

## **Frequently asked questions on the proposal for Somerset Nursery School to join the Wandsworth Federation of Maintained Nursery Schools**

### **Q. What is a Federation?**

A. A federation is defined in law as two or more maintained schools operating under the governance of a single governing body. The schools continue to be individual schools and admission to each school continues to be determined by the appropriate admission authority. The schools keep their existing DfE category, character and legal identity.

The statutory context for federations is the Education Act 2002, The School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2007 and The School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2012.

### **Q. Would the name of the school change?**

A. No. Each school would keep its own name but there will be a separate over-arching name for the Federation, the Wandsworth Federation of Maintained Nursery Schools, and a single Governing Board.

### **Q. Would the school logo and identity change?**

A. No. Somerset would keep its current logo and identity.

### **Q. Who would lead the new Federation?**

A. The proposal is for an overarching senior leadership structure led by an Executive Headteacher (Emma Williams) working across all three nursery schools, and the deputy headteacher (Kellie Schrader) managing the day-to-day running of Somerset, as at present. A single Federated Governing Board would oversee strategy for the combined schools.

### **Q. By sharing an executive headteacher and a single governing board, is there a risk that the ethos and strengths of each school will be lost in a more corporate structure?**

A. There may be occasions where the Executive Headteacher will spend more of their time and attention in one setting than the other. But with a Deputy Headteacher employed full-time on each site focusing on the day-to-day running of each school, the Executive Headteacher will have more time to focus on strategy for the benefit of all schools and mentoring and developing staff.

### **Q. Would there be any change to admission arrangements?**

A. No. The current admissions policy would continue to apply for Somerset.

### **Q. Would school start and finish times change?**

A. In the short-term NO, but they could be reviewed in the light of experience.

### **Q. Would children be registered to the Federation or a single school?**

A. Children would be on the roll of their individual school within the Federation.

### **Q. Would the Federation be inspected by Ofsted?**

A. No. Each school would have separate Ofsted inspections and be graded separately, as they are now.

### **Q. Would the schools share a single budget?**

A. No. Each school would continue to receive its own funding, manage separate budgets and keep separate records of its accounts. However, there may be occasions when the schools share costs or combine purchasing if this means that they would be able to get better value for their money to continue to ensure good opportunities for children.

The federated governing body will receive the delegated budgets allocated to each of the three schools in the federation. A contribution from each of the schools' budgets can be used collectively with the agreement of governors. The federated governing body has control over how much is put into the shared pot for joint provision. Each school must remain financially viable so any shared commitments must be realistic and not threaten the viability of individual schools.

**Q. By sharing resources under the new Federation do you mean physical resources (e.g. books and toys) administrative resources (e.g. HR, accounting) and/or staff splitting their time between sites?**

A. It is unlikely that the schools would share physical resources and in terms of existing staff they would work in their schools as they do now. There would be opportunities for sharing resources such as a premises officer and in terms of bought-in services such as the HR, finance and clerking support which the schools currently purchase from the local authority or external suppliers. It is hoped that the schools will have greater purchasing power to achieve volume discounts on stationery, IT, utilities and other items necessary for the running of the three schools. There may also be opportunities to share external services provided by specialists e.g. music therapy, educational psychology, yoga etc.

**Q. If one school goes into deficit, is it the responsibility of the Federation to bail out the other by using funds from the other school's budget?**

A. No. Each school will receive its budget based on the number of pupils in that school and will be expected to manage its budget in the same way as each school does currently.

**Q. Would there be any changes in the conditions of service for staff?**

A. No. There would be no changes and staff would continue to be employed on the same conditions of service as defined by Wandsworth Council contracts. This means that, for example, all employment rights and pension arrangements would stay as they are now.

**Q. Would staff work across all schools in the Federation?**

A. Existing members of staff would continue to work in their school as they presently do. However, there may be opportunities for staff to work across schools. We hope that staff would be able to take these opportunities as Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and sharing of good practice to improve the pupil outcomes.

**Q. Would the schools have the same Inset/Training Days?**

A. Yes, wherever possible. Each school would be able to choose when to hold these days, as they do now, but it is likely that they would take the opportunity to have joint Inset/Training Days.

**Q. Do schools in a Federation share a Governing Board?**

A. Yes. The previous Governing Board of Somerset would be dissolved and a new Federation Governing Board would be established.

**Q. Would one school take the lead over the other?**

A. No. The schools in the Federation would collaborate and work together as equal partners. We will ensure that the single Governing Board has representation from across all schools, although the reconstitution would be skills-led.

**Q. Is there any research on the impact of Federations?**

A. Ofsted has reported that, where schools work together and share leadership, standards have been raised and there have been improvements in children's achievement and behaviour. (Leadership of More than One School; Ofsted, September 2011).

**Q. If Federation of the schools goes ahead, when would this happen?**

A. If a decision is made to join the federation, the proposal is that this would take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022.

**Q. If the Federation goes ahead, what needs to be done between now and 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022?**

A. The Governing Board of Somerset would take the opportunity to carefully plan as many matters as possible in advance. The intention would be to ensure there is as little disruption for children, parents and staff as possible.

**Q. Can a Federation be dissolved?**

A. Yes. The Governing Board can choose to end a Federation if it is believed that it is no longer in the best interests of the children and stakeholders. This is not an action that would be taken lightly, or without due diligence and consultation. Although the move to federate is intended as a long-term approach, it is possible for schools to withdraw from a Federation and they must follow a prescribed process, set out in The School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2012.

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