

Proposals to introduce regulations to give Welsh local authorities the power to establish federations of maintained schools in Wales

Consultation response form

Your name: **Dr Philip Dixon**

Organisation (if applicable): **Association of Teachers and Lecturers (Cymru)**

e-mail/telephone number: pdixon@atl.org.uk / **029 2046 5000**

Your address: **2nd Floor. 9 Columbus Walk. Brigatine Place. Cardiff. CF10 4BY**

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) represents over 160,000 teachers, lecturers, head teachers, principals, and support staff across the UK in maintained and independent schools, further education colleges and sixth forms. It represents over 6,500 education staff in Wales.

Responses should be returned by **14 March 2013** to

School Governance Branch
Schools Management and Effectiveness Division
Department for Education and Skills
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or completed electronically and sent to:

e-mail: SMED2@wales.gsi.gov.uk (please enter 'Governing Body Consultation' in the subject matter box)

Question 1 – Do you agree with our proposal to allow an unlimited number of schools to federate? If not what upper limit of schools would you suggest?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

We do not believe this proposal is sensible. We think that an unlimited number of schools would be impractical, and suggest a maximum number of 5 schools. This would enable the executive head to be on site at least once a week. We also believe that increasing the number of schools beyond five would greatly increase the complexities of management, increase its distance from parents and that the risk of local self interest will become increasingly problematic as the number of federated schools increases.

Question 2 – Do you agree to the proposed changes to the ratio membership of a federated governing body for an unlimited number of schools? If not why not?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

We believe that all Head teachers within a Federation should be guaranteed a voting right on a Federated Governing Body. Teacher and Staff representatives should remain a separate category on the governing body.

Question 3 – Do you support this flexibility in the appointment of headteacher and deputy headteacher posts? If not please give your reasons.

Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

This seems sensible to us.

Question 4 – Do you agree with the amendments suggested in paragraph 32 (i)–(vi)?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

We would add:

- I) And full disclosure to other schools in the federation.**
- III) The proposals must be written in “child friendly” language.**
- V) Unless there is a significant change in circumstance.**
- VI) If the Local Authority can mandate the formation of a federation, why does the GB have to agree to a school leaving – the rule must be consistent.**

Question 5 – Do you agree with the proposals in paragraph 33, section 1(a–h)?

Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

We would add at

- E) And communicating the existence of such a link.**

Question 6 – Do you agree to the process for schools leaving a federation set out in paragraph 33, Section 2 (a) and (b)?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

The regulations certainly shouldn't allow for a revolving door. Schools should not leave a federation unless there is clear benefit to the exiting federation in a school leaving that federation or ensured by the school moving to a different federation.

Question 7 – Do you agree to the proposals to the numbers of pupils that would define a ‘small school’?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

School size is dependent on phase and the regulations should reflect that. Geography and local needs may on occasions mitigate, within clearly defined boundaries, the absolute application of the definition. A hundred would seem credible for a primary school but not a secondary. The former needs to provide for sufficient pupil numbers in each year cohort, the latter needs to ensure the delivery of a sufficiently broad curriculum.

The case also needs to be more explicitly made in terms of pedagogy rather than in assumed reference to finance. Estyn has found little difference in the standards achieved by pupils in small schools or the quality of education provided. Estyn found that staff often experienced more pressure because they had to juggle more. It has judged that small schools generally do not do as well as others in leadership and management, staff development and curriculum planning. In small schools where the head has a substantial teaching commitment there is an increase in the school leader’s workload which is unsustainable in the long term.

When considering the question of school reorganisation, the educational needs of pupils should be paramount. How small can a school become before it starts to lose the critical mass that ensures sufficient social interaction, extra-curricular activity and staff diversity that seem to promote learning and teaching? Children and their education should not be used as proxies in other campaigns and causes; nor should they be used as surrogates in debates about other societal changes.

Question 8 – Do you agree to the consultation proposals to be carried out by a local authority in respect of a small school federation)?

Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

We agree with this proposal.

Question 9 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

We are concerned that federation could become, in some cases, the second best option where closure or amalgamation might be more effective in ensuring efficiency and future standards of education.

The responses we have provided are made in context to the existing arrangements for school organisation. We are mindful that this consultation closes before the conclusion of the Review of the Delivery of Education Services in Wales by Robert Hill. We ask that this consultation is not considered in isolation as the review findings may have implications for some of the proposals to introduce regulations to give Welsh local authorities the power to establish federations of maintained schools in Wales.

Finally, we are not convinced that titles such as ‘Executive Head’ have any standing within the constraints of the STPCD, nor that this role has been sufficiently determined. It would seem prudent to us that these issues are addressed before proceeding with proposals and guidance for the federation of schools.

Responses to consultations may be made public – on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to be kept confidential, please tick here: