



**Mortimer St. John's Church of England Infant School &  
Mortimer St. Mary's Church of England Junior School**

**Consultation Proposal To Form A Federation**

**Consultation from Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019 to Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

## **Foreword**

The federation of schools is a legal process which enables schools to work together through a formal structured process by sharing a single governing board and school leadership team that will make decisions in the best interest of all the schools, staff and pupils in that federation.

This is as opposed to having separate individual governing boards for each school.

Due to the departure, at the end of the 2017-2018 academic year, of the then head of St Mary's Junior School, an opportunity has arisen to look at ways to build on the current success of schools within Mortimer.

Whilst both schools will continue to have their own individual identity with regards to name, culture, ethos and continue to manage their own budgets, this process involves establishing a single governing board and school leadership team to govern the two schools.

The governing boards of both St. John's Infant and St. Mary's Junior Schools have met individually and jointly respectively to discuss the potential of forming a federation between the two schools. A joint committee was established between the two boards to look at the potential benefits and identify drawbacks from federation. In addition, this committee also met with representatives of the Oxford Diocese and West Berkshire Council to seek their invaluable guidance and experience.

Following this joint, collaborative exercise between the two governing boards – both have voted by a majority in favour of forming a Federation.

Since the start of the current academic year, a single acting executive head has been in place, allowing the two schools to work much more collaboratively. Both governing boards believe that if this is made a permanent structure, reporting into a single governing board, it will impact positively upon both schools. Having a single team responsible for curriculum, policy, standards and oversight from the foundation to year 6 will allow greater understanding and communication as children move through the two schools.

This consultation document has been prepared jointly by the governing boards. The main purpose of this document is to provide information and to gather the views of all stakeholders, whether directly connected to the school or as part of the wider community.

Appendices to this document refer to other supporting information relevant to the federation of schools.

## Consultation Process

The consultation process for St. John's Infant and St. Mary's Junior schools will start at midday on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

It will end strictly at midday on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

This document, as part of the overall consultation process, seeks to provide information to allow you to make an informed decision as regards the proposal.

All feedback, whether positive or negative, would be greatly appreciated. Feedback provided by e-mail to [office@msj.w-berks.sch.uk](mailto:office@msj.w-berks.sch.uk) or [office@msm.w-berks.sch.uk](mailto:office@msm.w-berks.sch.uk) (with subject heading *Federation Consultation*) or through the attached feedback form are the preferred methods, so that there is a formal record that can be shared with all governors.

All feedback will be consolidated and anonymised prior to circulating amongst the governors of the two schools. Note that the governors reserve the right to circulate selected anonymised feedback to key stakeholders, in order to inform them of the consensus.

Any feedback shared will be held in accordance with the terms of data privacy and GDPR policies of the schools.

The consultation process is prescribed in The School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2012. These state that:

*The governing boards proposing to federate must jointly consider any responses to the proposals and each governing board must determine whether –*

- (a) to proceed with the proposals for federation as published;*
- (b) to proceed with the proposals for federation with such modifications as the governing board consider appropriate; or*
- (c) not to proceed with the proposals for federation.*

*The modifications referred to in (b) may not include a change in the identity of the governing boards proposing to federate.*

The governing boards of both schools will meet in the week following the end of the consultation period to consider all the responses and come to a formal decision about whether or how the federation should proceed.

If the decision is to proceed (with or without any modifications to the proposals for federation), the final decision will be communicated to parents and staff through the existing communication routes as soon as possible. Other stakeholders will be informed by letter within one week following the decision.

The current proposal is for the Federation, if approved, to start on 3rd June 2019 at 7 p.m. This will be the date of the establishment of the new Federation Governing Board, with the existing governing boards at both schools dissolving on the same day at 6.59 p.m.

### **What are the benefits for both schools?**

The intention is that the Federation would allow staff and the new governing board to build on the current experience to the benefit of children at both schools.

- Within the Federation, both schools will maintain their unique identities, ethos and characters. *This is not to be considered a 'merger' of the two schools.*
- There can be a single shared vision, equality of provision and expectations across both schools set by the Federation Governing Board with the Senior Leadership teams of both schools.
- The Senior Leadership Team structure for both schools would be expected to become stronger and increasingly effective as it would be permanent. There would be improved capacity of the schools' leadership in the event of illness or leavers due to the larger leadership team.
- By sharing resources, provision could be improved for the children, particularly special educational needs and disabilities provision. Experience and understanding of individual children can be easily shared as they move from infant to junior school and can provide ongoing support.
- The Federation is an attractive option for teachers and support staff looking for a new challenge while providing wider opportunities for professional development for the staff of each school. These improved opportunities could help with recruitment and retention of staff.
- The Federation would provide both short and long-term stability in leadership and staffing for both schools.
- The schools can build on established shared approaches to classroom practice, such as marking and assessment, to allow staff across both schools to collaborate effectively. This would help improve and maintain standards in both schools.
- There is the opportunity to extend extra-curricular clubs across both schools using shared resource and expertise.
- There can be sharing of Safeguarding practices, procedures and processes.
- Ongoing, there may be opportunities for efficiencies in both schools. This includes information technology support and making financial savings and increasing efficiency by sharing purchase contracts.

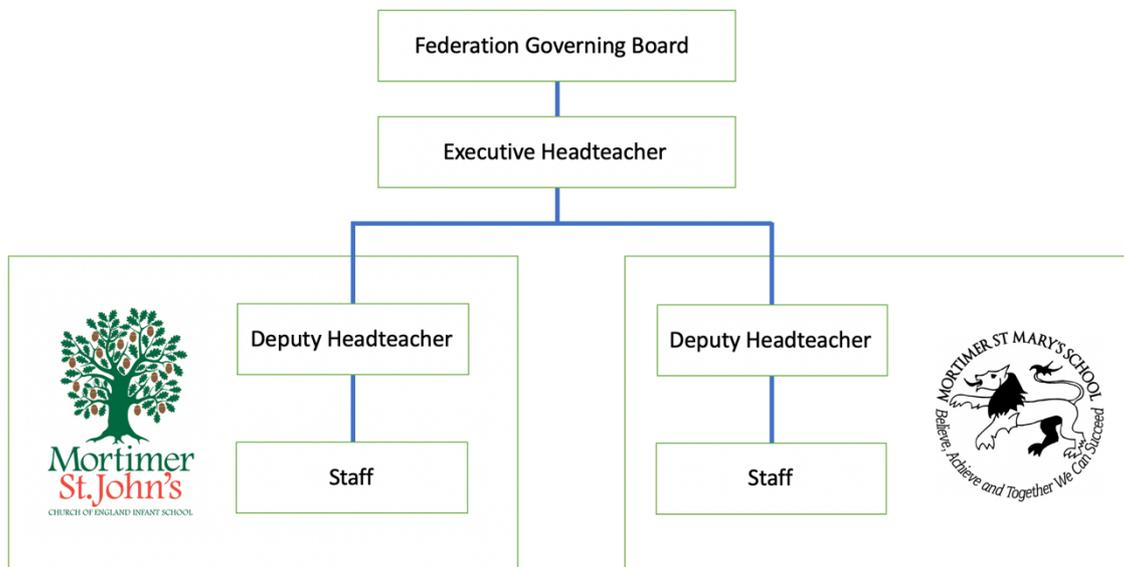
### Leadership of the new Federation

There will be a new role of Executive Headteacher leading the federation on a strategic level and working with the Leadership Teams depending on the requirements of each school at any one time.

There would be a Deputy Head of each school and key senior staff based in each of the two schools who would manage those schools on an operational, day-to-day basis.

While assigned to one school, those senior members of staff would be expected to work collaboratively across both schools where appropriate and where expertise and strengths can be shared. Similarly, if a member of staff wishes to develop their skills in a particular area through the other school within the federation, this will be seen as beneficial to both schools.

The new Federation Governing Board, West Berkshire Authority and Oxford Diocese will work closely together to ensure that the Leadership Team is supported in the transition period to a federation and in its ongoing work.



### Governance of the new Federation

If the final decision is made to federate the two schools, the current governing boards would be dissolved and replaced with a single, newly appointed governing board responsible for both schools.

The Federation Governing Board members will be selected for the skills, expertise and understanding they bring to benefit the strategic development of the federation of the two schools. This is in order to secure the best possible outcomes for every pupil, regardless at what stage of their education. In doing so, the governing board will look to secure a membership which has a balance of knowledge and regular interaction with both of the schools.

It is proposed that the new governing board will consist of 20 governors, as set out in the table below. This is a size which will allow a breadth of experience but also some resilience in knowledge and history of each school to remain within the new board.

The proposed composition reflects statutory requirements, and the requirements of the Oxford Diocese – as St Mary's Junior School will remain a Voluntary Aided school. These stipulate that Foundation Governors should be in the majority on the Federation Governing Board by a majority of 2.

Category of Governor	Number of Governors in each category	Method of selection
Executive Head Teacher	1	Appointed due to their role
Staff Governors	1	Elected by staff (both full time and part time) across both schools.  This is the highest number of staff governors allowed by government regulations.
Local Authority Governor	1	Nominated by West Berkshire Authority, and appointed by the governing board.  This is the highest number of LA governors allowed by government regulations.
Parent Governor	2	Elected by the parents and carers of children registered at the two schools.  This is the highest number of parent governors allowed by government regulations.
Co-opted Governors	4	Appointed by the Governing Board and selected for the skills, expertise and understanding they will bring to benefit the strategic development of the federation of the schools. The process of selection of Co-Opted Governors is publicly available.
Foundation Governors	11 (including the Ex Officio Vicar)	Appointed through the selection process defined by the Oxford Diocese.

The structure has been shared with both the Oxford Diocese and West Berkshire Authority and they are in agreement.

The expected process should be as follows, if the final decision of both governing boards is to federate:-

- All existing members of both governing boards will resign and a new, single governing board would be formed.
- The Local Authority will select their nominated governor and Oxford Diocese will select Foundation Governors, in consultation with the PCC (Parochial Church Council).
- A ballot will take place across both schools of parents and carers to appoint the Parent Governor positions.
- A ballot will take place of all staff across both schools to appoint the Staff Governor.
- The board will then meet to review the skills of the board in its new form and identify any skills or experience that are missing. Through a review process involving the whole board, volunteers will be appointed as Co-opted Governors.

In addition to the above Governing Board structure, there is the option to co-opt additional Associate Members for specific roles or to sit on individual committees only. Such appointments would only be for those committees and will not have voting rights on the Federation Governing Board.

The shared governance structure of the new federation will allow the two schools to:-

- work together much more efficiently and sustainably to raise standards, improve services and increase opportunities for pupils and staff;
- monitor performance across both schools, allowing honest conversations with respective leaders of both schools regarding any differences or challenges;
- evolve and manage curriculum needs across both schools and the requirements of Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2;
- monitor and encourage the sharing of resources, staff, expertise and facilities between the two schools;
- ensure the transition of children between the two schools is as seamless as possible.

### **Admission Arrangements**

The admission arrangements for each school will remain unchanged. West Berkshire Authority will remain the admissions authority for St. John's School and the new governing board of the Federation will be the admissions authority for St. Mary's School. Each will continue to apply their current admissions policy.

Parents will apply for a place for their child at the school of their choice, not at the federation, as each school within the federation will remain as a separate school. If the child is not given a place in the school they choose, they may be allocated a place at another school where they have expressed a preference, or a separate application will have to be made to attend a different school.

### Consultation Period Timetable

This consultation will start at midday on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019 and end strictly at midday Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

Open sessions for parents, staff and others within the wider community/stakeholders will be held in St. John's Village Hall on:-

- Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at 7.30pm
- Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2019 at 7.30pm

Proposed staff only meeting/drop in sessions are also being arranged.

This consultation document, including the attached Frequently Asked Questions and other associated documents that may be useful, are available from both schools' websites:-

Mortimer St Marys Junior School –

<https://msm-westberks.secure-dbprimary.com/westberks/primary/msm/site/pages/federationconsultation>

Mortimer St Johns Infant School –

<http://www.msj.w-berks.sch.uk/publications/consultation-of-federation/>

In addition, paper copies will be available at the school office of each school.

### How can you give your feedback?

You can provide your feedback, whether for or against the proposal, in one of the following ways:-

- Complete the attached form that is within this consultation document (Appendix 2) and return to either of the schools' offices. These should be in a sealed envelope and addressed to the Chair of either governing board.
- Write directly to the school, addressing your letter to the Chair of either governing board and either post or hand deliver to either school.
- Provide your response in an e-mail, addressed either to [office@msj.w-berks.sch.uk](mailto:office@msj.w-berks.sch.uk) or [office@msm.w-berks.sch.uk](mailto:office@msm.w-berks.sch.uk) with the subject heading *Federation Consultation*.

If you have any questions prior to providing your feedback, please attend one of the planned open sessions.

All documented feedback provided as above will be anonymised and collated so governors of both schools can consider every response submitted.

### What will happen after this consultation period?

Upon completion of the consultation period, the two governing boards will meet to discuss the feedback and to make final votes on whether to proceed with the Federation. They will decide as separate governing boards whether to proceed with the proposal.

This decision will affect the future direction of the two schools and the wider community within Mortimer, so we encourage you all to be part of the process and to have your voice heard.

Richard Bourne  
Chair of Governors  
Mortimer St John's Infant School

Marjorie McClure  
Chair of Governors  
Mortimer St Mary's Junior School

## **Appendix 1 - Federation Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is federation?**

If the decision is taken to federate both Mortimer St Mary's and Mortimer St John's would maintain their individual identities but will operate with one joint governing board.

### **Why are the governing boards looking at the possibility of federating?**

The governing boards believe our schools working together could create better opportunities for the children.

### **What are the benefits of federating?**

The benefits of working together within a federated structure could include:

- Improved opportunities for children.
- Improved opportunities for staff.
- Better leadership development and talent management.
- Same systems of assessment, data and finances
- Cost savings and efficiencies to back office systems.
- Strengthened and more streamlined governance.
- More capacity for innovation.

### **Will the governing boards be following a blueprint? Do the governing boards know of other similar schools that have successfully federated so the governing boards could follow what they have done?**

The governing boards have done all the due diligence to understand the positives and pitfalls of federating and this includes looking at case studies of schools that moved to federation (e.g. Short Heath Federation). If the decision is taken to federate, the governing boards will ensure the approach is bespoke for the federation and meets the unique needs of both schools.

### **Is there any evidence to show Federation can work?**

Yes. In its annual report for 2011/12 Ofsted noted that 'strong partnership work between schools is improving standards' and that 'the evidence from federations of two or more schools, led by an executive headteacher, is positive'.

### **How long will the consultation period last?**

The consultation process will last at least 6 weeks as required by the regulations.

### **Who has the final decision on whether the schools federate?**

The existing governing boards of the two schools will consider all feedback from consultation and then make a decision. It is not a vote by stakeholders.

### **Will there be two governing boards?**

No, Federations have a single governing board overseeing the work of all the schools in the federation.

### **Will the existing governors resign?**

Both existing boards will dissolve. The governing boards will engage with the governors from both schools to understand who would like to continue the federated governing board and if there are others within the community who may also wish to be involved. The published selection processes of appointing foundation, local authority, staff and parent governors will decide the composition of the new

governing board. These processes will ensure the necessary steps will be taken to ensure the most effective governance for the success of the federation.

**How will federation impact the schools' budgets?**

The schools will maintain their individual budgets while identifying opportunities to pool resources.

**How does federation impact staff? Will they have to work in the other school as well?**

Federation will provide staff with great personal development opportunities. It will also help to attract more applicants, with the opportunity to work across Foundation, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, when positions become available.

**Will a new school be built?**

No, both schools will remain as individual schools on their existing sites.

**Will both schools move to the same site?**

No, both schools will remain as individual schools on their existing sites.

**What is the difference between Voluntary Aided (VA) and Voluntary Controlled (VC)?**

Both Mortimer St Mary's and Mortimer St John's are church schools and neither is a lesser church school.

In Voluntary Aided schools the governing board employs the staff and is responsible for the admissions criteria. School buildings and land are usually owned by a charity, often a church.

A Voluntary Controlled school is a state-funded school in which a foundation or trust (usually a Christian denomination) has some formal influence in the running of the school. VC schools are a cross between community and VA school.

**Will either school be changing their VA/VC status?**

This is something the governing boards had checked as part of the Consultation process, however, there are federated schools with different statuses, so it is not an essential requirement for federation to have the same status. There are no current plans to change the status of either school. Any future change would be a decision for the new governing board to consider and have a separate consultation with stakeholders.

**Will I need to buy a new uniform?**

There are currently no plans to change the uniform for either school. If this does change in the future there will be a soft roll out over a number of years, parents will not be expected to suddenly replace existing uniform.

**Will it affect admissions to the schools?**

No, the admission process will remain the same.

**Will schools in a federation be inspected separately or jointly?**

Schools in a federation are inspected separately but it is appropriate to ask Ofsted to inspect the schools at the same time in order to form a rounded picture of the work of the federation.

**Can a federation be time limited? Can a school leave a federation?**

Federations are long term commitments and should not be seen as a quick fix. It is possible however for schools to withdraw from a federation.

**Who will be the headteacher?**

The federation will have an Executive Headteacher and each school will have a Deputy Headteacher.

**What will the leadership structure look like?**

The federation has an Executive Headteacher and a single governing board. The two schools in the federation will each have a Deputy Headteacher.

**Will it mean my child will have lessons at both schools and thus need to be dropped off and picked up from different schools?**

No, the children will continue to attend years Reception, 1 and 2 at St John's and then move to St Mary's site in Year 3 as per today.

**If timescales slip, will Mortimer St Mary's be at risk not having a headteacher?**

No, a contingency plan is in place if this were to happen.

**Further useful information regarding federation can be found on the web links at the end of this document.**

**Appendix 2 - Consultation Response Form**

**Proposal to Federate Mortimer St John's C of E Infant School and Mortimer St Mary's C of E Junior School**

Please note that we will anonymise responses and they will be circulated to the Governors of both schools. Selected feedback may be shared with other key stakeholders in the decision.

Any responses must be received by the end of the consultation period - midday Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

Use the box below to share your comments on the proposed federation, having read this document.

Alternatively, you may wish to indicate which of the following most accurately reflects your views on this matter:-

I support the proposal

I do not support the proposal

I do not feel strongly one way or the other

Print Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Category of respondent (e.g. parent, staff, resident) \_\_\_\_\_

Address : \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Postcode : \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail : \_\_\_\_\_

Once completed, please return to either:-

- The School Governors c/o School Office, Mortimer St. John's CE Infant School, West End Road, Mortimer, Berkshire RG7 3SY
- The School Governors c/o School Office, Mortimer St. Mary's CE Junior School, The Street, Mortimer, Berkshire RG7 3PB

### **Appendix 3 - Further Useful Information On The Web**

[National College of Teaching & Leadership – The governance of federations \(August 2014\)](#)

[National College of School Leadership – A study of the impact of school federation on student outcomes](#)

[National College of School Leadership – A study of the impact of school federation on student outcomes \(case studies\)](#)

[Article from Headteacher Update on Federation – September 2014](#)

[Useful collection of articles from National Governance Association on Federation](#)

[National Governance Association report – The Road to Federation \(updated 2015\)](#)

[National Governance Association – campaign “Federation First”](#)

[National College of School Leadership – A study of hard federations of small primary schools](#)

[Furze Platt Infant and Junior school \(Maidenhead\) announce federation](#)

#### **Oxford Diocese process for the selection of Foundation Governors :-**

[Oxford Diocese – Becoming a Governor](#)

[Guidelines for the appointment of PCC Governors](#)

#### **West Berkshire Council process for the selection of Local Authority Governors:-**

[Information on School Governors and Clerks](#)

[Nomination form to be a Local Authority Governor](#)