



Headington Quarry Nursery School

FORMAL CONSULTATION PAPER

THE PROPOSED FEDERATION OF HEADINGTON QUARRY NURSERY SCHOOL AND WHEATLEY NURSERY SCHOOL

**CONSULTATION PERIOD
7th October 2024 to 24th November 2024**

This Consultation Paper is being circulated to the following persons:

- Parents and Carers of pupils registered at Headington Quarry Foundation Stage School and Wheatley Nursery School
- Staff of both schools and Trade Unions
- The Governors and Clerks to the Governing Bodies of both schools
- Director of Children's Services, Oxfordshire County Council
- Secretary of State for Education

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CONTENTS

SECTION	CONTENT	PAGE
A	Letter from the Chairs of the Governing Bodies of Headington Quarry Nursery School and Wheatley Nursery School	3
B	About our schools	5
C	What is a federation?	7
D	The rationale for federation	8
E	The risks of federation and managing the risks	10
F	Staffing	11
G	Composition of the new federation governing body	11
H	Further Information	13
I	Feedback on the Consultation: Your Views	14
J	What happens next?	14
K	Federation Consultation feedback form	16



Headington Quarry Nursery School

A. A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRS OF THE GOVERNING BODIES OF HEADINGTON QUARRY SCHOOL AND WHEATLEY NURSERY SCHOOL

Dear Pupils, Parents, Carers and Community Stakeholders,

Headington Quarry Nursery School (HQNS) and Wheatley Nursery School (WNS) have, since 1st September 2022, had an interim arrangement in place where the two schools have shared an Executive Headteacher. The purpose of the interim arrangement was to allow the Governing Bodies of each school to assess whether or not to form a more permanent way of working together if it became clear that to do so would be appropriate and in the best interests of both schools and their pupils.

Over the past two years, the Governing Bodies of each of HQNS and WNS have closely monitored the relationship of the two schools and both consider that each school has reaped the benefits of working with the other. In view of this and, together with Oxfordshire County Council, the two Governing Bodies met on 10th June 2024 and agreed to formally consider a federation. At that meeting, they agreed to establish a Joint Federation Committee comprised of six governors with representation from both schools to lead on the practical matters surrounding the proposal to federate the two schools and whose role it is to keep the two schools' Governing Bodies informed.

At their respective Full Governing Board Meetings held on 25th September 2024 and 26th September 2024, the Governing Bodies of each of HQNS and WNS formally considered and approved the proposal to form a federation of the two schools, to be known as The Shotover Nursery Schools Federation, with an effective date of 22nd April 2025. If federation does occur, this will mean formalisation of the relationship between HQNS and WNS on a permanent basis from the effective date.

Presently, WNS is federated with John Watson School, a community special school, as The Wheatley Nursery School and John Watson School Federation. It has become increasingly clear over the past few years that this arrangement is no longer in the interests of either school and, if WNS and HQNS should federate, The Wheatley Nursery School and John Watson School Federation will be dissolved in order that WNS and HQNS may form a new federation with each other.



Headington Quarry Nursery School

In order to take the proposal forward, at a Joint Full Governing Board Meeting that was also held on 26th September 2024, the Governing Bodies of both schools agreed to proceed to a formal consultation with all stakeholders, in order to seek their views.

This formal Consultation Paper explains what a federation is, sets out the rationale for the proposal and what it will mean for both schools.

In this Consultation Paper, you will also find information on how to let us have your feedback on the proposal, as well as details for the meetings which we will be holding where we will be able to provide further information and answer any questions that you may have.

If you should have any queries in the interim, please do not hesitate to contact the Chair of Governors of HQNS if your child attends HQNS; or the Chair of Governors of WNS if your child attends WNS, via the appropriate school office. If you do not have a child attending either school, you may contact either Chair of Governors. Contact details for the school office may be found on page 13.

We look forward to receiving your feedback.

Yours faithfully

Catherine Burton
Chair of Governors
Headington Quarry Nursery School

Lynn Wong
Chair of Governors
Wheatley Nursery School



Headington Quarry Nursery School

B. ABOUT OUR SCHOOLS

Both HQNS and WNS share a common vision, ethos, core values and strategic direction.

Our Vision

At HQNS and WNS, everyone is known, valued and respected. Each setting is a community of mutual respect and care in which children, families and staff all work and grow together. All are committed to providing a high-quality approach to education and care for young children.

Our Ethos

Our ethos places the child at the centre and we build our curriculum around their interests and needs, creating moments of awe and wonder as we challenge children and staff to make every moment matter. We value what every child and their family brings to our schools, helping us to create a rich, diverse and unique culture within each school.

We believe that every child matters and strive to provide rich experiences capable of supporting each child’s development based on early childhood principles.

Our Core Values



Excellence

Our staff are experts in the early years sector and plan experiences which

stimulate children to wonder about the world and to think creatively, led by their strengths and interests.



Integrity

Children and families are at the heart of everything we do. All our decisions, whether financial, administrative or curriculum based, are made to improve their lives. We nurture each child’s passions and skills and challenge them to achieve their full potential.



Care

We care about safeguarding children, providing a safe environment and improving wellbeing for all. We care about ensuring that all staff reach their full potential by giving them opportunities to develop. Above all, we care about giving children under the age of five the best possible education.



Joy

Children’s wellbeing and happiness is crucial to learning. Children learn best through play, talk and meaningful first-hand experiences with trusted adults. Through play, children can explore,



Headington Quarry Nursery School

imagine, socialise and be curious about the world they are growing up in.



Ambition

Our rich and inspiring curriculum meets the needs of each and their family by developing the child's physical, emotional intellectual and cultural needs, allowing them to become confident and take risks in their learning. All children and their families have opportunities to make a better society and gaze across the horizon, knowing their dreams could be possible. As early years experts, our knowledge, understanding of neuroscience and continual analysis of ethical research shapes every decision and aspect of our work.



Community

Our diverse community is a model of inclusion, offering equality of opportunity and we are committed to disseminating our practice and to being a major influence in the local authority as a model for outstanding pedagogy. By working in a multi-disciplinary team, our school community shares in the care and education of our children.



Curiosity

Children take a lead in their learning,

guided by their interests and developed by expert practitioners. Staff and the wider early years workforce are encouraged and trusted to take risks in their practice to provide provocations for their own and children's learning. We provide opportunities for children to learn in the natural world and to think about sustainability.

Strategic Direction

Our two schools strive to be centres of excellence, with experienced and knowledgeable staff who are themselves lifelong learners.

Ofsted has judged both schools to have an effective and highly ambitious curriculum, equipping children with the skills they need for the next stage of learning.

Our ability to provide better opportunities for self-development and career progression for staff will be enhanced as part of a larger organisation and shared resources, knowledge and skills will allow us to further develop and excel in the delivery of an education to children under the age of five.

The combined expertise across the two schools means we could provide training for other Early Years settings, spreading our exemplary practice further.



Headington Quarry Nursery School

C. WHAT IS A FEDERATION?

A federation is defined in The Schools Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2012 as two or more maintained schools (including nursery schools) operating under the governance of a single governing body. This means that if a federation of HQNS and WNS is formed, the current Governing Bodies of the two schools will cease to exist and will be replaced by a single, newly appointed governing body with responsibility for both schools. Details about the composition of the new governing body are set out later in this document.

Each school within a federation continues to be a school in its own right. They will have a common leader in the Executive Headteacher and share a governing body, but each school will continue to keep their unique identity and character, have their own Ofsted number, be subject to separate Ofsted inspections and have its own budget. Children will continue to be taught in their own school and admissions

arrangements will not change. The Admission Authority for HQNS and WNS will continue to be Oxfordshire County Council.

In a federation, the single governing body is committed to improving outcomes and life chances for all children across the federation, as opposed to just a single school. Governors may share resources and expertise across schools, as well as find better ways of working to improve leadership, quality of teaching and pupil outcomes.





Headington Quarry Nursery School

D. THE RATIONALE FOR FEDERATION

HQNS and WNS are becoming an increasingly rare commodity, with just five other local authority maintained nursery schools remaining in Oxfordshire. Due to many years of underfunding from Central Government, the number of nursery schools has steadily declined to around 385 across the whole of England, yet they remain a critical part of the delivery of an education to our youngest children.

Early childhood has a significant impact on a child's life journey and research has shown that when a child under the age of five spends longer in early years provision, they develop the skills required to help them thrive. They are more likely to become lifelong learners capable of grasping opportunities and have better educational outcomes later on, enabling them to achieve their fullest potential.

Children are at the heart of all we do in each of our schools and the vision and values of HQNS and WNS are already very closely aligned. From now and going forward, both HQNS and WNS are united in their wish to better serve their communities and promote inclusion for all. The Governing Bodies of both schools consider that a federation will allow this to be achieved in a more coherent and successful way. In coming together, HQNS and WNS will share a common vision through The Shotover Nursery Schools Federation.

By forming a federation, both schools will become more resilient and have the best chance of being sustainable in the longer term. Together, the schools will have a greater voice, which is important in terms of standing and being able to secure the resources needed to deliver for our pupils, both now and in the future.

Although each school will remain unchanged in how it is run day to day, being part of something larger means that there will be more collaborative opportunities for both staff and pupils.

Being part of something larger will also help our schools attract good quality staff. The opportunity to share training and support for staff at all levels will help to ease recruitment difficulties which all nursery schools face. Staff will also have the ability to develop skills and knowledge to become experts in particular fields which may then be shared in joint training opportunities with other staff across both schools. This allows for better career development opportunities across schools, thereby improving the retention of talented staff.



Headington Quarry Nursery School

For both schools to be able to access to a wider group of professionals who are able to share knowledge and best practice and to learn from each other also means that every child's learning and school experience will be enhanced. Children will benefit from high quality teaching and learning and be able to access a broad and balanced curriculum taught by qualified good and outstanding teachers. Each school will be able to build upon its approach to classroom practice and assessment of pupil attainment, thereby enabling standards to be maintained and improved.

It is expected that the Executive Headteacher's time will be split equally between each of HQNS and WNS, as it has been during the interim arrangement, although it may be necessary, from time to time, for the Executive Headteacher to work more hours in one school than the other, which would typically be where they are required to provide temporary classroom cover for a teacher who is absent due to illness.

The way in which the schools will be led and the knowledge of staff across the federation will have the effect of mitigating the effects on a school's ability to deliver for its pupils as a result of staff being unexpectedly away from work or when they leave our employment, as the staff who remain will continue to have knowledge and experience of both schools.

Other resources may also be shared across the federation to improve provision for children, including provision for the increasing number of children in our communities being identified as having special educational needs and disabilities.

Where support or other external services are required, they may be procured by the federation for both schools, rather than for just the individual school, thereby creating economies of scale and enabling the money saved to be deployed on other resources that will benefit pupils.

Whilst there will be no immediate impact from the forming of a federation, the schools will, over time, benefit from the links that will exist between them.

The reason for not continuing with the existing interim arrangement on a permanent basis is because it prevents the schools from being able to recruit staff into posts that will serve both schools, as staff will need to be employed by one school or the other. The workload of the Executive Headteacher is also duplicated, as they will be required to carry out identical work



Headington Quarry Nursery School

separately for each school, including preparation for, and attendance at, Governing Board meetings, which is not sustainable in the long term.

E. THE RISKS OF FEDERATION AND MANAGING THE RISKS

There will always be some risks involved whenever there is any change to the status quo. The key risks of HQNS and WNS forming a federation are as set out below.

- The schools struggle to form a cohesive governing body that capable of properly considering the interests of both schools
- There is a big difference in the culture of the two schools
- Financial economies do not materialise
- Change in leadership in the future may lead to changes in the nature of the federation

The Governing Bodies of each school have carefully considered these risks for the past two years, during which time each school has had the benefit of getting to know the other. It is rare to have had the opportunity to have a “try before you buy” experience for such a prolonged period of time, as most schools which come together to form a federation will not have had the benefit of previously working together.

The experience over the past two years has demonstrated that the partnership between HQNS and WNS works. We are very similar schools which share similar values, are situated within close geographical proximity to each other and serve broadly similar communities. Both schools’ Governing Bodies have concluded, after having the opportunity to scrutinise the impact and effect of the relationship, that the risks on the schools in forming a federation would be minimal when compared to the significant benefits a federation will bring.

To manage the risks of federation, the new federation governing body will meet regularly to review the arrangements and seek the support of Oxfordshire County Council’s education team where appropriate. The governing body will be made up of individuals from each school and each governor will be required to comply with the Code of Conduct of the new federation, under which they will be obliged to act in the interests of all schools in the federation. This means that decisions may only be taken if they are in the interests of both schools and where they will not benefit one school to the detriment of the other.

The governing body of the new federation will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the federation on an ongoing basis to ensure its success. There will be regular monitoring of,



Headington Quarry Nursery School

among other things, safeguarding, progress, attainment, workload and pupil and staff wellbeing. If it is determined that to remain federated is no longer in the best interests of the schools, the governing body will be able to take a decision to dissolve the federation and where each school will then return to being a standalone school.

F. STAFFING

Both HQNS and WNS are schools maintained by Oxfordshire County Council. This will remain unchanged and Oxfordshire County Council will continue to be the employer of staff at the two schools.

At present, all staff are employed under contracts in respect of the school at which they work and this will continue to be the case for existing staff when the schools federate, with one exception, namely that of the Executive Headteacher, whose contract will be a new contract of employment with The Shotover Nursery Schools Federation. Going forward, all new staff will be engaged as employees of the federation.

Although the Executive Headteacher will be spending time at both schools, they retain the overall responsibility as each school's headteacher at all times, even if they are not physically present on site. Each school will continue to have a minimum of one full-time equivalent qualified teacher who will have responsibility as a Base Leader with oversight of the school at any time the Executive Headteacher is not on site.

G. COMPOSITION OF THE NEW FEDERATION GOVERNING BODY

The existing Governing Bodies of HQNS and WNS will cease to exist at midnight on 21st April 2025, when The Wheatley Nursery School and John Watson School Federation will also dissolve. At one second past midnight on 22nd April 2025, the new federation governing body will take over the governance oversight of The Shotover Nursery Schools Federation.

When schools federate, their existing governing bodies do not amalgamate. Instead, a new governing body will be formed and elections will be held for governors of the new federation after this Consultation has closed and if a firm decision is made by the Governing Bodies of both HQNS and WNS to proceed to federate. The new governing body will, until federation occurs, be a shadow governing body and will be provided with all the information it requires to take over as governors by the outgoing current Governing Bodies of HQNS and WNS. The



Headington Quarry Nursery School

shadow governing body will closely follow the federation process so that they are ready to take over immediately when the new federation comes into being. Some of the existing governors of each of HQNS and WNS may choose to put themselves forward for a role on the new federation governing body.

The governing body of The Shotover Nursery Schools Federation will comprise up to fourteen governors, as follows:

- The Executive Headteacher
- 1 Staff Governor (elected jointly by the staff of both schools)
- 2 Parent Governors (elected jointly by the parents/carers of pupils at both schools and may come from the same school or one from each school)
- 1 Local Authority Governor
- 9 Co-opted Governors

Information about elections to the new governing body will be provided in due course.

The members of the new federation governing body will be selected based upon the skills, expertise and understanding they bring to benefit the strategic development of the federation of schools and to secure the best outcomes for all pupils.

The governing body will look to secure membership that represents a good balance of knowledge and regular interaction with each school. The vision is that the single governing body of the federation will enable the two schools to:

- Work together efficiently and sustainably to raise standards, improve services and increase opportunities for pupils and staff
- Monitor performance across the two schools and have honest conversations with the Executive Headteacher about any differences
- Compare curriculum interventions across the two schools and promote good practice quickly
- Share resources, staff, expertise and facilities

If you wish to be considered as a governor of the new federation governing body, please do let the Chair of Governors of either HQNS or WNS know, via the appropriate school office.



Headington Quarry Nursery School

The first Full Governing Body meeting of The Shotover Nursery Schools Federation will take place at 7.00pm on the federation effective date of 22nd April 2025.

H. FURTHER INFORMATION

This Consultation Paper will be available to view at any time at the school office of both HQNS and WNS during school hours and will also be placed on each school’s website.

We have arranged for the meetings set out below to be held where Governors will be available to answer any questions that you may have.

Date	Time	Open to Whom?	Venue
8 October 2024	3.10pm	Staff only	Wheatley Nursery School
9 October 2024	3.30pm	Staff only	Headington Quarry Nursery School
12 November 2024	5.00pm	All welcome	Wheatley Nursery School
13 November 2024	6.30pm	All welcome	Headington Quarry Nursery School
18 November 2024	1.00pm	All welcome	Remote meeting via Microsoft Teams

If you are not a member of staff and wish to attend one of the in-person meetings being held at WNS on 12th November 2024 or at HQNS on 13th November 2024, please let the relevant school office know by 3.00pm of the previous day, so that we may know to expect you. You are welcome at either school, even if your child attends the other nursery school.

If you wish to join the Teams meeting on 18th November 2024, please inform the office of the school your child attends in order that we may send you the Teams link closer to the time.

Any other interested party who does not have a child attending either HQNS or WNS may contact either school office.

The location of each school and contact details for the school offices are:

Headington Quarry Nursery School
 Tel: 01865 762345
 Email: admin@headington-nurs.oxon.sch.uk
 4 Quarry School Place
 Headington
 Oxford OX3 9LH

Wheatley Nursery School
 Tel: 01865 598044
 Email: wnsoffice@wheatleynurseryschool.com
 2B Littleworth Road
 Wheatley
 Oxford OX33 1NW



Headington Quarry Nursery School

I. FEEDBACK ON THE CONSULTATION: YOUR VIEWS

We would welcome any views which you may have on the proposal to federate HQNS and WNS. You may provide your views in the following ways:

- By email to the office of the school your child attends, with the subject line being marked clearly with the words “**Federation Feedback**”
- By completing and returning the form which may be found at Section K of this Consultation Paper to either school office
- In writing and delivered by hand or by post to either school office, with the envelope marked clearly with the words “**Federation Feedback**”

Any interested party who does not have a child attending either HQNS or WNS may provide feedback to either school office.

Your representations will only be taken into account and considered if they are received by no later than midnight on Sunday, 24th November 2024.

J. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

After the consultation has closed, the Joint Federation Committee will gather all feedback received on the proposal to federate received from stakeholders. This will be carefully considered and collated for presenting to each school’s Full Governing Body for further consideration.

Governors will also be carrying out a due diligence process to ensure that the Governing Body of each school has a full understanding of the other school, to ensure that when federation occurs, they are fully apprised of all matters of which they should be aware, including in respect of staffing, finances and land and premises.

The work to be undertaken will take several months and the Governing Bodies of both schools will continue to meet both individually and jointly on a regular basis as the work progresses.

When the work is complete, the individual Governing Bodies of HQNS and WNS will, on 3rd March 2025, meet to make a firm decision as to whether or not to proceed to federate. These meetings will be immediately followed by a Joint Full Governing Body Meeting at which each school’s Governing Body will confirm to the other that they wish to proceed, if that is



Headington Quarry Nursery School

the intention. The Chairs of Governors of each school will notify all stakeholders of the outcome of the decision as soon as practicable after 3rd March 2025 and in any event by no later than 10th March 2025. The effective date, which is currently proposed to be 22nd April 2025, will also be confirmed.

If the Governing Body of either HQNS or WNS does not agree to federate, the current interim partnership arrangement will continue until such time the two Governing Bodies agree to bring it to an end; and is subject to one term's notice. If federation takes place, the existing interim partnership arrangement will terminate with immediate effect.

The decision as to whether or not to proceed to federate HQNS and WNS rests solely with the Governing Bodies of the two schools.

We hope the information in this Consultation Paper is helpful and we look forward to receiving your feedback.





Headington Quarry Nursery School

K. FEDERATION CONSULTATION FEEDBACK FORM

Please provide your views on the proposed federation of Headington Quarry Nursery School and Wheatley Nursery School.

This form should be returned to either school office by no later than 24 November 2024, marked for the attention of the Chair of Governors.

Name (optional):

I am a (please select one):

Parent/Carer of a child at HQNS		Parent/Carer of a child at WNS	
Member of staff at HQNS		Member of staff at WNS	
Other interested party (please specify):			

Please indicate whether you support the proposed federation of HQNS and WNS (please select one):

Yes		No		I am not sure	
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Your Comments:
