



Consultation on the Federation of the Governing Bodies at Pencoedtre and Whitmore High Schools



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Contents

[Context 3](#_Toc188966712)

[The Proposal 4](#_Toc188966713)

[Summary 4](#_Toc188966714)

[Why are we Proposing the Changes? 5](#_Toc188966715)

[Background 5](#_Toc188966716)

[Estyn 7](#_Toc188966717)

[What does it mean for your school 8](#_Toc188966718)

[The Federation Process 8](#_Toc188966719)

[Key steps 10](#_Toc188966720)

[Process for seeking views of stakeholders 12](#_Toc188966721)

[Consultation Process 12](#_Toc188966722)

[Responding to the proposal 12](#_Toc188966723)

[Key Delivery Dates 13](#_Toc188966724)

[Composition of governing body 14](#_Toc188966725)

[The benefits of Federation: 15](#_Toc188966726)

[Keys to a successful federation 15](#_Toc188966727)

[Challenges of federation 16](#_Toc188966728)

[Admission Arrangements 16](#_Toc188966729)

[Appendix 1 16](#_Toc188966730)

[FAQs 16](#_Toc188966731)

[Federation background 16](#_Toc188966732)

[Federation Guidance and Legal framework 17](#_Toc188966733)

[Key principles of Federation 17](#_Toc188966734)

[Advantages of Federation 18](#_Toc188966735)

[Risks of Federation 18](#_Toc188966736)

[Roles within Federation 18](#_Toc188966737)

[School identity 19](#_Toc188966738)

[Next steps 20](#_Toc188966739)

# Context

The federation of schools is a legal process which enables schools to work together through a formal structured process by sharing a Governing Body that will make decisions in the best interest of the schools, staff and pupils in that federation.

The governing bodies of Pencoedtre High School and Whitmore High School jointly approached the Vale of Glamorgan Council in January 2025 to request their assistance in consulting on a formal federation involving both schools. If agreed, this federation would commence with effect from 1 September 2025.

Both existing governing bodies have a strong record of working collaboratively and this is impacting positively upon both schools. This consultation proposes establishing a single Governing Body to govern both schools. If agreed, both schools would continue to have their own individual identity with regards to name, culture and ethos, and would continue to manage their own individual budgets.

Both governing bodies and the Vale of Glamorgan Council are responsible for promoting high educational standards and for delivering efficient secondary education. Having effective leaders in our schools is considered central to this responsibility. This consultation document presents the case for a change to the leadership and governance arrangements at both schools. The consultation document has been prepared jointly by the governing bodies with support from the local authority. The main purpose of this consultation is to provide information and to gather the views of identified stakeholders. Appendices to this document refer to general conditions for the Federation of Schools and as such should be read in the appropriate context to the federation of Pencoedtre High School and Whitmore High School.

This consultation document seeks to provide information on the proposed federation presented by both governing bodies. We look forward to receiving your views on the proposal.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
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# The Proposal

## Summary

The governing bodies of Pencoedtre and Whitmore High schools, with the agreement of the Vale of Glamorgan Council (the LA), propose to use the powers granted to them by the Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014 to establish The Federation of Pencoedtre and Whitmore High schools. Pencoedtre and Whitmore High schools are both located in Barry.

The governing bodies of both schools are committed to ensuring delivery of the best consistent education outcomes for their pupils. Arrangements previously put in place to oversee the joint working of the two schools and sixth form came to a conclusion with the retirement of the original Executive Head Teacher in 2022. The Head Teacher at Whitmore High School was seconded to the position of temporary Executive Head Teacher across both schools in January 2024 and a temporary Head of School was appointed to support the Executive Head in each school. This new structure is working well across both schools and it is therefore timely to consider a more permanent solution so there can be stability in both management teams and governance. The Governing Body of Pencoedtre, the LA and Estyn are also satisfied with the new leadership arrangements which have already facilitated positive progress.

As the temporary arrangements have been working well for almost a year, the proposal is to have a more permanent structure to ensure sure both schools can continue to thrive, and improvements can be made for the benefit of all students and staff. The Executive Head post was made permanent recently and the both Heads of Schools posts have been advertised. This change would also provide stability in both management teams and governance.

The governing bodies of both schools have discussed the proposed arrangements with the Local Authority and all are in support of this proposal. With a shared sixth form, a shared Executive Head Teacher, and some senior leaders taking on joint responsibilities, is considered to provide the best outcomes across both schools, ensuring the most appropriate strategies for change and approach to teaching and learning so that children can access the same high standard of education and support.

## Why are we Proposing the Changes?

The Governing bodies are proposing the change as we believe that it is in the best interest of both schools including, staff, pupils and governing bodies. The leadership changes over the past few months have seen many positive changes and both governing bodies are committed to driving this forward.

Whilst the federated schools would continue to have their own individual identity with regards to name, culture and ethos and would also continue to manage their own budgets, this process involves establishing a single Governing Body.

The aim of the Federation is for the schools to work in partnership to:

* develop the excellent shared practice that guarantees outstanding experiences and increased opportunities for pupils and staff.
* develop the common goals and reflective approaches to teaching and learning that will ensure that both communities benefit from a quality education.

This will ensure significant positive outcomes and improved standards for all.

The proposed name of the Federation is ‘Pencoedtre and Whitmore High School Federation’.

If the proposal is accepted, the Federation would be effective from 1 September 2025.

# Background

Both Pencoedtre High School and Whitmore High School are mixed sex schools following a consultation on [Transforming Secondary Education in Barry](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/living/schools/Consultations/Consultation-on-Transforming-English-Medium-Secondary-Education-in-Barry.aspx), which successfully lead to the provision of new buildings, new identities and new catchment areas.

Both schools have worked on an informal collaborative basis for some time. This collaborative approach continues to impact positively on both schools.

The Schools are both located in Barry, Vale of Glamorgan and are located only 1.4 miles apart.

**Image 1: Pencoedtre High School on map**



**Image 2: Whitmore High school on map** 

Pencoedtre High school is an English Medium, 11-18, community school.

The school characteristics (2024) are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capacity  | 1261 |
| Admission Number  | 210 |
| Pupils on roll (September 2024) | 1191 |
| Free school Meals  | 38.8% |
| Attendance during the year | 75.1% |

Whitmore High School is an English Medium, 11-18, community school.

The school characteristics (2024) are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capacity  | 1128 |
| Admission Number  | 180 |
| Pupils on roll (September 2024) | 1181 |
| Free school Meals  | 15.1% |
| Attendance during the year | 89.3% |

Estyn

Pencoedtre High School was put into special measures in November 2022. The report highlighted a lack of clear, strategic direction from senior leaders with confusion over roles and responsibilities having an impact on improving important aspects of the school. The school prepared an action plan and has already made progress to address the recommendations.

Whitmore High School’s Estyn report (March 2022) stated that ‘The headteacher is an inspirational and motivational leader who has galvanised the staff and created a strong sense of team. With the support of highly motivated leaders and an Executive Headteacher, the school has established a clear philosophy to ensure that Whitmore High School is a place where staff and pupils work together effectively, enjoy their learning and reach their full potential. The school is particularly reflective and ambitious and has high expectations for all aspects of its work.’

With Whitmore having a good track record and good leadership in place and Pencoedtre needing additional support to make improvements, the temporary arrangements that have been put into place have already seen positive changes.

By entering into a federation, the two schools would continue to work together under shared leadership to utilise their strengths to improve standards across the federation and together address areas in need of improvement. By federating under one governing body, the climate of trust, openness and willingness to work together that already exists, would be further enhanced. The governing body will ensure there is fairness in the share of the resources allocated to each school.

# What does it mean for your school

There will be no change to the identity of either Pencoedtre or Whitmore High School. The only change would be that they would work together in formal partnership under a single governing body. The existing governing bodies will be dissolved and replaced by a new, single governing body with strategic oversight of both schools. The existing Governing Body will remain until 31 Aug 2025, the new Federated Governing Body will take effect from 1 Sep 2025.

Schools in a federation maintain their own delegated budget, name, character, school uniform and ethos, and would be able to explore the advantages of sharing resources such as facilities, IT, school buildings etc.

The changes to resources and leadership put in place have already made positive changes. Both governing bodies are committed to continuing with this going forward. This federation has many other potential benefits as indicated under the benefits section.

# The Federation Process

**Policy :**

The Welsh Government’s policy objective is to promote collaboration between all parts of the education system to improve outcomes. School federation is a more formal way of extending collaboration and promoting closer working relationships.

**Legislation :**

The Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014.

**Summary :**

The federation of schools is a legal process which enables schools to work together through a formal structured process by sharing a governing body that will make decisions in the best interest of all the schools, staff and pupils in that federation. The most important reason for considering federation must be the benefits such an arrangement would bring for children and young people in the federating schools by enhancing educational provision. A federation can provide a foundation for sustainable long term development and improvement.

To be successful, federation needs to be based on a commitment to work as a group of schools and a willingness to do things differently for the added benefit of all pupils, their well-being and achievements.

One of the advantages of federation is that schools that federate remain in their communities and keep their individual identity. However, the existing governing bodies will be dissolved and replaced by a new, single governing body which will have oversight of, and equal responsibility for, the work of all schools within the federation.

The membership of a governing body for a federation of schools is almost identical to the membership of an ordinary governing body with all stakeholders being represented although there is more flexibility in the proportions of representation of each category of governor.

The term ‘Federation’ describes a formal and legal agreement by which the schools involved work together in formal partnership under a single governing body. The existing governing bodies will be dissolved and replaced by a new, single governing body with strategic oversight of both schools.

The Federated Governing bodies will only consist of a maximum of 17 governors if federated, whereas both the current governing bodies consist of 20 each. Any governors that do not become members of the new Federated full governing body still have opportunity to become governing body committee members. This will be carefully managed with support from Vale of Glamorgan Council.

A decision to federate by either schools or LAs will not override the need for a LA to intervene or act on school improvement or school organisation issues.

**Key facts :**

* There will be a single governing body with strategic oversight of both schools within the federation.
* Each school would retain its name, category, budget, staff and continue to serve its community.
* Each school would have its own Estyn inspection, though increasingly these are coordinated to happen at the same time for schools within a federation to minimise stress and disruption.
* The governing body of a federation can use resources and staff across the federation to improve the educational outcomes for all pupils.
* An audit trail must be kept and separate accounts produced for each school in the federation.
* The governing body of a federation cannot require existing staff to work across both schools within the federation, but they can negotiate with the school staff unions over whether flexible contracts can be introduced.
* New staff can be appointed to work across both schools in the federation.

# Key steps

Table 1: Outline of the Federation Process

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Steps** | **Description** |
| **Step 1: Exploration** | Schools to explore reason for federation and seek advice and guidance from the Local Authority (LA) including early discussions, general agreement on federation purpose. Governing bodies to inform staff and school staff unions of the processes and implications.Set up a governor working group with representatives from both schools to lead the federation process as waiting for regular governing body meetings will make the process longer. Determine a date for the operative start of federation. |
| **Step 2: Preparation** | Prepare a report for the Governing bodies to seek the views of stakeholders (for consistency, the same report should be used for each school, with sections covering school specific issues).Governors and LA decide to agree on governance structure – membership and constitution of the federated governing body (governing bodies should seek advice from the LA and agree a name for the federation.Governing bodies to explore staffing structure and longer term development of federation structure. Financial and HR issues are explored and discussed between LAs and governing bodies. Consider a timetable for election and appointment of governors to the federated governing body to facilitate progress later. |
| **Step 3: Report and seeking views** | Produce a report on federation and proceed to seek views of stakeholders includes determining a date for federation which must be 125 days from the date proposals are published. The federation date must not be less than 125 days (4 months minimum) following the publication of the proposals. |
| **Step 4: Defining** | School leaders, and governing bodies should liaise and * start to scope and define leadership roles across the federation.
* start to prepare job descriptions and contracts for any new posts and roles
* prepare a proposed staffing structure
 |
| **Step 5: Action after seeking views of Stakeholders** | Governing bodies (GB) must consider responses and must publish a summary of the responses together with the LA’s comments, on the LA website. The GB must also publish a summary of the responses together with the LA’s comments on the LA website |
| **Step 6: Implementation** | Final decision whether to federate or not and decision published on the LA’s website. Copies of decision to any other relevant LA; the headteacher of every school included in the federation proposal; foundation governors and any Trustee (if appropriate); the diocesan authority or any other religious body (if appropriate) and any other person they consider appropriate. Governors should liaise with the LA and diocese (if appropriate) over the new Instrument of Government and election and appointment of new governors. A copy of the new instrument of government must be sent to Welsh Ministers. |
| **Step 7:Evolution** | * Single governing body meets to elect chair and vice chair.
* New staff roles operating (Performance Management structure and process).
* School Improvement Plan targets resources and expertise at raising standards across the federation.
* Calendars and professional processes aligned.
* Look at how new technologies can support federation development.
 |
| **Step 8: Embedding** | Opportunities for resources and staffing to be used flexibly to raise standards in federation schools.  |
| **Step 9: Strategic Development** | * Overview of federation arrangements and impact on standards and school improvement capacity.
* Wider opportunities for the professional development for all staff are implemented.
* Model practices, processes, policies and documentation in place.
 |

# Process for seeking views of stakeholders

## Consultation Process

It is a statutory requirement to seek the views of stakeholders on federation proposals, whether the federation has been proposed by the respective school governing bodies or the LA. In this instance, the Governing Bodies for both schools are proposing the establishment of a federation with support from the Vale of Glamorgan Council on the consultation process.

This document represents the Council’s responsibility under The Federation of maintained Schools (Wales) Regulation 2014 to consult with appropriate stakeholders.

The main purpose of this document is to provide information and to gather the views of identified stakeholders.

The Governing bodies will seek the views of the following stakeholders:

* Pupils, staff, governors and parents/guardians of both schools
* Teaching and support staff associations

The consultation document will also be distributed to the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Staff (teaching and non-teaching) at  Whitemore and Pencoedtre High Schools | Governing Bodies of Whitemore and Pencoedtre High Schools |
| Parents/Carers and Guardians of children at Whitemore and Pencoedtre High Schools | Barry Town Council |
| Central South Consortium Joint Education Service | Local Councillors |
| Estyn  | Neighbouring Primary and Secondary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan  |
| Central South Consortium Joint Education Service |   |

## Responding to the proposal

The governing body of both schools will ensure that this consultation is meaningful, relevant, and appropriate for all stakeholders involved. As it is felt that the proposal is in the best interest of the schools, the governing body have a duty of care to ensure that proposal is clear, transparent, and reflective of those affected. This is a vision that can only be realised by working in partnership with The Vale of Glamorgan Council, parents, staff, and pupils as well as the wider community served.

The governing bodies of both schools have met with the local authority (Vale of Glamorgan Council) and all are in support of the proposal.

If the proposal is accepted, the Federation will come into being on 1 September 2025.

This consultation will run from **3 March – 14 April 2025**, this gives all consultees the opportunity to ask questions and make comments that will be considered by the governing body when deciding how to proceed.

This section also contains a link to the online survey and a free post address if you would like to submit a response via post. The response form can be found under [Section 8](#S8) .

**All feedback should be received in writing by 14 April 2025 in order to be considered as part of this consultation. Any items received after that date cannot be considered. All responses will be coordinated by the Vale of Glamorgan Council on behalf of the governing body for consideration. Responses can be completed online using the online response form or alternatively by completing the consultation response form and returning to the address provided.**

##

## Key Delivery Dates

The timeline for the proposed Federation is outlined below:

3 March 2025 – 14 April 2025

6 week Consultation

Consider Responses to consultation

4 April - 5 May 2025

Publish a summary of the responses together with the LA’s comments on the LA website

19 May 2025

Final decision to federate or not and decision published on the LA’s website.

2 June 2025

Governors to liaise with the LA and diocese (if appropriate) over the new Instrument of Government and election and appointment of new governors. A copy of the new instrument of government must be sent to Welsh Ministers.

June 2025

June 2025

Single governing body meets to elect chair and vice chair

Federation fully established

September 2025

## Composition of governing body

The table below gives details of the current governing body membership of Pencoedtre and Whitmore High Schools and a possible option for membership of the new Federated governing body (shaded column).

**Table 2: Pencoedtre High School & Whitmore High School federated governing body options**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of governor** | **Min no.** | **Max no.** | **Pencoedtre & Whitmore current** | **Federated**  |
| Parent | 2 (1 per school) | 4 (2 per school) | 6 | 4  |
| LEA | 2 | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| Teacher | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2  |
| Staff | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2  |
| Community | 2 | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| Headteacher | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| **Total** | **15** | **17** | **20** | **17** |

## The benefits of Federation:

* Consistency of teaching and learning methodology.
* Streamlining of policies and structures.
* Sharing of good practice, preparation materials and resources.
* Enhanced opportunities for pupil activities – widens curriculum choice and options for students as schools come together to provide access to each other’s courses and facilities, leading to improvements to the quality of learning for staff and pupils.
* Enhanced opportunities for staff professional development.
* Increased opportunity for middle management development.
* Schools have options to choose a senior leadership structure to suit their circumstances leading to easier recruitment of staff and headteachers particularly if there have been difficulties.
* Opportunities for school leadership beyond a single school.
* Opportunities for the creation of new roles that can be shared across schools i.e. bursar, ICT Technician, drama teacher, peripatetic teachers.
* Improved social opportunities for pupils.
* Opportunities to maximise resources and professional expertise particularly where there are financial difficulties or low pupil numbers and achieve financial efficiencies from economies of scale.
* Adds capacity and supports efficiency by providing an economy of scale for undertaking key activities.
* Promotes the broader welfare of students by offering potential for bringing together pastoral, health, careers, youth and other services to meet their all-round needs.
* Support for schools in difficulty.
* Schools with strengths can contribute to the learning of others.
* Supports school improvement by enabling schools to draw on the resources of other schools to tackle problems, share expertise, raise expectations and address the needs of particular groups of pupils.
* Potential for improved recruitment of governors with fewer governor vacancies.

## Keys to a successful federation

* Building of trust between LAs, governors and school communities which is fundamental to the success of federations and must be fostered at every level of management.
* Commitment of time and resources from all schools involved.
* Shared vision and a common purpose of what needs to be done.
* Shared identity between schools e.g. geographical proximity and having common aims on curricular and non-curricular activities
* Clear leadership and management structures.
* Sufficient time for all parties to be at ease with the proposed changes.
* All to feel like equal partners.
* Sense of ownership of process by the schools.
* Good communication with parents and staff over the changes brought by federation.

Challenges of federation

* Increased workload for governors during inception and first year.
* Initial concern amongst governors, parents and staff – time needed for federation fully implement.

Both Governing Bodies have been working successfully on a collaborative basis for over a year and the arrangements have been working successfully amongst both schools.

## Admission Arrangements

The admission arrangements for each school will remain unchanged. The Local Authority is the admissions authority for each school. Parents will apply for a place for their child at a school of their choice, irrespective of federation arrangements, as each school in the federation is a separate school. The Councils normal admission arrangements, procedures and oversubscription criteria apply to both schools on application at either the year 6 transfer stage or an application to transfer in year.

# Appendix 1

##  FAQs

### Federation background

**What’s the background to Federation?**

* The federation of schools is a legal process which enables schools to work together through a formal structured process by sharing a governing body that will make decisions in the best interest of all the schools, staff and pupils in that federation.
* The concept of schools sharing a governing body is not new. Prior to the commencement of provisions in the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 (‘the 1998 Act’), which required all schools to have their own governing body, schools were able to share a governing body.
* A federation is a legal governance structure where between two and six schools share a single governing body. The schools will retain their individuality, their own name, ethos, budget and school uniform but could share resources, facilities and good practice.

**Why should schools federate?**

* Working together through a single governing body structure enables schools to raise standards and maintain local education provision by sharing resources, staff, expertise, and facilities and sharing best practice. A single governing body also provides an effective and accountable mechanism for schools to pool resources, including staff and budgets, release capacity in the senior management team and gain economies of scale and efficiencies.

**What is school governing body federation?**

* Schools coming together under a single governing body to drive school improvement, share best practice, staff and facilities and provide better value for money.
* Schools that federate remain as separate legal entities with their own budgets, name, character, ethos & school uniform.

**Is this federation motivated by reducing costs?**

This federation is purely down to the current leadership working well across both schools, with a more permanent structure needed to ensure that that effective management continues.

### Federation Guidance and Legal framework

**What about guidance on Federation as this is a new concept?**

* Welsh Government Guidance Circular dated 2 June 2023: Federation process of maintained schools in Wales provides guidance for governing bodies and local authorities.

**What’s the legal framework for Federation?**

* The legal provision to federate is contained within the Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014.

### Key principles of Federation

**What are the key principles of Federation?**

* Establishing and developing a Federation requires a high degree of trust between governors, schools and their communities. It also requires a willingness to see the potential of a formal partnership whilst at the same time realising and recognising that the partnership strengthens rather than threatens the characteristics and qualities of individual schools within it.
* Commitment to work as a group of schools and a willingness to do things differently for the added benefit of all pupils, their wellbeing and achievements and the development of all the schools and their communities.

### Advantages of Federation

**What are the drivers and expected advantages of federation?**

* School improvement - broader learning and social experiences for the children leading to greater pupil choice, improvement in pupil progress and achievement therefore raising standards.
* Sharing resources including expertise, best practice, teaching and learning materials and facilities.
* A greater emphasis and clearer focus on strategic leadership and management including structures.
* New opportunities and flexibility for staff to work together, reduce isolation and enhance professional development.
* Broadening governors’ perspectives and pooling governor expertise and “social capital”.
* Avoid duplication of effort therefore promoting better economies of scale.
* Federated schools remain within their communities.

### Risks of Federation

**What are the risks associated with Federation?**

* Perceived loss of individual school identity.
* Potential organisational difficulties in providing a curriculum across a number of sites.
* Higher travel costs if staff and pupils move between schools to provide a broader curriculum and out of school activities.
* Staff employment and conditions of service issues.
* The challenge of relationships between governors, Headteacher(s) and staff working across a number of schools.

### Roles within Federation

**What is the role of governors in Federation?**

* Consider all the benefits and risks of Federation and then decide whether to proceed or not.
* Identify drivers for change i.e. school improvement.
* Seek and consider school performance, funding and building information on each school so that sound decisions are made on an evidence basis.
* Willingness to accept change and working together to bring school improvement.
* Identify a small group of governors to work with the LA on an initial proposal.
* Clearly understand that a federated governing body is responsible for all schools within the federation.

**What is the role of the Local Authority (LA) in Federation?**

* Have a clear idea of their future school organisation plans and how federation fits in.
* Articulate these plans to governors.
* Advise and support governors
	+ Talking about options & benefits;
	+ Information gathering;
	+ Preparation of report; and
	+ Ensure compliance with the law.
* Recognise several services will need to be involved to ensure a successful federation:
	+ School improvement;
	+ Additional Learning Needs;
	+ Human resources;
	+ Finance; and
	+ Governor Support.

**What happens to the existing governing bodies if we decide to proceed with Federation?**

* On the federation date the governing bodies of Pencoedtre and Whitmore High Schools will be dissolved and the new federated governing body is established.
* The Federated governing body must consist of no less than 15 and no more than 17 governors.

**What happens to staff within a Federation, will their conditions of service change?**

All staff terms and conditions would not change as a result of this federation. There is no expectation for staff to work across both schools. The only thing that would change would be any new roles post-federation could include provision to work across sites.

Strategic and financial planning will mean that jobs can be better protected in any period of contraction and that specialist staff can be used to best effect. The Federated governing body may appoint new staff to work within both schools in the Federation, this could include shared teaching and support staff.

### School identity

**Will my school lose its identity within a Federation?**

No, although the schools will share a single governing body. The schools retain their separate legal status, have separate budgets and will be subject to their own Estyn Inspection. Whilst each school maintains responsibility for its own budget, there is scope through the single governing body to use pooled budgets across schools within the Federation.

### Next steps

**What happens to the two schools after Federation?**

Schools involved in a Federation remain as separate legal entities maintaining their own separate budgets.

**Will the school l become a super school?**

No, the school will not become a super school as a result of this federation. Schools involved in a Federation remain as separate legal entities maintaining their own separate budgets.

**Will the admissions arrangements change as a result of this federation?**

No, the admission arrangements will remain the same. It will be continued to be managed by the Local Authority.

**What will happen with the joint sixth form?**

There will be no changes to the joint sixth form. Admissions will be managed by the Local Authority with no changes.

**What are the Inspection arrangements for schools within a Federation?**

The current legal position is that individual schools are inspected in accordance with Estyn’s 6 year cycle. However, it is proposed to change the Regulations to enable all schools within a Federation to be inspected at the same time in the future for consistency.

**What happens with admissions after federation?**

The admission arrangements for each school will remain unchanged. The Local Authority is the admissions authority for each school. The Councils normal admission arrangements, procedures and oversubscription criteria apply to both schools on application at either the year 6 transfer stage or an application to transfer in year.