



**Isle of Man
Government**

Reiltys Ellan Vannin

Department of Education and Children

**Chief Executive Officer
Ronald Barr**

Geoff Moorcroft
Director of Education
Education Improvement Service
Department of Education and Children
Hamilton House, Peel Road, Douglas
Isle of Man, IM1 5EZ

Direct Dial No: (01624) 685796
Mobile: (07624) 460341
Website: www.gov.im
Email: geoff.moorcroft@sch.im

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Dear Parents/Carers

The Department of Education and Children has agreed to the federation of Dhoon School and Laxey School, beginning 1st September 2017.

Following the appointment of Mr Max Kelly, currently headteacher of Dhoon School, to the position of headteacher of Laxey School, an opportunity has arisen for the two schools to work more closely together.

From 1st September, both Dhoon and Laxey School will continue to exist as separate schools. Their leadership structures, policies, traditions, and each school's distinct ethos will continue to exist and pupils and families should experience little difference. However, the schools will have a single headteacher - Mr Kelly - and a single Governing Body, comprised of the Governing Bodies of both separate schools.

The individuality of both schools will be maintained, with separate uniform, logos etc and each serving a distinct community. Both schools have long and successful traditions and the Department would seek to maintain these.

Mr Kelly is in a unique position and has considerable experience of managing similar situations. He served on the Governing Body of Andreas and Bride schools, when they were federated, has worked as a Deputy Headteacher in the 'Murray's Road' site of Scoill Yn Jubilee when it amalgamated and, of course has worked as headteacher of Dhoon. He is aware of the need to respect both schools and establish strong internal and external relationships to make such a structure work effectively.

Senior teachers already exist at both schools and the temporary absence of a headteacher could provide them with invaluable professional development and, should they aspire to the substantive role themselves, excellent preparation. Additional staffing would be provided to enable there to be someone, in a non-teaching role, on each site at all times.

What are 'federated schools'?

A federation of schools is where a number of maintained schools come together under one governing body. The schools' individual governing bodies are disbanded and a new single overarching governing body is formed. This becomes the accountable body for all the schools and sets the strategic direction for the group of schools. Federation is not to be confused with collaboration, which is a less formal arrangement.

What are the advantages of 'federated schools'?

Federation can be a very effective group structure, providing maintained schools with the opportunity to form a group in order to improve the education of pupils. This enables governors and school leaders to focus on forming relationships between schools first, and then joint leadership, governance and business management.

Federation can lead to a broader curricular offer for pupils in both schools (eg extra-curricular clubs) as well as stronger Governance and improved practice, through dialogue.

Over time, it is anticipated that the schools will be able to work more closely on staff training, to develop more flexible arrangements for deciding which pupils will attend which school, for moderating and benchmarking judgments, opportunities for innovation, recruitment and making efficiencies by sharing some resources, where necessary. The 'load' of responsibilities can be shared across more people.

Ultimately, all of these opportunities could result in even better outcomes for pupils.

Does the Department have any plans to 'federate' any other schools?

The Department has no current plans to federate or merge any of its existing schools. However, it keeps all of its schools under constant review and, if it were appropriate, would consider different structures, as it moves forward.

Has the Department developed this structure to address the weakness of one of the schools?

No - the Department is proud of Dhoon and Laxey Schools, both of which serve their communities extremely well. They both have high expectations and have achieved impressive outcomes for pupils. This decision has been taken to forge even greater collaboration between the schools and as a result of this unique opportunity.

Is this a cost saving measure?

No - the federation has been agreed on the basis of a strong, educational argument for closer working between one small and one medium-sized school. The Department will augment the staffing of the two schools, such that there is always somebody who does not have a class commitment. This will result in a modest cost saving - the difference between a teacher's and a headteacher's salary but is not the motivation for the change.

Yours sincerely



Geoff Moorcroft
Director of Education