



**Federation of Middleham (VA) and
Spennithorne (VC) Church of England
Primary Schools**

***Consultation
Document***

**Proposals by the Federated Governing Board to –
Change the age ranges of: -**

- 1. Spennithorne Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School to an age range of 4-7 and that it becomes Spennithorne Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Infant School; and**
- 2. Middleham Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School to an age range of 7-11 and that it becomes Middleham Church of England (VA) Junior School; and**
- 3. To change the category of Spennithorne Church of England Infant School from Voluntary Controlled to Voluntary Aided**



Federation of Middleham and Spennithorne Primary Schools.

September 2025

Proposals by the federated governing board to restructure the federation into separate infant and junior schools – with Spennithorne Church of England (VC) Primary School becoming an infant school (with an age range of 4-7) and Middleham Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School becoming a junior school (with an age range of 7-11) from September 2026

Spennithorne Church of England (VC) and Middleham Church of England (VA) Primary Schools are separate schools. The schools work together in a federation under the governance of a single federated governing board. This arrangement has ensured that good practice in both schools is shared. The federation's governors have agreed to ask North Yorkshire Council to restructure the federation by changing the age ranges of both schools.

The federated governing board and North Yorkshire Council have agreed to consult stakeholders on a proposal to create separate infant and junior schools serving children aged 4 to 11, from 1 September 2026. Spennithorne Church of England (VC) Primary School would become an infant school with an age range of 4-7 years and Middleham Church of England (VA) Primary School would become a junior school with an age range of 7-11 years.

The federated governing board has also requested that the category of Spennithorne Church of England School is changed from Voluntary Controlled (VC) to Voluntary Aided (VA) as part of these school organisation proposals.

It is proposed that the two schools will restructure from 1 September 2026 and that the newly organised schools will subsequently be called Spennithorne Church of England (VA) Infant School and Middleham Church of England (VA) Junior School.

Please take time to look at the proposals, and then send us your views by the closing date on 7 November 2025. We look forward to hearing from you.

There will be a public meeting on:

Thursday 2nd October 2025 at 6pm at

Middleham CE Primary School, Park Lane, Middleham, Leyburn, North Yorkshire, DL8 4QX

Background

The villages of Spennithorne and Middleham and the areas of Wensleydale directly around them are currently served by two separate small primary schools. A single federated governing board is responsible for the governance of both Spennithorne Church of England (VC) Primary School and Middleham Church of England (VA) Primary School, and an executive headteacher works with the federated governing board to make sure that good standards of teaching and learning are available for all pupils.

The current structure of the federation was established as a proactive response to the low numbers of pupils in both schools enabling the federation to provide sustainable education to pupils within both catchment areas and involve pupils of a similar age from across the federation being taught together in single classes. This means that, although parents/carers select at which school to enrol their children, the federated governing board has arranged the education of some of the federation's pupils to be in a school other than the one at which they are enrolled. The federated governing board has provided transport for some pupils to move between the schools involved in the federation.

The federated governing board proposes to change the way it operates the two schools following advice from the Council. The proposed changes will formalise the federation's organisational structure and will ensure that the schools comply with Government regulations about School Admissions and Registration.

The federated governing board would like to confirm that the proposals will result in only minimal impact upon the way in which pupils are taught in each school, and that they will work closely with pupils and parents to implement them.

Why is a change required?

During summer 2024, the Council received legal advice that the model that had been established by the federation was not compliant with the provisions of the Education Act 1996 and the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 which govern the arrangements for school admissions and registration. The advice, which was partly informed by information provided by the Department for Education (DfE), noted that pupils are required to receive their education at the school at which they are registered.

This advice means that the current organisational arrangements within the federation are not compliant with the regulations and that the federated governing board needs to implement a change so that the arrangements become compliant.

The Council advised the federated governing board of possible solutions / restructure options, set out below, which the federated governing board has carefully considered.

Following its consideration of the options the federated governing board has submitted proposals for the establishment of separate infant and junior schools and believes that this option will enable them to best meet the needs of the community and to continue to provide a high standard of education to pupils.

In order that it can do this, the Council is required to follow a statutory process that includes this period of consultation.

You are encouraged to give your views on the proposals.

Summary of the options considered

The federated governing board reviewed each of the options and considered a range of criteria, including the potential impact upon teaching and learning, management and financial implications prior to reaching a conclusion about its preferred option. The table below provides a summary of the options, the issues involved and of the federated governing board's conclusion: -

Description	Why was the option <u>Discounted</u> or <u>Recommended</u> ?	Conclusion
1.Continue as two separate primary schools.	The federated governing board did not consider there to be sufficient pupils on roll at either school for this to be a viable option.	Discounted
2. Become one primary school on one of the sites.	The federated governing board concluded that there would be insufficient space on one school site for the full age range.	Discounted.
3. Become one school across two sites. .	Utilising the indicative financial model provided by the council, the federated governing board identified that this option would result in a significant reduction in the revenue received compared to that currently received by the federation and considered that that would have a detrimental impact upon the schools if it were to be pursued	Discounted.
4. Restructure as separate infant and junior schools.	<p>Utilising the indicative financial model provided by the council, the federated governing board identified this option as providing the most sustainable solution. It concluded that the option would enable the current efficiencies associated with the federation to be maintained, without the significant financial impact associated with Option 3 above.</p> <p>The federated governing board considered that this option would improve education of children in their peer groups by enabling classes with a narrower age range than Option 1 above, and that it provided a more financially viable option than Option 3 above.</p> <p>The federated governing board noted a risk arising from the Home to School Transport Policy such that, if a joint catchment area is served, then for some pupils the infant or junior schools may not be the nearest suitable school to their home address for travel eligibility purposes.</p>	The federated governing board requested that the Council consider a number of linked proposals arising from their conclusion and, if approved, to undertake the required statutory process to enable them to be implemented.

The Federated Governing Board's Proposal

After careful consideration of all the options, the federated governing board requested that the Council consult on their proposals to restructure the federation into separate infant and junior schools.

The federated governing board's proposal is:-

- That the age range of Spennithorne Church of England (VC) Primary School be changed from 4-11 to 4-7, and that the school becomes Spennithorne Church of England Infant School
- That the age range of Middleham Church of England (VA) Primary School be changed from 4-11 to 7-11 and that the school becomes Middleham Church of England (VA) Junior School
- That the category of Spennithorne Church of England School is changed from Voluntary Controlled (VC) to Voluntary Aided (VA)
- That the schools would have a shared catchment area, comprising an amalgamation of the existing schools' current catchment areas
- To establish a Published Admissions Number (PAN) of 20 at each of the two schools
- That the proposal be implemented from 1 September 2026

The federated governing board have confirmed their intention to continue to operate as a federation. This will ensure that they continue to benefit from doing so, including through shared governance and leadership, enhanced educational opportunities and resource efficiency.

Should the proposal be implemented, the change would take effect from 1 September 2026.

Why are they proposing change now?

The executive headteacher and federated governing board have written out to parents about the changes that are being proposed. The proposals will ensure that the schools are compliant with the regulations and will also benefit pupils by building on the work that the federation has already undertaken. The federated governing board think that learning and progress can be even better if each school is targeted to a Key Stage, with the infant school nurturing early childhood development through play and interactive exploration, and the junior school gradually preparing children for secondary school.

How would the schools be governed and managed?

Under the proposal the schools would continue to operate as a federation. The federation would continue to have a single federated governing board.

There would continue to be a single executive headteacher who would provide leadership in both schools. The current executive headteacher would continue in their role.

What would the schools look like?

Under the proposed new structure, children would be taught at the school in which they are registered within the federation. The following would also apply:

Transition

Transition between Key Stages would be marked, since it would coincide with a transition between schools. It is considered that the federated schools would work together to deliver a smooth transition and help to ensure that the good progress made by children at Key Stage 1 is maintained and built upon at Key Stage 2.

Admissions

Should the proposal be implemented, places for infant children currently enrolled at Middleham Church of England (VA) Primary School would be made available at Spennithorne Church of England (VA) Infant School. Parents could also express a preference for any alternative school.

Should the proposal be implemented, places for junior children currently enrolled at Spennithorne Church of England (VC) Primary School would be made available at Middleham Church of England (VA) Junior School. Parents could also express a preference for any alternative school.

In the future, pupils on roll at Spennithorne Church of England (VA) Infant School would not automatically transfer to Middleham Church of England (VA) Junior School. It would be necessary to apply for a place at the junior school, for provision through to age 11. Parents of children attending the infant school would need to express a preference and when they are making their decision parents could also express a preference for any alternative school.

Proposal to change the category of Spennithorne Church of England School from Voluntary Controlled to Voluntary Aided

The federated governing board has requested that the category of Spennithorne Church of England School is changed from Voluntary Controlled to Voluntary Aided as part of these school organisation proposals.

Joint working with Middleham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School could be enhanced should Spennithorne become a Voluntary Aided School due to greater alignment between the two schools. For example:

- the schools would have the same Religious Education syllabus enabling greater shared provision.
- the federated governing board would be the single employer of staff, making shared staffing arrangements in appropriate cases easier.
- the inspection processes under the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools framework would be more aligned.

As a Voluntary Aided School, the federated governing board would become the Admissions Authority and therefore be responsible for determining the school's admission arrangements, with admissions applications continuing to be processed under North Yorkshire Council's co-ordinated admissions scheme.

In a Voluntary Aided school, the federated governing board is the employer of all staff, rather than the local authority. Staff in Spennithorne would automatically transfer their employment on their existing terms and conditions from the local authority to the federated governing body under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE).

The local authority receives school condition allocation to invest in priorities across the schools for which they are responsible, including Voluntary Controlled Schools. As a Voluntary Aided school, Spennithorne would not look to the local authority for this funding: instead, the Diocese receives school condition allocation to distribute based on an assessment of priorities across the Voluntary Aided schools in the Diocese. As a Voluntary Aided school, Spennithorne would be responsible for making a 10 per cent statutory contribution to all capital works funded from school condition allocation funding or Devolved Formula Capital.

If Spennithorne CE changed category from a Voluntary Controlled to a Voluntary Aided school, there would be no change of ownership of the building. The landlord of Spennithorne School House is the Rector, Church Wardens and Trustees of School House Trust and the landlord of playing fields adjoining Spennithorne CE Primary School are the Trustees of the Ferrand Family Irrevocable Trust.

Admissions Catchment Areas

Under the proposal, both the infant and junior schools would serve the catchment areas which are currently separately served by each primary school. For this reason, the catchment areas would be merged, with each extended to include the other. The shared catchment areas are shown on the maps accompanying this consultation document. These arrangements would be implemented from September 2026 only in the event of the infant / junior restructure. The shared catchment area is shown on the map accompanying this consultation document.

Home to School Travel

Eligibility for assistance with home to school travel would be determined in accordance with the Council's home to school travel policy, including any decision to provide discretionary eligibility linked to the federated governing board's proposals.

It is proposed that special considerations or discretion be given to pupils already on roll at the point that consultation was requested in September 2025. It is proposed that the Council provides discretionary travel for children, already assessed as eligible for travel *and* on roll at schools on 1 September 2026, within the federation schools for the duration of their education at the schools within the same federation, subject to there being no change in their circumstances. This will enable the schools to move to compliant arrangements and would be a time limited discretionary provision so that children already on roll could maintain

continuity of education within the federations that they are already registered, in the event that the school organisation proposals result in them having to move to a different school within the federation due to the age range changes.

An example would be a current Y1 child who attends a primary school but who is required to move to an infant school for Y2 before returning to the junior school (formerly the primary) for Y3 to Y6 – even if the infant school is not the nearest suitable school at the time of the transfer. This acknowledges the council's commitment to continue eligibility under the 2019 policy for children in schools before September 2024.

Any new applications for assistance with home to school travel to either school received after 1 September 2026 would only be considered under the current home to school travel policy, unless part of a linked proposal that is decided by the Council.

Religious Designation

Spennithorne and Middleham are denominational schools. Under the proposal, the infant and junior schools would continue with a Church of England religious designation. The Diocese plays an active part in the life of the schools. As Church of England schools, the school organisation proposals would also require approval from the Diocesan Board of Education.

Learning and Progress

The federated governing board has confirmed that pupils would be in class groups with their peers. The proposals of separate infant and junior schools share the benefit of greater numbers of children being together in similar age groups and curriculum groups.

The schools would aim to have integrated arrangements for the assessment of learning, including recording of progress and transition across the infant and junior schools. As now, each separate school would have its own Ofsted inspection and its own budget. With the agreement of governors and approval of local authority officers, schools within federations can continue to request to amalgamate budgets.

Finance

Capital Position

Capital investment is not included within the proposal.

Revenue Position

School budgets are funded largely by pupil numbers so the proposal would not lead to an increase in revenue funding. The school organisation proposal of infant and junior schools provides the same level of funding across the federation as that currently received by the separate schools with the lump sum funding retained for each school. In an amalgamation of two schools (Option 3 above), one school's lump sum would cease and whilst an amalgamated school across two sites may receive split site funding, this would be a reduced funding amount compared to the lump sum funding for the two schools.

Federated governing boards can request to amalgamate their individual school budgets; these arrangements could continue under the infant and junior school proposals.

Based on the proposal taking effect from September 2026, and other things being equal, the federated governing board has determined the optimum funding position, based on best estimates of revenue funding for each financial year, for the individual schools within the federation. Irrespective of this school organisation proposal, the federation governing boards are continuously required to oversee financial management, and this includes considering efficiency actions where improvements are identified as being necessary in the school financial forecast.

Pupil Numbers

The Published Admission Number (PAN) is the number of school places that the admission authority must offer in each relevant age group of a school. The relevant age group is the age group at which pupils are normally admitted to the school e.g. Reception for a primary school or infant school, and Year 3 for a junior school.

As at January 2025 there were 42 pupils registered at Spennithorne CE VC Primary School and 50 pupils registered at Middleham CE VA Primary School. These numbers do not reflect pupils in the two schools, since they are taught together by age group, irrespective of the school in which they are registered.

Based on projected pupil numbers in 2025/6, including pupils from new open market housing, the forecast pupil numbers in the proposed re-organised Infant and Junior schools are set out below:

	2026/27		2027/28	
Year	Spennithorne Infant	Middleham Junior	Spennithorne Infant	Middleham Junior
Reception	16		16	
Year 1	15		16	
Year 2	17		15	
Year 3		15		17
Year 4		9		15
Year 5		17		9
Year 6		13		17
Total	48	54	47	58
Potential 19 further pupils from 76 houses with existing permissions				+19

Based on May 2025 school census

Admission Number

Currently, the PAN of Spennithorne is 13 and the PAN of Middleham is 15. It is proposed to increase the PANs at both schools to 20. The proposed PANs of 20 would accommodate combining two Reception intakes and take account of future pupil projections.

School Place Sufficiency

It is important to ensure sufficient school places in the local area. Both schools are in the sparsely populated Outer Wensleydale school place planning area and there are surplus spaces in the locality.

Staff

A separate consultation process, including a staff meeting, is running in parallel with this consultation.

Who are we consulting?

This consultation is being undertaken as part of a statutory process that is set by the Department for Education.

Copies of this consultation document have been sent to all parents of pupils and to staff at the two schools. It has also been distributed to neighbouring schools, councillors, parish councils, professional associations and the local MP.

Your views are important and your response to the consultation will be published on North Yorkshire Council's website to inform the decision-making process.

Your personal details, and those of others you may refer to, will not be published.

What happens next?

If the decision is taken to consult further, then statutory notices would be published in the local press. These notices, alongside the required statutory proposals, would provide four weeks for further representations to be made. A final decision would then be taken by North Yorkshire Council's Executive and, if agreed, the proposal would be implemented from 1st September 2026.

Anticipated key dates

All dates are subject to approvals at each stage.

Consultation opens	22 Sept 2025
Public meeting at the school	2 Oct 2025 at 6pm at Middleham CE Primary School
Consultation closes	7 Nov 2025
North Yorkshire Council's Executive considers consultation responses	16 Dec 2025
Statutory Notices published (4 weeks for representations to be made)	12 January – 6 February 2026
Final decision by North Yorkshire Council's Executive	17 March 2026
Proposed implementation date	1 September 2026

How to respond

Your views about this proposal are welcomed. You can either complete and return the attached response sheet or submit an online response.

Paper responses should be returned to North Yorkshire Council at the address below:

FREEPOST RTKE-RKAY-CUJS
Middleham and Spennithorne Schools Strategic Planning
North Yorkshire Council
County Hall
NORTHALLERTON
DL7 8AE

Online responses may be submitted by following this link:

[Middleham and Spennithorne consultation survey](#)

The closing date for responses is 5pm on 7 November 2025

All responses to the consultation received by this date will be considered by the Council's Executive on 16 December 2025.

Responses to the consultation will be published on the Council's website. Your personal details, and those of others you may refer to, will not be published.

Federation of Middleham (VA) and Spennithorne (VC) Church of England Primary Schools.

This is a consultation on proposals to change the age ranges of Spennithorne Church of England (VC) Primary School and Middleham Church of England (VA) Primary School from 1 September 2026.

We are collecting this information for the purpose of gathering views on the proposal. (Your personal data will not be published or passed to any other organisation unless a legal obligation compels us to do so. Reading our Privacy Notice will help you understand how and why we process your personal data. www.northyorks.gov.uk/privacy-notices)

Do you have any comments about the junior and infant school proposal? (Please do not disclose any personal information in your answer)

Do you have any comments about the proposal to change the category of Spennithorne from Voluntary Controlled to Voluntary Aided? (Please do not disclose any personal information in your answer)

Do you have any comments about the proposal to merge the two admissions catchment areas? (Please do not disclose any personal information in your answer)

Do you have any comments about the increase in PAN (Published Admission Number) to 20?

What is your interest/status? (Parent / Governor / Teacher / Community / Other)	
Please state	

Name of school: (if applicable)	
------------------------------------	--

To confirm your proximity to school and to prevent duplicate responses we are asking you to provide your name and address. This information will be removed from any analysis or reports.	
Name:	
Address:	
Postcode:	

To help us assess whether we have provided clear information, please let us know whether you found this consultation easy to understand? Yes / No
--

--

<p>Please send this response sheet to the following “FREEPOST” address. You <u>do not</u> need to use a postage stamp.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> FREEPOST RTKE-RKAY-CUJS Middleham and Spennithorne Schools Strategic Planning North Yorkshire Council County Hall NORTHALLERTON DL7 8AE </p> <p>Or to submit your response online go to:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Middleham and Spennithorne consultation survey</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To be received by no later than 5pm on 7 November 2025</p>
--