

TOTNES SCHOOLS



Aims:

To become the **centre of expertise for inclusivity** in South Devon and beyond
To raise **educational achievement** .

It's a Mystery

After two terms of trying to spread the word, it would appear that the Federation is still something of a mystery. The word **Federation** evokes confusion at best and a total blank at worst. Let me try to answer some of the questions.

What is a Federation?

A Federation is a group of schools, which have agreed to work together, collaboratively in certain areas for the good of the member schools and all their students and staff. There are Federations throughout the country and the numbers are rapidly growing. Current educational thinking views this as the way of **the future** and the benefits, both educational and financial, are potentially far reaching.

Federations are made up of schools, which have joined together for a variety of reasons but the one thing they have in common is the **strength** that create through **unity**. They will have a sense of common purpose, clear common goals and a common ethos.

Who's paying?

Two years ago the Innovations Unit (a Dfes funding body), seeing the potential of this kind of initiative, gave schools the opportunity to bid for a pot of money to set up new and innovative Federations. We were fortunate to have our bid accepted and this resulted in the formation of '**The Totnes Federation**'.

We have a **Federation Governing Body** made up of 2 representatives from each school, the 3 Headteachers and myself, the project coordinator. It is responsible for financing, through the separate Federation budget, and developing the various areas of the BID.

Why Us?

The close collaboration between the schools was formed five years ago via another project, looking at Inclusion. As the funding for this project began to end, it was felt that the benefits to all three schools were so great, that the collaboration should not only continue but grow, to incorporate other areas of school life. It is the active statement of the commitment by the three Headteachers involved, Stephen Jones - KEVICC, Annie Tempest - Dartington Primary and Audrey Farrow - Bidwell Brook, to work together toward a more unified approach.

What are we trying to do?

We are working together to share ideas, expertise, resources, ways of teaching and learning in order to raise achievement, further develop inclusion, pioneer inclusion modules in teacher and teaching assistant training, improve the perception of the learning environment, improve transition from one key stage to another, e.g. year 6 to 7, redefine and develop the role of the teaching assistant and to develop 14 – 19 SEN provision.

What have we achieved so far?

- We have teachers working cross phase i.e. teaching Literacy in each others schools. This has been an incredibly enlightening experience, e.g. from this exercise we have discovered a number of discrepancies and gaps in the National Literacy Strategy, which goes some way to understanding why moving from Primary to Secondary can be so traumatic for some pupils and we are now in a position to address this problem, in order to make transition easier.
- Based on recent surveys we are working toward a clearer, more user friendly **role and training of Teaching Assistants and Teaching Staff** to make systems more effective, through carefully designed courses.
- We are developing Teacher Training courses across all three schools to incorporate inclusion and a clear insight into transition between one school and another.
- We have aligned training days to maximise opportunities to share ideas, policies and knowledge. (Also a financial saving, i.e. 3 for the price of 1)
- Through joint initiatives e.g. Network Learning, Dartington Plus, Leading Edge we are beginning to use common teaching and learning strategies, which will have an effect on a variety of areas of school life.

If there are still areas that you want clarified there are leaflets available at each school reception area or visit our website:

www.totnes-federation.devon.sch.uk. I can be contacted personally by phone or email .

Thankyou

Jill Bruley