



## Castle-Newnham and Hazeldene Federation Frequently Asked Questions

**This set of questions covers issues critical to the consultation about the proposed federation between three schools. They are the 'big' questions that enable stakeholders to get a good view of the main issues but will develop over time as further questions come to light.**

### **1. What is a federation?**

A federation is defined in law as two or more maintained schools operating under the governance of a single governing body. The statutory context for federations is the Education Act 2002, The School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2007 and The School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2012.

### **2. Why is federation being pursued?**

This is for two main reasons. Firstly, to improve educational outcomes, which will be achieved by minimising transition between schools and reducing the impact this has on pupil progress. Secondly, educational outcomes will be enhanced by ensuring consistently high-quality teaching and learning across the schools. Federation enables shared governance and leadership which will ensure a one-school approach, stability and the certainty for parents that when a pupil starts in reception their route all the way through to GCSE is clear.

### **3. What is the timescale for the proposed changes?**

This consultation is about federation which is proposed for January 2016. There will be further consultation in the Autumn once federation is formally agreed on the changes to age-range. The idea is that from September 2017 pupils moving into Year 5 who wish to do so will stay at Hazeldene for a further two years. Also in September 2017 pupils at Castle who wish to do so will automatically transfer to Year 5 on the Newnham site as part of the same all-through school. Both sets of pupils will be able to carry on their education to 16 in a secondary provision on the Newnham site and the first group of pupils to be able to take advantage of this is the current Year 6 once they reach Year 9 in 2017. The first group of current Hazeldene pupils will transfer to secondary education on the Newnham site in 2019 when they join Year 7.

**4. What are the terms used in describing the different phases of education and how does this fit with the proposed federation?**

	Key Stage	Year	Age	Testing
NURSERY			3-4	
PRIMARY	1	Reception	4-5	Baseline testing
	1	Year 1	5-6	Phonics screening
	1	Year 2	6-7	Key Stage 1 SATs
	2	Year 3	7-8	
	2	Year 4	8-9	
	2	Year 5	9-10	
	2	Year 6	10-11	Key Stage 2 SATs
SECONDARY	3	Year 7	11-12	
	3	Year 8	12-13	
	3	Year 9	13-14	
	4	Year 10	14-15	
	4	Year 11	15-16	GCSE

Each school will have its own separate nursery. Hazeldene will cover the primary phase from age 4-11. The all-through school (Castle-Newnham) will cover the primary and secondary phases from age 4-16. Hazeldene children will be able to join the all-through school in Year 7.

**5. Why are Castle, Hazeldene and Newnham in the federation?**

Castle, Hazeldene and Newnham are maintained schools. This means they are funded by the local education authority (Bedford Borough). As three Bedford Borough Schools they share a common ethos and set of values. All three schools believe that high expectations for all children within a school where staff know and value each individual child and family lead to the best possible outcomes and a happy experience of school. This common outlook has been evident throughout our discussions and our decision to propose a hard federation for Castle and Newnham and a soft federation with Hazeldene.

**6. Will the federated schools have a new name?**

Both Castle and Newnham have long established names, well known in the local community. Any change of name would be a matter of consultation with the respective school communities. Hazeldene will continue to be known as Hazeldene School.

**7. Can parents choose a different school if they wish to?**

They can. The federation expands the options open to parents. The federation provides the certainty of a place for a pupil all the way through to GCSE but if parents wish to send their child to another school whether that's a primary, middle, a secondary or an independent school that is their choice.

**8. How will children transferring from Hazeldene or elsewhere into Year 7 be integrated successfully?**

The all-through school (Castle-Newnham) and Hazeldene will work closely together throughout the primary phase so that Hazeldene pupils are familiar with staff, buildings and future classmates before they reach Year 7. Towards the end of Year 6 there will be specific opportunities for transition activities which will also be open to any pupils and families joining us from other schools at this point. Induction in Year 7 will include mixed classes and team-building activities.

**9. Will the schools retain their existing individual character in the federation?**

They will. The federation will combine the considerable strengths from each of the three existing schools and build and develop those strengths.

**10. Are schools in a federation inspected separately or jointly?**

While schools in a federation are inspected separately Ofsted can inspect schools at the same time in order to form a rounded picture of the work of a federation. The existing inspections - outstanding and good - will be retained until the next inspection. The aim will be to develop educational excellence throughout the federation and for this to be recognised by Ofsted as well as by the local community.

**11. How will arrangements work in practice?**

Hazeldene, like Castle has been interested in becoming a primary for a while. However, unlike Castle, Hazeldene already has the capacity to accommodate the two additional years required to change from a lower school into a primary (years 5 and 6). Thus the federation enables Hazeldene to retain its years 5 and year 6 pupils who, when they reach year 7, will then transfer to the Newnham site to for their year 7-11 education up to GCSE.

**12. How will the schools be led?**

There will be a new, single governing body for the Castle/Newnham all-through school. The all-through school will be led by a Headteacher who will work closely with two heads of school (one based in and responsible for each site) below which there will be a unified senior leadership and teaching and learning staffing structure. Hazeldene will operate as at present with its own governing body, Headteacher and staff but it will strengthen its existing teaching and learning ties with the Castle-Newnham all-through school.

**13. How will the federation ensure that there is sufficient secondary knowledge and experience to teach up to GCSE among the team of staff?**

There are already senior staff and others at Newnham with substantial secondary experience to age 16 and beyond, including the Headteacher. Recent appointments have boosted this experience further and, as the team grows and develops, the ability to teach subjects to GCSE will be a consideration in recruitment. The three-year lead-in before GCSE courses are introduced will enable currently less-experienced staff to prepare through training, partnership working with other successful schools and / or secondments and periods of work-shadowing, as present commitments allow. Newnham has been very successful in recruiting high-quality staff across the range of phases and subjects and we believe that the federation and the opportunities it offers will be a big attraction in future to the recruitment of additional high-quality staff wishing to teach either in the primary or the secondary phase.

**14. Is this a takeover?**

No, this is a development of two schools (Castle and Newnham) and a commitment from them with Hazeldene to develop and build on their respective strengths.

**15. What's in it for Castle, Hazeldene and Newnham?**

Federation presents an opportunity to improve existing provision. Currently responsibility for Key Stage 2 and 3 teaching is split between a range of lower, middle and upper schools. The federation will enable full responsibility and accountability for pupils' progress throughout. It will also ensure that all the hard work that staff currently put into Key Stage 2 can be taken through to the Key Stage 2 SATs that take place in Year 6, on to Key Stage 3 and right through to GCSEs. The commitment to children and their learning and progress will be sustained throughout.

**16. Are the sites suitable?**

Yes. Newnham was built and opened as a secondary school. The separate Year 5 Annex was added later and will be ideal as an additional primary provision for the all-through school (Years 5 and 6). The Borough Council has encouraged schools to think about and plan for their future and, as three maintained schools, the federation will work with the Borough Council to attract funding to further enhance the sites. All three sites are suitable for what is being planned.

**17. How is having Year 5-11 on the same site going to work?**

The significant advantage of the federation is that its all-through nature will ease transition between educational phases. Each existing site lends itself to specific age ranges with the added advantage for the primary phase of being able to access some of the specialist facilities of a secondary school. Pastoral care will be provided through primary class-based teaching all the way through to year 6 and, with a clearly defined secondary curriculum from Year 7, pupils will be very well prepared to choose options for GCSE.

One of the longstanding attractions for parents of the Newnham site is the separate annex mentioned above which traditionally is the starting point for all Year 5 pupils. With minor modifications the annex will accommodate all year 5 and year 6 provision (other than specialist provision such as science, music and sport) so forming a discrete unit on the Newnham site with its own reception, entrance and play area.

**18. Would classes in a year group be on two sites?**

No.

**19. Will teachers be expected to work on both sites during the school week**

No, though meetings and training activity will rotate between the sites. Teachers may be re-allocated to a different class at the start of a school year, as is presently the case.

**20. How will budgets be managed?**

The schools will continue to be funded as separate bodies through Bedford Borough's funding formula. The single governing body for the Castle/Newnham all-through school will have responsibility for planning the use of all funds allocated across the federation.

**21. How will admission arrangements work?**

The Castle-Newnham federation and Hazeldene school will publish and consult on new admission criteria. Pupils at Castle and Hazeldene will be guaranteed entry to the secondary provision and others will also be able to access provision subject to the availability of places.

**22. Will nursery provision be retained on the Castle and Hazeldene sites?**

Yes. Nursery provision and arrangements will not change.

**23. How is this going to be financed?**

This will be through a combination of approaches. Efficiency savings and economies of scale will play a part. Adaptation to buildings – which are relatively modest- will be spread over a number of years as the all-through school evolves. As three maintained schools the federation will work closely with Bedford Borough Council to seek and secure additional sources of funding to pay for these adaptations over time.

**24. What is the expected impact on staffing?**

The impact on recruitment and retention of staff is expected to be very positive as most teacher training in England is geared towards “primary” or “secondary” teaching. As the federation and the age range of the all-through school develops there will be staffing changes and recruitment needs. But as this will be spread over a number of years and across the three schools we expect this to be an overwhelmingly positive development for staff in terms of the shared working and professional development opportunities.

**25. What will the secondary curriculum look like?**

Key Stage 3 pupils (Years 7, 8 and 9) will continue to follow the National Curriculum. A range of additional options will be added for Key Stage 4 up to GCSE following consultation with pupils and parents. The secondary curriculum will be broad and balanced but focused strongly on traditional subjects. Newnham already has an excellent reputation in sports and the creative arts and will aim to develop these as well as extend its languages provision which is already a regional hub. The all-through school will continue to embrace the advantages brought by new technologies in supporting teaching and learning. The extra-curricular offer will become even more extensive as the staff group and their various interests and expertise grows and diversifies.

**26. What about post 16 provision?**

Bedford is already well served with 6th form and other post-16 places so governors and staff will be working positively with those providers as the federation develops through to GCSE. Our curriculum offer will serve pupils well in choosing which of Bedford's existing provision they wish to move on to.

**27. What will the school logo/uniform be?**

They will stay the same for the immediate future. The federation will involve pupils and parents in the design and development of a new logo and uniform for the all-through school. Hazeldene's uniform and logos will not change.

**28. Will there be joint events such as sports days and concerts?**

Each site will continue to host a wide range of events as at present but, as a federation, we will take advantage of the opportunity to plan and organise joint events too, extending opportunity for pupils and staff alike.

**29. Can children from other middle schools join the school at Year 9?**

Yes, subject to places being available.

**30. What role would the school council have?**

The federation provides a really good opportunity to develop one school council. One of the strengths of an all-through school is the opportunity it provides for older and younger pupils to work with each other to the benefit of both as demonstrated by the existing arrangements between the schools.