



Proposal to Federate Youlgrave All Saints' and Biggin Church of England Primary Schools



Introduction

This report sets out the proposal for Youlgrave All Saints' C of E Primary School and Biggin C of E Primary School to enter into a formal federation under a single governing body, in accordance with the School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations.

A federation is a formal partnership in which two or more schools share a single governing body and leadership structure while retaining their own individual identities, sites, admissions arrangements and distinct Church school ethos. Each school remains very much part of – and committed to – its own village community.

This proposal explains the reasons that the governing bodies from both schools see federation as the best available option for both our schools, building on the strong foundations of collaboration that have already been established through the sharing of an Executive Head Teacher. Federation will enable the governing bodies to proactively strengthen leadership, share resources, and continue improving educational outcomes for all our pupils, whilst retaining each school's unique identity. This will put us in a stronger position to determine our own futures and more opportunity to align the outcomes with the best position for both our schools.

Background

Youlgrave All Saints' is a voluntary-aided school which means it is a state-funded school where a foundation or trust (usually a religious organisation) contributes to building costs and has a substantial influence in the running of the school. 90% of the voluntary-aided school's capital costs are met by the state, with the school's foundation contributing the remaining 10%. Staff are employed by the governing body. Youlgrave currently has 58 pupils on roll. The governing body structure comprises 12 governors: 6 foundation governors, 1 diocese-appointed governor, 2 parent governors, 1 staff governor, 1 local authority governor, 1 head teacher. Vacant roles include: 1 parent governor, 1 local authority governor, 1 diocese-appointed governor, 2 foundation governors.

Biggin is a voluntary-controlled school which means it is wholly funded by the state. The land and buildings are owned in part by a charitable trust associated with the Church, and in part by the local authority. The Church has some influence, but the local authority employs staff and manages admissions. Biggin currently has 19 pupils on roll. The governing body structure comprises 12 governors: 2 foundation governors, 4 parent governors, 1 staff governor, 1 local authority governor, 1 head teacher, 3 co-opted governors. Vacant roles are: 1 parent governor, 1 local authority governor.

Our current position of sharing a Head Teacher between the two schools, as well as some initial collaboration between the schools, has opened up the potential opportunities of a federation. Governors from both schools, along with representatives from the Diocese of Derby and

Derbyshire County Council formed a joint committee to explore the options around federation and develop this proposal. The Government, as well as the Local Authority and Diocese positions, is that greater levels of collaboration to achieve efficiencies and financial sustainability are essential, and strongly recommended for the successful endurance of small rural village schools.

Both schools are in a solid financial position and some collaboration and sharing of costs is already in place; our shared Head Teacher, the sharing of some purchased resources so that each school doesn't need to buy these separately, and some collaborative working through the sharing of expertise and experience of our staff. However, the governing bodies feel that this is the right time to make a case for federation, which would open up further opportunities for joint working.

Rationale and benefits

Federation is a natural progression where successfully collaborating schools share a single Head Teacher. The Boards of Governors consider that the interests of both school communities are best served by creating a clear line of governance for the Executive Head Teacher, rather than two boards, thus advancing to a federation would be a beneficial next step.

There are a number of benefits that can be realised through federation, particularly for small rural schools.

- a) Sustainability of small schools – federations help small, rural schools remain open and financially viable by sharing costs, staff and facilities.
 - b) Shared strategic leadership and governance expertise, and greater resilience in leadership succession planning.
 - c) A shared governing body can embed efficiencies and improvements in the governance process by eliminating duplication of duties and resource use.
- Curriculum broadening – collaborating schools can offer a wider, more enriched curriculum, resulting in improved outcomes for pupils.
 - Staff capacity: Safeguarding will be strengthened by each school having a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead on site. They will work with the Executive Head Teacher (the Designated Safeguarding Lead) to ensure that there is always sufficient support for safeguarding issues across both schools.
 - School improvement will be enhanced by sharing subject leadership across the teaching staff of both schools. This will avoid duplicating effort, enable increased leadership capacity across all areas of the curriculum and create greater opportunities for staff development and collaboration.
 - Staff development – enhanced opportunities for staff development across the federated schools and greater abilities to recruit and retain staff.
 - Resource and expertise sharing - schools can share specialised staff (e.g. SENCOs), expertise, resources and facilities which lead to better economies of scale and improved financial sustainability across the schools. This model may also reduce the need for agency staff to cover for staff absences.

The Governing Bodies of both schools believe that a movement to a federation is currently the best way forward to cement our collaboration.

Implications of Federating

Identity - Each school would retain its own distinctive character, including their names, uniform and community links. There is, however, a lot of commonality between both schools' vision and ethos and we would look to introduce a common vision driving the school leadership.

Staffing – Both schools would continue to have their own staff team appropriate to meeting the needs of the children and the curriculum, as is current practice. The schools would federate with existing staffing arrangements. Staff members in Biggin, a voluntary-controlled school, are employed directly by the local authority and this would remain unchanged upon federation. In Youlgrave, which is a voluntary-aided school, the federation's governing body would become the employer. Both schools operate under local authority model policies regarding pay and conditions, which would continue to be the case once the schools have federated.

Both schools will be supported by a single administration team. This would enable each school to have full administrative and business support whilst increasing efficiency and building resilience.

Throughout our collaboration, both schools have benefitted from opportunities for joint training, staff meetings and INSET days, and sharing expertise. The schools would continue to create similar opportunities wherever clear benefits arise, and take advantage of the Lady Manners cluster and other associations they belong to.

Leadership – Ms Teresa Nicholls would be a single Executive Head Teacher responsible for the running of both schools. As now, she would spend 50% of her time in each school once federated. The Executive Head Teacher would be supported by a distributed leadership model for key functions which will be balanced across both schools.

Governance – On federation, a new governing body would be created which would be responsible for the strategic running of the schools to achieve the best possible education for the children in both schools. The new governing body will consist of at least 14 governors, representing stakeholders across both school communities. The governing body would continue to have 3 core strategic functions, but across both schools:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction (through the schools' improvement plans)
2. Holding the executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the schools and their pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the schools and making sure their money is spent well, including the pupil premium

Admissions – No change is envisaged to the current admissions process. The new governing body will set the admissions policy for Youlgrave, which would be administered by Derbyshire County Council, as at present. The Local Authority will continue to control the admissions at Biggin.

Finance – Each school retains its own budget and these will remain separate. The Federation Governing Body would have oversight of how funds can be deployed to maximise the benefits of federation while meeting the needs of each individual school. Governors would have the option to spend funds jointly where that is to the benefit of both schools. An example of this might be purchasing a curriculum package jointly.

Proposed Governance Structure

The main change due to federation would be the creation of a single governing board working for the best interests of the children in both schools, and answerable to both communities. For a federation with a VA and a VC school, the Diocesan Board of Education would require a 'foundation majority of two'. (That is, foundation governor places outnumber other categories of places by two.)

Based on a total of 14 governor places, the proposed governance structure is:

- 7 appointed foundation governors
- 1 ex-officio clergy foundation governor
- 1 Head Teacher
- 1 staff governor (this is the maximum permitted by regulation)
- 2 parent governors (this is the maximum permitted by regulation)
- 1 local authority governor
- 1 co-opted governor

Consultation

We wish to consult widely with all interested parties before making any final decision, and the timetable for this is given below.

The consultation period will run for 6 weeks from Monday 13 April 2026 to Sunday 24 May 2026. We invite parents, staff and any other interested parties to meetings at the dates detailed below.

When will a decision be made?

Consultation feedback responses will be reviewed by the federation joint committee in June. Both governing bodies will meet on Wednesday 17 June 2026 to jointly consider the feedback received. The governing bodies' recommendation will then be considered by the Diocese of Derby Board of Education on Tuesday 7 July 2026. The governing bodies of both schools will then meet separately on Wednesday 8 July 2026 to make a decision whether:

- a) to proceed with the proposals for federation as above.
- b) to proceed with the proposals for federation with such modifications as the governing body consider appropriate.
- c) not to proceed with the proposals for federation.

Timeline

Monday 13 April – Sunday 24 May	Consultation period
Wednesday 17 June	Governing bodies meet jointly to consider consultation outcomes
Tuesday 7 July	Diocese of Derby Board of Education considers consultation outcome and governing body recommendations for federation
Wednesday 8 July	Governing bodies meet separately to make formal decision on federation
Thursday 9 July	Communicate the decision on federation to parents, staff and other stakeholders
Tuesday 1 September	Intended start of federation should both governing bodies agree to this.

Biggin and Youlgrave School Federation Consultation Process “At a Glance”

How long will the consultation period last?

Six weeks from the 13th April to the 26th May 2026.

Where can I get a printed copy of the school federation proposal?

A paper copy can be collected from **Biggin and Youlgrave** schools.

How can I talk to someone about the proposal?

There will be **drop-in sessions**:

Youlgrave: on the 22nd April and Governors will be available at school between 8.30-9.30am, 12.30-1.30pm and 5.00 until 6.00pm

Biggin: on the 23rd April and Governors will be available at school at 8.30-9.30am, 12.30-1.30pm and 3.00 until 5.00pm.

There will be a final drop-in on the **29th April at Youlgrave** and **30th April at Biggin** between 5 and 6pm.

How can I respond to the proposal?

You can respond at one of the sessions above or by completing a response form. A paper copy of the response form is available from school, and it is also available online [here](#) . Responses can be returned to the school office or emailed to Mandy at AStafford-Wood@Youlgrave-allsaints.derbyshire.sch.uk or Jane at JSutton@Biggin.derbyshire.sch.uk

When should I respond by?

Responses would be very welcome at any time during the consultation period – but ideally the sooner the better.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION The Governing bodies of Youlgrave All Saints’ C of E primary School and Biggin C of E primary School are data controllers under the Data Protection Act 1998 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We will ensure that your personal information is processed fairly and lawfully and, in this instance, used only for the purpose of validation, which will enable a fair and just consultation.