

The Orchard Lea Federation Consultation FAQ's



Here are some of the immediate questions you may have regarding the proposed federation of Orchard Lea Infant and Orchard Lea Junior Schools and any potential challenges.

Why is this happening?

The majority of children at Orchard Lea Infant School progress to Orchard Junior School and benefit from the informal light touch collaborative partnership which exists between the two schools. The creation of a hard federation between the Infant and Junior school, formalising this partnership, would create more ways to share resources and expertise between the two schools which in turn would increase the impact our finite resources have on the life chances of our children.

What is a hard federation?

A hard federation means there are still two schools, with separate budgets and two separate OFSTED inspections. There would be one governing body and one Executive Headteacher who has overall responsibility for both schools.

Has this happened elsewhere?

Yes it has. Across the UK, schools are increasingly working together to form partnerships to support each other and make improvements.

What are the benefits of a hard federation?

School leaders and governors can ensure the two schools work together to give continuity and consistency for our pupils, whilst still having each school's unique identity and character. It will enable us to attract and retain the best teachers who will have the opportunity for career development and management responsibilities across the two schools. Having one governing body will enable us to take a strategic view of the needs of both schools which ultimately benefit the children. This will ultimately ensure the best possible learning outcomes for all our pupils.

Is there evidence to show that such federations prove successful?

Ofsted published their findings from a review of federations, which found that schools working in partnership are generally of a higher standard than those working alone. You can read this at:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/leadership-of-more-one-school>

NB: this document has been withdrawn; however, it is still relevant to the federation process. In addition, there was a relevant BBC news article published, "Pupils more confident in federated schools". This can be found at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-15004918>

NB: this document does not reflect current government policy; however, it is also relevant to the federation process.

The current governors who have formed part of the Federation working party have visited the following local federations and spoken with both their governors and Executive heads. Everyone of them shared overwhelmingly positive outcomes.

- Wallisdean Infant and Junior Schools
- Crofton Anne Dale Federation
- Alver Valley Schools
- Heathfield Schools Partnership

Does this mean that the schools are merging?

No. If the schools federate, the two schools will remain legally separate schools, each with their own Ofsted grading, allocated budget and policy for admissions.

Was amalgamating as a primary school considered?

No. A single primary school would result in less overall funding as it would not allow each school to retain its own individual budget and Ofsted rating.

Is a federation another name for an academy?

No. Academies are publicly funded independent schools that get money direct from the government, not the local council. They are run by an academy trust which employs the staff. Some academies have sponsors such as businesses, universities, other schools or voluntary groups. Sponsors are responsible for improving the performance of their schools. Academies do not have to follow the national curriculum, can set their own term times and school hours.

Would the children belong to the federation or to their own school?

If the federation goes ahead, the children will belong to their respective schools, while the schools will belong to the federation.

Will the names of the schools change?

No. There is no requirement or intention to change the name of either school.

Will each school have a Head of School?

Yes. The respective Heads of School will be responsible for managing the day to day running of their schools and their key stage. They will also work together under the leadership of the executive head to deliver the strategic overview, future direction and leadership of the schools/federation. Beyond this, it is also anticipated they will continue to work together on key projects important to both schools.

Do federated schools have a combined budget allocation?

No. In a federation each school continues to receive its own budget from the Local Authority based on the number of pupils within it and has to account for how this budget is used.

Will the admissions procedure change?

No. For both schools the governing body will continue to use the Local Authority's policy on admissions, exactly as happens now. Infant Parents will still have to apply for Junior School places, as the schools will still be separate.

Will my child/children have the same teachers as they do now?

Teachers will continue to teach the same classes as they are doing now. When children move up a year group it is likely that they will have a new teacher, but this is usual practice and nothing new. As staff may be offered the opportunity to work across both schools if they would like to, it is possible that children may meet some new staff at some point, or be taught by familiar faces.

What will be different for children?

In the short term, children will not notice changes in their normal day to day school life. However, federation will bring a lot of benefits over time, such as:

- a smoother Yr2 to Yr3 transition enabling children to settle in even better.
- developing a seven-year approach to teaching and learning (from Year R to Year 6).
- staff sharing expertise across the two schools to deliver high quality teaching; there will also be greater career opportunities for existing staff and it will be easier to attract high quality new teachers.
- a more joined up approach for helping children and families needing extra support, e.g. with SEND pupils and in the use of the Pupil Premium fund.
- common policies and strategies enabling both schools to foster a shared ethos and culture.

What are the changes for parents?

There will be very few changes to how federation will affect parents. Uniform, the time of the school day and holidays and inset training days will all currently remain the same.

What will it mean for staff?

There are real advantages for staff. Although everyone's present contracts will remain the same, staff will have opportunities across the two schools. This could include leadership opportunities, support staff working with each other, joint training, sharing of resources and collaborative learning. No one would be forced to move schools. In the future, new staff could be employed across both schools to give greater flexibility.

Who can attend the drop-in session?

The session is open to anyone with an interest in the future of the schools. Please do let us know if you have any questions, concerns or comments.

Will the governors take full account of the views of the parents?

The governors have published a proposal and will consider all the feedback and make every effort to address any comments. The ultimate decision to federate the schools will be taken by the governing bodies of both schools whilst taking into consideration all the views submitted.