

Policy for Church Schools requiring Interim Leadership and/or considering Federation

A) Introduction

This guidance is intended for Governing Boards of Church of England Schools in the Diocese of Lincoln. Its aim is to support Governing Boards that are considering an Interim Headteacher or an Interim Executive Headteacher for their school. It also provides important information for schools considering federation.

B) Why would a school need an Interim Headteacher?

There are generally three main reasons for this.

1. The substantive Headteacher has resigned too close to the resignation deadline and governors are not able to appoint a new head within the timescale. An interim leader is then required until a new appointment can be made.
2. The substantive Headteacher has resigned and the governors have decided to explore an alternative leadership model. This may be an interim executive headship arrangement with another school.
3. The substantive Headteacher is on long term absence and the governors need an interim leader to cover the absence.

C) How do we go about finding an Interim Headteacher?

It is really important that you contact the Diocesan Education Team and your Local Authority (LA) adviser to let them you know your requirements. The LA and Diocese will work together to help the school find an appropriate leader ensuring that the school works within the LA and diocesan policies. The interim head is most likely to come from another school which is considered to have good leadership capacity. In some cases, a supply agency may be considered. In exceptional cases, the LA may provide an Interim Head in the short term. (The LA has their own protocol for this).

D) What role does the Governing Board have in appointing an Interim Headteacher?

It is likely that this process needs to move swiftly and efficiently to secure an interim leader in time for the start date. The Governing Board has the delegated authority to appoint their own interim Headteacher and is not obliged to use the interim head recommended by the LA and diocese. However, you must involve the diocese and LA in the appointment process and pay due regard to the guidance and advice given.

The Governing Board may permit the Chair to take the lead in finding an interim Headteacher (with the support of the LA/diocese), keeping the Governing Body informed throughout the process. The Governing Board may then approve the Chair's recommendation – taking into account of the advice given by the LA and Diocese. The appointment process will vary on how much is known about the proposed interim head. (i.e. already well known to the LA/diocese/school or from an agency). The LA and diocese will advise on the appointment process.

E) As a church school, do we have to have an interim leader who is an experienced church school Headteacher?

The Governing Board will want to ensure that the school is well led and managed as a church school. It is not essential for the interim head to have been a leader in a church school but it is important that the interim head is committed to maintain and develop the Christian character of the school.

F) Can we approach non-church schools to see if they would be willing to share their Headteacher with us?

Talk to the LA and diocesan advisers about your proposals to approach schools in the first instance. The LA and Diocese will have intelligence about the schools and will advise if they are likely to have the capacity to share leadership with your school.

There are potential long term implications for a church school establishing an Interim Executive headship with a non-church school. There are also implications for a Voluntary Aided (VA) church school sharing leadership with a Voluntary Controlled (VC) church school.

The implication is that there are different governance models in schools with a religious designation.

G) Why should it matter if the school we want to share a head with has a different governance model?

It doesn't really matter if you are absolutely certain that an interim executive headship is a short term measure.

However, it is not uncommon for schools to explore federation once they have seen the benefits of sharing a Headteacher with another school. A federation means that one Governing board is established to replace the individual Governing Boards of each school.

A new federated Governing Board provides greater strategic leadership for the schools. For example, sharing resources, achieving economies of scale, enhancing teaching and learning and providing greater opportunities for professional development for all staff.

The new federated Governing Board also ensures that the individual character and identity for each school is maintained.

To achieve the benefits of federation and preserve the Christian foundation and character of church schools, it is important that the foundation governor representation is maintained. **The Lincoln Diocesan Board of Education's (LDBE) position on federation is that:**

- Schools of the same designation e.g. two VA schools or two VC schools must maintain the same proportion of foundation governors in the new federated governing board. That being up to at least 25% foundation governors in a VC only federation. In a VA only federation the majority of foundation governors must exceed all other governors by 2.
- For a VA school federating with a VC school, the LDBE requires a VA majority foundation governance model in place for the new federation. The foundation governors could be nominated by the PCCs in which the schools are located.
- For a VA school federating with a non-church school, the LDBE requires a VA majority foundation governance model in place for the new federation. The foundation governors could be nominated by the PCCs in which the schools are located.

- For a VC school federating with a non-church school, the LDBE requires a VC minority foundation governance model in place for the new federation. The foundation governors are nominated by the PCC in which the church school is located.

A non-church school does not become a church school by entering any of the governance models above. It retains its community school identity. It is the responsibility of all governors in the new federated governing board to ensure that the schools retain their individual identity.

It is important for all stakeholders including the Local Authority to know the LDBE position on federations from the point of early discussions about sharing a Headteacher with another school.

Without this transparency, the schools could find there are strong objections to changing the composition of the Governing Board when formally consulting on federation. This formal consultation usually takes place several months after the schools have become accustomed to working with each other. These objections could prevent the proposed federation from happening which in turn could prove to be detrimental to the long term executive leadership in the future.

H) In cases where the DBE expects a majority foundation governance model, how do we find and appoint enough suitable foundation governors?

For this DBE position on federation to be feasible, it is important that there is a sufficient number of foundation governors who have the relevant skills and experience, the energy and time to undertake the role properly, and the commitment to support and challenge school leaders appropriately. The DBE understands the challenge for recruiting suitable governors and is implementing plans to support schools and Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) to enhance the supply of foundation governors. The plans include:

- DBE officers working with senior clergy, deaneries and PCCs to identify and overcome barriers for recruitment;
- Developing stronger connections between PCCs and schools so they can get a clearer understanding of each other's context and needs;
- Facilitating 'taster' sessions for potential foundation governors e.g., visits to schools and meeting the Chair and Headteacher;
- Stronger engagement with governor recruitment agencies such as 'Inspiring Governance' (to widen to field of potential nominations for PCCs)
- Providing additional guidance and support for new and experienced foundation governors.
- Reviewing the appointment processes for foundation governors to ensure it operates efficiently as possible.

With these measures in place, the DBE is confident that the risk of having long term vacancies is minimized and the prospect of establishing strong and effective VA majority governance models is entirely possible.

I) What if the DBE strategies listed above do not help us find the foundation governors we need?

If it is the case that the new federation is not able to fill foundation governor vacancies, the DBE will provide an interim solution until suitably skilled foundation governors can be appointed. The interim solution may include one or more of the following options:

- The DBE may deploy an experienced foundation governor from another church school.
- A DBE director may serve on the Governing Board as a temporary foundation governor.

- c) A DBE officer may engage in full governing board meetings. This attendance may be virtually or in person.
- d) The DBE may appoint a governor on a temporary basis from another church school who currently may not be a foundation governor but has shown a commitment to support school leaders in developing the Christian character of their own school.

J) We think we know of a suitable partner school that is interested in sharing their head in the interim. What do we do next?

1. Seek support from the LA and diocesan advisers.
2. A meeting is convened for the Chairs of each school, the Head and the LA/diocese officer to discuss the position (e.g. context / character of the school, school needs, duration of the role, days per week, salary costs, line management etc.)
3. Arrange visits to each school (if appropriate).
4. Reflect on the initial meetings and visits. Consider the leadership capacity proposed and assess whether it meets the school's needs. Consult with other senior leaders, governors, LA and diocese on proposal.
5. If all parties are agreed in principle, HR will provide a 'Memorandum of Understanding' document for both Chairs to sign to formalise the agreement.
6. The position begins and is kept under review.

K) What if we have been approached by a school to provide interim executive leadership support?

1. Seek guidance from the LA and diocesan advisers.
2. The head, chair and adviser have an initial meeting to discuss your school's capacity to provide support. Consider your school's leadership at all levels, the potential backfill that would be required for your own school and undertake initial research about the other school. For example, the school's character, location, governance model, inspection judgements, pupil outcomes etc.
3. Decide whether to explore this opportunity further by meeting with the Chair of the other school and the LA / diocesan advisers. Ask questions about the school's context, needs, staffing, finance, duration of the role, reasons for approaching your school to share a head etc.
4. Visit the other school to consider if the ethos, culture and values are in line with your school.
5. Reflect on your research, initial meetings and visit to determine whether you have the capacity to commit leadership support for the school. Consult with other senior leaders, governors, the LA and diocese.
6. If all parties are agreed in principle, HR will provide a 'Memorandum of Understanding' document for both Chairs to sign and formalise the agreement.
7. The position begins and is kept under review.

L) What if we do want to federate as a result of a successful arrangement with a partner school?

There is a separate formal process for federation – not covered by this document. Please contact your LA and diocesan advisers for further advice.

This guidance was approved by the LDBE on 16th June 2020.

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