

## Mrs Bland's Infant and Nursery and Garland Junior School

### Federation Consultation Proposal

# Proposal to form a Federation: Mrs Bland's Infant School and Nursery and Garland Junior School

## A. Foreword

The federation of schools is a formal, structured, legal process which enables schools to work together to form a single governing board and school leadership team that will make decisions in the best interest of all the schools, pupils and staff in that federation. Currently, Mrs Bland's Infant School and Nursery ("Mrs Bland's") and Garland Junior School ("Garland") have separate individual governing boards for each school.

Mrs Bland's and Garland are located near to one another in Burghfield Common, with Mrs Bland's being the main feeder school to Garland. The schools have a history of working together. In January 2023 we set up a working group, made up of the Headteachers of both schools and governors from both governing boards to look at ways to increase collaboration. The natural progression of the working party was to explore federation of the schools.

Both schools will continue to have their own individual identity, with the schools' names remaining as they currently are. Both schools will continue to receive separate funding and will still be subject to separate Ofsted inspections. However, through the process of federation, a single governing board and school leadership team will be established to govern across the two schools.

The governing boards of both Mrs Bland's and Garland have met individually and jointly to discuss the possibility of forming a federation between the two schools. The working group has carefully investigated the potential benefits and drawbacks of a federation. In order to seek guidance, advice and perspective on the federation process, the working group met with representatives from West Berkshire Council, Human Resources (HR) specialists and both the governors and leadership teams of several schools in the local area who have completed the federation process.

Following this joint, collaborative exercise, both governing boards have voted in favour of consulting on a federation. The governing boards think there are many advantages to the children, staff, and parents of having a single team responsible for curriculum, policy, standards, and oversight from the Foundation Stage to Year 6.

This consultation document has been prepared jointly by the governing boards. The main purpose of this document is to give information to stakeholders so that they can reach an informed view about federation. The consultation will help the governing bodies of both schools by gathering the views of all stakeholders; whether directly connected to the school or as part of the wider community.

## B. Consultation Process

The consultation process for Mrs Bland's and Garland will start at **17:00 (5pm) on Fri 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023** and will end **17:00 on Fri 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

We value any and all feedback, whether in favour of federation, against federation, or suggesting something that is not included here. The preferred method of feedback is through the enclosed feedback form, so that there is a formal record of all feedback that can be shared with the governing boards of

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both schools. Alternative methods can be found in section J. If you are not able to give your feedback in writing or in the methods contained in section J and need us to make an adjustment to the consultation process so that you can participate, please get in touch with either school office.

All feedback will be consolidated and anonymised prior to being provided to the governing boards of both schools. Please note that the governors may circulate selected anonymised feedback to key stakeholders, in order to inform them of the views expressed.

Any feedback shared will be held in accordance with the terms of data privacy and GDPR policies of the relevant school.

The federation consultation process is prescribed in The School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2012. These state that:

The governing boards proposing to federate must jointly consider any responses to the proposals and each governing board must determine whether –

- a) to proceed with the proposals for federation as published;
- b) to proceed with the proposals for federation with such modifications as the governing board consider appropriate; or
- c) not to proceed with the proposals for federation.

The governing boards of both schools will meet in the weeks following the end of the consultation period to consider all the feedback received. Following a review of this feedback, the governing boards of both schools will make a formal decision about (i) whether or not the federation should proceed and (ii) whether any modifications to the proposal are required.

If the decision is to proceed with the federation, the final decision will be communicated to parents and staff through the existing communication routes as soon as possible. Other stakeholders will be informed by letter within one week following the decision.

The current proposal is for the Federation, if approved, to commence on **Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> Oct at 19:00**. This will be the date of the establishment of the Burghfield Common Federation Governing Board, with the existing governing boards at both schools dissolving on the same day at 18:59.

#### **C. What will the federation be called?**

The names of the schools have historical significance in Burghfield and Reading and so, along with reasons of continuity and familiarity, it is proposed that they remain unchanged. A brief outline of the history is detailed below:

Horatio Bland was a well-travelled merchant, originally from Canada. He founded Mrs Bland's in memory of his wife, who died on a trip to Jerusalem in 1868. The original school building was demolished in the 1960s and is now the site used for Bland's Court sheltered accommodation. Horatio Bland built a large house with a separate museum building to showcase artefacts from around the world. This house, originally called Hillfields, is now the headquarters for the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association on Reading Road.

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Thomas Bland-Garland was Horatio Bland's favourite nephew, having formed a strong bond working together in South America. When Horatio Bland died, he left a life interest in Hillfields to Thomas Bland-Garland, who later ensured the Bland collection was given a permanent home in Reading Museum.

To help preserve these historical ties, it is proposed that the federation be named 'Burghfield Common Federation of Mrs Bland's Infant and Nursery and Garland Junior School' (the "Burghfield Common Federation").

#### **D. What are the benefits of federation?**

For any schools that choose to federate, there are a number of benefits for the pupils and staff. There are particular benefits for bringing together an infant and junior school in this way, where pupils typically move from one school to the other. There are also benefits to forming a federation, rather than merging existing schools into just one single school. Through the research conducted by the working group the following benefits were shared:

##### **General Benefits:**

- A single shared vision and mission statement, leading to a shared development plan across both schools. This means both schools are working towards shared goals for their future.
- Consistency of provision, expectations and oversight across both schools set by the new governing board with the Senior Leadership Team.
- The Senior Leadership Team structure will enable strong strategic leadership for both schools. This means strong leadership, supporting excellence and driving improvements consistently and equally in both schools.
- Recruiting teachers is currently difficult for schools across the UK. It can be quite difficult to attract and retain staff in smaller schools, especially in rural or semi-rural locations. Federations offer a unique set of challenges, allowing them to attract more ambitious applicants when recruiting in the future, as well as retain their best existing teachers- for example by giving staff opportunities to develop a subject specialism across all primary year groups.
- The federation model enhances established shared approaches to classroom practice, such as assessment and expected behaviours, allowing staff across both schools to collaborate effectively. Working in a federation gives staff more colleagues to collaborate with, learn from, be inspired by, share expertise with and draw upon for support. This would help improve and maintain standards across the federation, leading to better outcomes for all children.
- Increased flow of safeguarding information and the opportunity for consistent engagement by specialist staff throughout their time at the federation will lead to both schools becoming even safer places for the children to learn.
- There would be opportunities for efficiencies in both schools. This includes information technology support, making financial savings and increasing efficiency by sharing purchase contracts. Whilst cost saving is not the driving factor behind federation, we expect these savings to be invested to provide extra opportunities for children across the federation.
- There would be the opportunity to improve facilities for curricular and extra-curricular activities across both schools, using shared resources and expertise that one school alone would not be able to provide.
- Federation allows schools greater flexibility with staffing, such as being able to distribute staff across schools, whether for cover or to share specialist skills, or for continuous professional development opportunities.

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#### **Benefits specific to Mrs Bland's and Garland:**

- The two schools serve the same children and families. Each year a high percentage of Year 2 pupils from Mrs Bland's Infant and Nursery move to Garland Junior School. Strong strategic leadership and the joint understanding of children's needs would, in turn, lead to improved transition.
- The Burghfield Common Federation would establish a joint curriculum statement leading to consistency of approach and an opportunity to develop deep learning across the primary range, improve progress and attainment, and prepare children effectively for their future education.
- We are proud to serve a diverse community, and of the additional support provided by the schools to those who need it. Provision would be improved for the children, particularly for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and those from other vulnerable groups through improved continuity of care on transition between the two schools. There will also be the potential for staff to continue working with children throughout their time in the Burghfield Common Federation where that is the best option for the child.
- Many families have children at both schools at the same time. It will help parents and caregivers to work in partnership with the schools if the policies and procedures are consistent. Parents and caregivers can be clear about what is expected of them and their children and can also have clear understanding of what they can expect from each school.
- Federating will result in a governing board that can draw on a wider range of skills, experience and expertise, resulting in more effective governance.

#### **Benefits to federation instead of merging the two schools into one single school:**

- A school merger is a much more complex legal process which would inevitably take leadership attention away from focusing on the day-to-day operation of the schools.
- A school merger would mean changes to school funding. We believe that this could result in a 7% drop in funding, based on current models.
- A school merger could leave the school more vulnerable to losing one of its sites, reducing the amount of space available for teaching and learning activities, including sport. Federation allows both schools to keep their unique identities, reflecting their proud history and place in our thriving community.
- The Burghfield Common Federation would provide both short and long-term stability in leadership and staffing for both schools.

#### **E. Leadership of the New Federation**

There will be a new role of Executive Headteacher, who will lead the Burghfield Common Federation on a strategic level and work with the Burghfield Common Federation Governing Board and leadership team. Recruitment for the Executive Head position would in the first instance be from the two current Headteachers. This will ensure that the new Executive Head has knowledge of the schools, will provide continuity to the federation, and will meet the requirement to minimise redundancies in the restructuring process. The schools will work closely with their respective HR providers to ensure the process is carried out fairly and correctly.

Each school will have a Head of School, who will manage and lead the school on an operational, day-to-day basis, supported by key senior staff based in the two schools. As with the Executive Head, the Heads of School will be recruited from among the current Heads and Deputy Heads.

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The Burghfield Common Federation Governing Board and West Berkshire Local Authority will work closely together to ensure that the leadership team is supported in the transition period to a federation and in its ongoing work.

Pay and conditions for the new roles will be taken from the government policy- [School teachers' pay and conditions document 2022 and guidance on school teachers' pay and conditions September 2022](#), with further guidance taken from each school's respective HR provider.

#### F. Staffing

It is not anticipated that the federation will directly impact other staff during the federation process. Long term decisions about staffing matters will be for the new governing board and leadership team to consider, in due course.

#### G. Governance of the New Federation

If the final decision is made to federate the two schools, the current governing boards will be dissolved and replaced with a single, newly appointed governing board responsible for both schools, along with a clerk to the new governing board.

The Burghfield Common Federation Governing Board members will be selected for the skills, expertise and understanding they bring to benefit the strategic development of the federation of the two schools. Each governor will serve for an initial term of four years. The Burghfield Common Federation Governing Board will look to secure a membership which has a balance of knowledge and which regular interacts with both schools.

The relevant restrictions imposed by government regulations are:

- The executive headteacher is a governor
- The local authority nominates one governor, who is then appointed by the newly federated governing board
- There are no more than two elected parent governors
- There is one elected staff governor

It is proposed that the Burghfield Common Federation Governing Board will consist of up to 17 governors, as set out below;

Category of Governor	Number of Governors	Selection
Executive Head	1	Appointed due to their role
Local Authority governor	1	Nominated by West Berkshire Local Authority
Staff governor	1	Voted by staff. To ensure representation from both schools, a second staff governor would be voted for by the staff and selected as a co-opted governor.
Parent governor	2	Elected by the parents and carers registered at the two schools.
Co-opted governor	12	Appointed by the governing board and selected for the skills, expertise and understanding they will bring to

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		benefit the strategic development of the federation of the schools. The process of selection of co-opted governors is publicly available.
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The size of 17 was selected to ensure the board carries as much experience and knowledge from the two individual governing boards across to the Burghfield Common Federation as possible, with an odd number to assist in cases of close votes. It will also give increased availability for situations such as complaints and grievances, exclusion panels and performance management committees.

In addition to the above governing board structure, the Burghfield Common Federation Governing Board would be free to appoint additional associate members for specific roles and/or to sit on individual committees to offer their expertise and experience, but not to vote in full governing board meetings. The Heads of School will automatically be invited to be associate members of the Burghfield Common Federation Governing Board should they not be chosen as staff governors.

#### Committees

The following committees are proposed:

- Finance, Premises and Resources Committee consisting of seven members, which shall include the Executive Headteacher.
- Curriculum and Progress Committee consisting of seven members, which shall include the staff governors. Curriculum & Progress Committee members will be linked to specific areas of the curriculum and will meet with the subject leads at both schools.
- Executive Headteacher appraisal, pay, complaints and exclusions panels. These panels will consist of the most experienced governors available.

#### Governor and Associate Member Roles

It is proposed there should be governors or associate members linked to the following areas:

- Health & Safety
- Safeguarding
- Communications
- SEND
- Pupil Premium
- Staff and Pupil Wellbeing
- IT

#### Process

If the final decision of both governing boards is to federate, the process will be as follows;

- All existing members of both governing boards will resign, and the Burghfield Common Federation Governing Board will be formed.
- The Local Authority will select their nominated governor.
- A ballot will take place across both schools of parents and carers to appoint the parent governor positions.
- A ballot will take place of all staff across both schools to appoint the staff governor.

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- Federated governing board will elect a chair and vice chair of governors.
- The Burghfield Common Federation Governing Board will then meet to review the skills of the board in its new form and identify any skills or experience that are missing.
- Through a review process involving the whole board, volunteers will be appointed as co-opted governors.

#### **Advantages to a Federated Governing Board**

The shared governance structure of the new federation will give strategic oversight of primary education in Burghfield Common to achieve the highest educational standards possible and allow the two schools to:

- Work together much more efficiently and sustainably to raise standards, improve services and increase opportunities for pupils and staff.
- Ensure both schools retain their individual ethos and character.
- Monitor performance across both schools, with a clear structure of responsibility and accountability.
- Assure the curriculum and its implementation, identifying needs across both schools and the requirements of Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1, and Key Stage 2. Establish a shared curriculum statement that would enable themes and values to flow through the two schools.
- Monitor and encourage the sharing of resources, staff, expertise, and facilities between the two schools.
- Give oversight of the procedures and strategies for the transition of children between the two schools, ensuring the process is as seamless as possible.
- Allow for more cohesive and cost-effective financial planning, including the ability to identify projects and spending that could benefit both schools.

#### **H. Admission Arrangements**

The admission arrangements for each school will remain unchanged, with the West Berkshire admission policy and procedures being followed.

Parents/carers will continue to apply for a place for their child at the school of their choice, not at the Burghfield Common Federation, as each school within the Burghfield Common Federation will remain as a separate school. As always, a place at Garland must be applied for during Year 2 at Mrs Bland's.

#### **I. Consultation Period Timetable**

This consultation will start at **17:00 (5pm) on Fri 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023** and end strictly at **17:00 on Fri 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023**.

Open sessions for parents, staff and others within the wider community/stakeholders will be held at the schools and/or virtually. Further details of these meetings will be published on the websites of the two schools nearer the time, and notified to parents and carers on Parentmail.

Proposed staff only meeting/drop-in sessions are also being arranged.

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This consultation document and the Frequently Asked Questions are available from both schools' websites:

<http://www.mrsblandsinfants.co.uk>

<https://www.garlandjuniorschool.co.uk>

In addition, paper copies will be available at the school office of each school.

#### **J. How can you give your feedback?**

You can provide your feedback, whether for or against the proposal, in one of the following ways:

- Complete the attached form that is within this consultation document (Appendix 1) and return to either of the schools' offices. These should be in a sealed envelope and addressed to the Clerk of either governing board.
- Write directly to the school, addressing your letter to the Clerk of either governing board and either post or hand deliver to either school.
- Provide your response in an e-mail via the Clerk of either governing board, addressed either to [cclerk@mrsblands.w-berks.sch.uk](mailto:cclerk@mrsblands.w-berks.sch.uk) or [jthompson@garland.w-berks.sch.uk](mailto:jthompson@garland.w-berks.sch.uk) with the subject heading 'Federation Consultation'.
- If you have any questions prior to providing your feedback, please email the clerks at the email addresses above, or attend one of the planned open sessions.
- All documented feedback provided as above will be anonymised and collated so governors of both schools can consider every response submitted.

#### **K. What will happen after this consultation period?**

Upon completion of the consultation the two governing boards will meet to discuss the feedback, agree on any adjustments to the proposal, and make final votes on whether to proceed with the Federation. They will decide as separate governing boards whether to proceed with the proposal. If either school decides not to proceed with the proposed federation, then both schools will continue with individual governing boards and leadership teams.

The decision on whether to federate or not will affect the future direction of the two schools and the wider community in Burghfield Common, so we encourage you all to be part of the process and to have your voice heard.

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**Appendix 1 - Consultation Response Form**

**Proposal to federate Mrs Bland’s Infant School and Nursery and Garland Junior School**

Any responses must be received by the end of the consultation period – 17:00 on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Use the box below to share your comments on the proposed federation, having read this document.

Alternatively, you may wish to indicate which of the following most accurately reflects your views on this matter: -

I support the proposal

I do not support the proposal

I do not feel strongly one way or the other

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Category of respondent (e.g., parent, staff, resident, etc) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Once completed, please return (in a sealed envelope) to either:-

- The Clerk to the Governing Board c/o Mrs Bland's Infant and Nursery School, Jordan's Lane, Burghfield Common, Reading, RG7 3LP
  
- The Clerk to the Governing Board c/o Garland Junior School, Clayhill Road, Burghfield Common, Reading, Berkshire, RG7 3HG