

FEDERATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN

September 2023 to July 2024



“I leave behind a belief that you can be kind but strong, empathetic but decisive, optimistic but focused, that you can be your own kind of leader.”

Jocinda Ardern, former Prime Minister of New Zealand

“In a creative, caring environment, we all support and challenge each other to develop confidence and independence. As active global citizens, we are inspired to discover and succeed in lifelong learning.”

Introduction

When Jacinda Ardern announced that she had decided to leave her post as Prime Minister of New Zealand, she said that she believed it was possible to be “kind but strong, empathetic but decisive, optimistic but focused, that you can be your own kind of leader.” Her leadership style was widely recognised as being one of the decisive factors in New Zealand coming through the pandemic successfully and her approach to the enormous challenge facing her country was applauded across the world. It cannot have been easy for her to manage the challenges of being kind but strong, empathetic but decisive and optimistic but focused but the success she achieved demonstrates that it is indeed possible to hold these in tension and that leaders can indeed develop their own leadership style to reflect their personality. Exe Valley Federation leaders reflected on this quote at their most recent leadership team day and considered how their own style of leading their schools showed kindness, strength, empathy, decisiveness, optimism and focus in an increasingly challenging educational context.

During another leadership team day, we read a very recent report about the way our education system has changed since the pandemic ended. ‘Teaching, the new reality’ was published in May 2023 and was based on extensive research by Education Support. It made sobering reading as it began to evidence the new reality that most people working in education recognise but that public perception has not yet caught up with. The report stated that, “The popular view of a school-based career in the UK is often set in sunlit uplands, filled with eager learners and inspired teachers, long holidays and four o’clock finishes. The reality has much sharper edges.” This reality includes the challenge of increased expectations on schools to provide a much wider range of support for children and families in the wake of the pandemic and in the midst of a cost of living crisis. Teachers and school staff face these additional challenges against an existing backdrop of difficult funding, accountability and workload pressures. The report challenged us to think about the well-being and emotional health of the children and staff in our schools and to focus our development priorities around improving this where we can. We concluded that whilst we recognise the rather gloomy picture of education in the UK at the moment, we are privileged to work with teams of professionals in our schools who put the needs of our children before their own and for this we are very grateful.

The Federation Development Plan gives senior leaders and governors an opportunity to bring together the priorities for the coming year into one document and to share our vision with parents, governors and the wider staff team. Many of the challenges described in ‘Teaching, the new reality’ will not go away in the coming twelve months but the resilience and determination to continuously improve that the plan demonstrates, is a testament to the federation’s strong commitment to being the best that it can be.

This year, we have been working with Whimple Primary School and I am delighted that the federation governors and Whimple governors agreed to make this a hard-wired arrangement by joining together formally from 1st September. I am grateful to the staff at Whimple who have engaged so willingly with us in sharing good practice and look forward to this relationship evolving over the coming years. As always, I am also extremely grateful to the six Heads of School and the governing board for their insights into the work of the federation and their combined contributions to this year’s Federation Development Plan.

John Jolliffe

John Jolliffe
Executive Headteacher
July 2023

Federation Development Plan Summary

1. Promoting global citizenship

Aim: every member of the Exe Valley Federation understands the challenges of being a global citizen and is well-prepared to take an active part in society in the future. This is how we will work towards achieving this aim in 2023/4:

- Children's awareness of climate emergency and creation care will be raised through initiating meaningful eco-projects, linked to school values
- All EVF schools will develop a meaningful link with a school in another part of the world to promote global understanding
- Children's leadership skills will be developed through school-based opportunities and the Archbishop's Young Leaders' Award [see Aim 3F]
- Children will have a greater understanding of democratic value and world religions and will be made aware of the risks of radicalisation
- Children will be equipped to speak out and stay safe at home, school and in the wider world
- Inspirational people from a wide variety of backgrounds will broaden children's understanding of difference

2. Building Cultural Capital

Every member of the Exe Valley Federation is given the essential knowledge that they need to become educated citizens. This is how we will work towards achieving this aim in 2023/4:

- To set high expectations for music provision, to embed and exceed the national curriculum and to support pupils to realise their musical potential
- All children will be offered an opportunity to perform in public, either in a musical concert or dance show
- Children will gain essential knowledge of the outdoors through a focused teaching programme and access to outdoor learning
- Year 6 will be prepared for the world of work and understand the need for relevant skills as they move to secondary school
- All children will be offered a wide range of clubs and after-school activities and disadvantaged children will be supported to attend

3. Creating flourishing communities

Every member of the Exe Valley Federation is part of a flourishing local community where their unique characteristics are understood and respected. This is how we will work towards achieving this aim in 2023/4:

- Engagement between schools and local communities will be improved through participation in local events
- Communication will be improved between schools and their parent communities through effective use of the website and social media
- Relational Practice Behaviour Policy will clarify expectations of behaviour and raise standards of behaviour where needed [see also Aim 4D]

For Church Schools:

- The federation's Vision Statement will be clearly articulated and understood in the context of the Church of England's Vision for Education
- The new SIAMS inspection framework will demonstrate that Church schools are living up to their foundation and this is effectively supported by the Exe Valley Federation
- Children will be able to become Courageous Advocates through school-based opportunities and the Archbishop's Young Leaders' Award [see Aim 1C]
- Church Schools will live up to their foundation principles through shared events and activities

4. Supporting mental health and well-being

Every member of the Exe Valley Federation is supported to have a positive approach to their mental health and well-being. This is how we will work towards achieving this aim in 2023/4:

- Two Lead Teachers for well-being will be appointed and trained to promote staff well-being across the federation
- Workload for teachers will be improved and staff well-being will be enhanced as a result of careful planning and support
- Children with high levels of generalised anxiety will be identified and given strategies to reduce or manage anxiety successfully
- Principles of Relational Practice and Policy will be embedded across the federation schools through training opportunities [see Aim 3C]
- Parents will be able to access support through Early Help and EVF parenting courses

5. Inspiring lifelong learning

Every member of the Exe Valley Federation is inspired to play an active role in their learning and have mastered reading and mathematical fluency. This is how we will work towards achieving this aim in 2023/4:

- The pedagogical ['craft of teaching'] skills of teachers will be further developed through a shared understanding of the features of good teaching and agreeing expectations in every class
- Curriculum design work will be refined further and a clear strategy for assessment is agreed and implemented
- Formative and summative assessment strategies will be refined so that children learn more and remember more through effective retrieval practice
- Lead teachers will drive development of subject areas through focused curriculum improvement plans
- Teaching and Learning Reviews will enable teachers to share good practice and reflect on their pedagogy
- Adaptive teaching strategies will ensure that the attainment and progress of disadvantaged children, and those with additional learning needs, enable them to learn the next component in a sequence of knowledge

Early Years Development:

- Phonics and early reading skills will be given high priority through the use of Little Wandle
- Teaching of maths in Early Years will reflect the importance of securing knowledge of numbers to ten
- Parents will receive regular feedback and information on how to help their children at home

English Development:

- Outcomes in reading will improve through the use of a broad range of high quality texts for whole class and guided reading
- Outcomes in writing will improve through developing oracy and transcription skills to build writing fluency and accuracy

Mathematical Development:

- Teachers will be supported to develop a shared vision and culture around the importance of maths and a belief that every child can achieve highly in maths
- Children will be able to talk about their mathematical thinking, share ideas, make connections using what they know and collaborate with others in maths lessons [Mathematical oracy]
- Children who have not met ARE or who fall behind during the year will be supported to catch up and keep up
- Children will develop an increased fluency of age-appropriate arithmetic skills and have access to reliable technology to complete the Y4 Multiplication Tables Check

6. Developing leadership capacity

Effective leadership and management ensures that the vision and values of the federation drive overall improvement. This is how we will work towards achieving this aim in 2023/4:

- Strategic growth plan will define the future direction of the federation with a timeline to be 'strong enough and big enough' to convert to a MAT in the future, if this becomes necessary
- School leaders will drive the strategic direction and educational aims of the federation and focus on how these aims impact positively on school improvement
- Governors will further develop their understanding of their strategic role and have a detailed knowledge of each individual school's strengths and development areas
- Heads of school will improve quality of self-evaluation through writing individual School Development Plans, School Effectiveness Summaries and Ofsted Action Plans
- Senior leaders will conduct Quality Assurance visits in each school to assure effective implementation of development aims [see Aim 5A to 5C]
- Leaders and governors will work with Moorsway Federation under a Management Partnership from September 2023 to December 2024 to provide school improvement support
- Senior leaders will be able to refine leadership skills through commissioning Senior Leaders' course

Continuing professional development:

- Curriculum lead teachers will be effectively trained and have time to implement development priorities to secure improvement in their curriculum areas
- Staff Development Days will enable all staff to learn and reflect on their practice by sharing their expertise through Continuing Professional Development opportunities
- Designated Safeguarding Lead [DSL] and Deputy DSLs will update knowledge and ensure that new safeguarding requirements are met.