



Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him.
They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream.
It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green.
It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.

Jeremiah 17: 7 - 8

15th July 2025

School Structure Arrangements

Dear Parent/Carer,

School Structure Arrangements

We are writing to inform you of some important developments that mean we must review how our two schools currently operate.

Earlier in the autumn term, the Governing Body and Headteacher were notified by North Yorkshire Council of updated guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). This guidance relates to the provision of education for pupils in schools other than the one they are officially registered at. Legal advice confirmed that this new information is directly relevant to our current Federation arrangements.

The key message from the DfE was that *pupils should be educated at the school where they are registered*. While governing boards do have some flexibility to provide off-site education, this does not extend to delivering full-time or majority education on a different site.

Since the formation of our Federation, we have operated largely as one school across the Middleham and Spennithorne sites. As you may know, parents/carers have had the option to choose which site to enrol their child at, and in some cases, this has resulted in pupils being dual-registered. We have now been informed that this setup does not meet current DfE registration regulations. It's important to note that we are not alone—other federations are also affected.

The Council has provided a number of potential options for how we could restructure, which the Governing Body has carefully reviewed. A summary of the options and our decisions is as follows:

- **Operate as a single primary school on one or two sites:**
This would involve effectively closing one of the schools. The Governing Body ruled this out due to the impact this would have on the communities, limitations in space and the financial disadvantage of losing one of our budgets. A single budget would significantly reduce the resources available to support pupils.
- **Run two all-through primary schools (Reception to Year 6) at each site:**
This option was also dismissed. It would result in small year groups and mixed-age classes, potentially covering whole key stages. The Governing Body felt this would compromise the quality of teaching and increase staff workload to an unsustainable level.
- **Restructure into separate infant and junior schools:**
This is the preferred option, as it reflects our current practice and will formalise our existing approach to ensure compliance with DfE regulations. It allows children to be taught in narrower age bands, which supports both educational quality and financial sustainability.

Our proposal is to restructure the Federation so that Spennithorne becomes an infant school (ages 4–7) and Middleham becomes a junior school (ages 7–11).

Under this arrangement, children would be registered and taught at the school appropriate to their age group:

- **Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 at Spennithorne**
- **Year 3, 4, 5 and 6 at Middleham**

We want to reassure you that this change will not affect the way we operate day to day. Teaching, curriculum, leadership and support will continue as they do now, and children will experience the same high standards of education and care. The main practical change for families will be that at the end of Year 2, parents will need to formally enrol their child at Middleham in order for them to begin Year 3. Uniforms will remain the same across both schools, and we are committed to maintaining continuity and familiarity for the children as they progress through the Federation.

As with any significant change to school structure, there will be a formal consultation process. This allows parents, carers, and members of the community to share their views, raise any concerns, and ask questions. This process can take up to a year, so any official changes are not expected to take effect until **April 2026**.

Subject to approval, the indicative timeline provided by North Yorkshire Council is as follows:

- **4th August** – Initial proposal considered by the Executive Member for Education
- **2nd September** – Publication of the report detailing the school organisation proposals, published on the council website
- **9th September** – Executive Member meeting
- **22nd September – 7th November** – Public consultation period (including a public meeting)
- **16th December** – Review of feedback and decision on whether to proceed
- **12th January – 6th February** – Statutory Notice Period
- **17th March** – Potential final decision
- **April 2026** – Formal implementation of the restructure (if approved)

We appreciate that this information is being shared very close to the end of term, and we apologise for the short notice. Unfortunately, the timeline for this process has been set by North Yorkshire Council, and we are required to follow their schedule. As a result, we are sharing this news as soon as we are able, to ensure transparency and to give families the opportunity to take part in the consultation process from the outset.

To support our families through this process and answer any questions you may have prior to the public consultation period, we as the school will be holding an informal drop-in session on Tuesday 9th September 2025, 6pm – 7pm. We welcome your feedback and are here to help you understand the proposed changes.

Please be assured that throughout this process, the Federation's Governing Body and Mrs Mann will continue to prioritise your child's education and wellbeing.

Kind regards,

J. Hadfield

Josh Hadfield
Chair of Governors

M R Mann

Marie Mann
Executive Headteacher



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