



Acting Headteacher: Mrs N Fletcher MA (Hons), NPQH

Argyle Street
Ulverston
Cumbria
LA12 0BD
Tel: 01229 483960

Email: admin@sjbarrow.cumbria.sch.uk

Website: www.sjbarrow.cumbria.sch.uk

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Dear Parents, Carers and Families,

As you may be aware, here at Sir John Barrow we work closely with other schools in the local area. Headteachers meet regularly and plan how to improve things for all children in all our schools together.

More recently, we have been fortunate enough to have been given extra funding from a local business which has allowed our joint projects to be really exciting, involve different staff from all schools and most importantly, have a positive impact for the children. Examples of this you might have heard of are the phonics and reading projects or the OPAL play project.

Although every school has its own unique character and the different children in the different schools need different things; there are many common features of what all good schools do. Here at Sir John Barrow, we believe the work done as part of the Furness Primary Collaborative has had a very positive effect for many children in our school in lots of different ways.

As a result of this, the governors at Sir John Barrow have decided to become part of a 'soft' federation with other schools who feel the same sense of excitement about what we can achieve together. We are planning to be operating as a Federation by September 2025.

Sir John Barrow will not be changing its name! We will not be changing our uniform! We will not stop 'Succeeding, Enjoying and Belonging' We will, however, look for even more ways to work well with other schools in our local area to make sure we are doing everything we can to provide the very best learning and education opportunities for our children.

If you would like to find out more about this exciting development for our school then please call in or contact either Mr Barrett or Mrs Fletcher to talk about this further. Thank you for your continued support.

Nancy Fletcher

Acting Headteacher



‘Soft Federation’ – What does it mean?

Will joining the federation change how our school looks and feels?

No. Each school in the federation will retain its own personal identity. Schools will continue to work together on projects that are mutually beneficial for all children across the schools in the federation. Staff will continue to share ideas and expertise and develop great teaching in all schools.

Does a soft Federation change our school or its governance?

No. A soft Federation is entirely voluntary so the only effect that it has on a school are those the school has chosen by joining the Federation. The school's leadership and governance responsibilities remain exactly as they were before joining the Federation. A soft Federation allows schools to pool some sovereignty in specific agreed areas.

Does joining a Federation cost anything?

Possibly. If the Federation has agreed to undertake activity and there is a cost to this then the federated schools will share that cost. Equally if the Federation benefits from income or cost saving this would be distributed to all Federation Schools.

Can Church Schools join Federations?

Yes. There is no limitation on them joining soft federations because this has no impact on the governance of the school or its character as a Church School. Joining a hard federation would require diocesan agreement because this would change the governance of the school. In this case the diocese would have to be satisfied that the governance and leadership model would not compromise the integrity of the Church character of the school. In this case it is a soft Federation which is being proposed.

Is the soft Federation agreement legally enforceable?

Probably not. Whilst the agreement is formal it has moral rather than legal force. However, elements of the agreement which have financial implications for schools would be open to formal process and eventually litigation. Governing Bodies should therefore be aware that signing up to the Federation and agreeing to share costs or income should be considered binding. For example: a school which holds a £20,000 Federation pot of money could not suddenly leave and keep that shared pot.

If the Federation can't bank or employ people why bother to federate at all?

The soft federation model allows schools to collaborate in a much deeper way than in a non-federated voluntary agreement. Governing bodies take a formal decision to federate and agree to pool resources and sovereignty in specified areas of activity. A Joint Strategic Committee provides governor oversight of the federation's activity. Although the agreement is moral rather than legal it provides a clear definition and basis for the pooling of sovereignty and resources. It also ensures for accountability and transparency further building trust between schools.



