Longsands College

Parent of a Child at Primary School * _____

Parent of a Younger Child

Pupil at St Neots Community College

Pupil at Longsands College

Other member of St Neots Community

Professional Association / Trade Union

Partner Organisation / Education Provider

* *Please name the school*

Proposal that St Neots Community College and Longsands College should Federate with effect from 1 September 2010

- I strongly agree with the proposed change
- I agree with the proposed change
- I do not have a strong view on the proposed change
- I do not agree with the proposed change
- I strongly disagree with the proposed change

If you would like to make an additional comment, please use the box below:

Proposal that St Neots Community College should change its status from a Community to a Foundation School with effect from 1 September 2010

Please place a tick in the box which most closely accords with your view

- I strongly agree with the proposed change
- I agree with the proposed change
- I do not have a strong view on the proposed change
- I do not agree with the proposed change
- I strongly disagree with the proposed change

If you would like to make an additional comment, please use the box below:

Return to: Suzanne Nelson
Children and Young People's Services
Box No. CC1209
Castle Court
Shire Hall
Cambridge
CB3 0AP

or email stneotssecondary@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

The deadline for receipt of comments is **26 April 2010**