

Consultation Document

The Governors of Bilston Nursery School and Eastfield Nursery School propose to form a federation under a single governing board with effect from 4th September 2017.

Consultation Period: 14th July 2017 until 1st September 2017

Introduction

For the last four years Bilston Nursery School and Eastfield Nursery School have been working together in a partnership under the direction of one Head Teacher. The Governors of Bilston Nursery School and Eastfield Nursery School have each decided to proceed with a consultation on a proposal to establish a Federation between the two schools during the Autumn term 2017.

The purpose of this document is to set out the proposal, and to seek the views of everybody with an interest in the schools. At the end of the consultation process both Governing Boards will consider all the responses before each making a final decision about whether to proceed to form a Federation.

What is a Federation?

A Federation is two schools working together under a single Governing Board. This can benefit children because the Governing Board can share expertise across the schools and pool resources.

Why Federate?

The schools have been working together successfully for a number of years and there have been clear benefits to both schools. The informal relationship between the two schools cannot continue indefinitely so the Governing Boards of both school wish to formalise the relationship to support both schools long term futures.

The benefits include:

- Improved outcomes for pupils due to collaboration and shared expertise
- Improved staffing due to increased opportunities working across both schools
- Financial benefits due to economies of scale and cost sharing opportunities

There is an increasing body of evidence for the benefits of close collaboration between schools which include:

- school leaders and teachers can share thinking and planning to spread expertise and tackle challenges together
- governors can come together to share their thinking, to combine skills and to support each other
- schools can find it easier to find and fund specialist expertise in areas such as SEN and finance
- there will be more opportunities for training staff and the cost of training can be shared
- schools can negotiate discounts on essential items that they purchase

What stays the same?

- Each school will retain its own name, ethos and values
- The schools will continue to be led under the direction of one Head Teacher
- School leaders and governors will continue to track children's progress and attainment at each school, and have the highest expectation of standards in both achievement and behaviour.
- Existing staff will keep the same terms and conditions of employment.
- Each school will continue to oversee their finances with each receiving and managing its own budget.
- Each school will continue to manage its admissions and there will be no change to the current arrangements.

What will change?

- There will be a single governing board across both schools. A single governing board will be able to take a strategic view of the needs of both schools.
- There will be opportunities for increased efficiencies through economies of scale by joint purchasing and shared deployed resources, including staff.

Federated Governing Board

After federating there would be a single governing board and a single set of committees covering both schools.

Category of Governor	Number of Governors	Notes
Head Teacher	1	
Parent Governor	2	One from each school
Staff Governor	2	One from each school
Local Authority Governor	1	
Co-opted Governor	6	Three from each school

What Next?

The Governing Boards of both school welcome comments from parents and interested parties on the proposals. If you would like to make any comments please return your responses by emailing either school at eastfieldnurseryschool@wolverhampton.gov.uk or bilstonnurseryschool@wolverhampton.gov.uk by 1st Sept 2017.

Bilston and Eastfield Nursery School Federation

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a federation?

A federation is an arrangement where two or more maintained schools share a single governing body. Schools in federation continue to be individual schools, keeping their legal identity, but have their governance provided by the same board.

Why federate?

The idea behind this federation is to ensure the best possible outcomes for all pupils at both schools. It would enable us to make the best use of staff and resources within and across both schools to the benefit of all children.

The benefits include:

- Improved outcomes for pupils due to collaboration and shared expertise
- Improved staffing due to increased opportunities working across both schools
- Financial benefits due to economies of scale and cost sharing opportunities

Is this just a money saving exercise?

No. The proposal is driven foremost by the desire to improve standards by sharing expertise and best practice across both schools. However, there will be significant funding cuts in education over the next few years and a federation would allow for shared cost savings and economies of scale

How much disruption would there be for children?

There would be no disruption for children. As both schools currently have an informal partnership agreement, the children would notice no difference if this were to change to a formal federation

What happens if parents say no during consultation?

The consultation is aimed at gathering opinions and information, and is not a vote. The Governing Bodies will consider all responses carefully, including any objections, and these will be taken into account when a decision is made at the end of the consultation process

How would the schools be inspected by Ofsted?

Both schools would continue to be inspected separately. It would normally be appropriate to ask Ofsted to inspect the schools in the federation at the same time so that a rounded picture of the work of the federations can be formed. Ofsted is increasingly aware of and interested in the role that federations and collaborations play in improving standards.

How would the schools be funded?

Each school would continue to be funded individually, however joint costs can be shared across both schools

Would parents need to buy new uniform?

No. Both schools would retain their individual identities, including uniforms. The aim is not to create one school.

What is the difference between the current informal partnership and a federation?

A governance federation is a legal agreement between schools, where they share a governing body and where the governing body and committees with delegated powers take decisions on behalf of both schools, even though each school retains its own budget share. In the current informal partnership agreement each school has retained its own governing body and each decision is made separately.

Why do we need the current situation to change?

The informal agreement cannot continue indefinitely. There is a lot of duplication of work for the leadership team and across both governing bodies, and only limited costs can be shared. A formal federation would allow much more sharing of costs, knowledge and expertise, and would significantly cut the workload for the leadership team, allowing them more time to focus on the pupils' teaching and learning.

Would staff change employers if their schools federate?

No, all staff would continue to be employed by Wolverhampton City Council.

Will staff be forced to work at the partner school?

Current staff are employed by the individual schools and their posts are designated at those schools. If, in the future, staff would like to work at the partner school and there is an opportunity available the SLT will try to accommodate those wishes. No member of staff will be forced to work in the partner school.