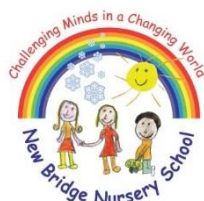


New Bridge and Caversham Nursery Schools and Blagdon Nursery School Federation Report

November 2019



Introduction

On 16th September 2019 the governors of Blagdon, Caversham and New Bridge Nursery Schools opened a consultation regarding the proposal to federate the three nurseries together as a Hard Federation under the Leadership of Executive Head Teacher, Mrs Joanne Budge.

An information pack was made available at each nursery school and was published on each nursery's website which covered: the background, the rationale, details of the proposal for the new governing body and the benefits of the federation.

Parents/carers of current children and those due to start in the new academic year, were invited to the consultation drop-in sessions at all three settings to enable them to ask any questions and raise any concerns with governors.

Staff at all settings also had the opportunity to discuss their questions and concerns with governors and with Joanne Budge.

Other stakeholders, including the Local Authority and Secretary of State for Education, also received the consultation documentation.

The consultation period ended on 28th October 2019.

We received 2 responses in favour of the proposal, and one response requesting more detailed information regarding staffing and funding levels across the nursery schools. See attached appendix.

The governing bodies from the three settings met on Tuesday 5th November 2019 to consider all the responses and questions raised. Responses were fully discussed, giving particular attention to the concern raised regarding staffing and funding levels, and the individual raising the question received a detailed response. It is anticipated that staffing and budgetary management will remain unchanged for the current school year. Governors are confident that staff will not be negatively impacted by federating the nurseries.

Having fully considered all the information gathered during the consultation, both governing bodies voted unanimously in favour of hard federating the three settings, with effect from 1st January 2020.

Appendix – Consultation Responses

From Councillor Ashley Pearce, Lead Councillor for Education, Reading Borough Council

Thanks for passing this consultation on regarding the federating of your nurseries which I am fully supportive of.

I have just answered a question at policy committee regarding the underfunding of maintained nursery schools from the Government and will continue to attempt to keep this in the public eye.

Also, if there is anything else I can help with, information, advice or requests of officers, please let me know.

From Councillor Adele Barnett-Ward, Councillor for Caversham

I support the proposal to federate Blagdon with Caversham and New Bridge Nursery schools. Reading's Nursery schools are a vital part of Reading's early years provision: they not only benefit the children enrolled in the nursery schools, but also support other providers through advice and sharing of best practice. The Government's changes to early years funding threatens the future of our Nursery schools so I welcome this proposal to save costs and share knowledge through federation.

I will of course continue to support the campaign for increased Nursery School funding that recognises the added value these settings provide to the communities they serve.

From a Caversham member of staff

Q1. How will the federation affect staff and will staff have the opportunity to work across all three schools?

A1. Continuity and consistency of staff working with children will remain a high priority. With regards to staff working directly with children, we would like to offer them the opportunities to share any expertise they have with other staff whilst remaining a key person. (This may involve a morning or afternoon at another nursery upskilling staff or running a workshop at an INSET day or attending a staff meeting at another nursery) It does NOT mean that staff will be changing schools on a daily basis. Staff would NOT be forced to work in other schools. We see this as a positive opportunity for staff to build and share their expertise in a wider environment. Any new staff appointed over time would be appointed by the federation and may have a clause in their contract about working across schools. Some admin staff (for example School Business Managers) may be required to work across the 3 schools.

From a Caversham Nursery School Parent

Q1. Will these proposed changes affect all rooms in the nursery ie discovers, adventures etc?

A1. There are no proposed changes to how individual rooms within each school will work.

Q2. With the proposed idea of sharing staff how will you ensure continuity and consistency of staff in one room?

How much choice will staff have in where they are placed as my thoughts are staff happiness will impact on their work and staff retention.

A2. Continuity and consistency of staff working with children will remain a high priority. With regards to staff working directly with children, we would like to offer them the opportunities to share any expertise they have with other staff whilst remaining a key person. (This may involve a morning or afternoon at another nursery upskilling staff or running a workshop at an INSET day or attending a staff meeting at another nursery) It does NOT mean that staff will be changing schools on a daily basis. Staff would NOT be forced to work in other schools. We see this as a positive opportunity for staff to build and share their expertise in a wider environment. Any new staff appointed over time would be appointed by the federation and may have a clause in their contract about working across schools. Some admin staff (for example School Business Mangers) may be required to work across the 3 schools.

Q3. With the proposed idea of sharing resources and ultimately a shared budget (although not initially) if necessary, how will you mitigate against one nursery with higher needs due to local socio economic factors using more of the budget?

A3. Each school would continue to use the money allocated to them by the Local Authority (funded places) or the parents (private places) within each school. Money may be pooled to buy larger items e.g. training, software, a specialist member of staff or specific resources that can be rotated across the nurseries.

Q4. With regards to funded/free places how many are offered at each nursery for 2, 3 and 4 year olds? How will it be ensured that the money for paid places does not go to subsidising free places at other nurseries and this will instead be invested back into the child's nursery and that parent costs won't rise?

A4. Two of the schools only offer funded places and this will remain unchanged.. One school that offers both funded and private places will continue to do so. School budgets are overseen and approved by the Governors to ensure they are spent appropriately.