North Yorkshire Council

Children and Young People's Service

Corporate Director Meeting with Executive Member

9 September 2025

Proposals for revised school organisation arrangements requested by federated governing boards of primary schools in North Yorkshire

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report provides information about the current school organisation arrangements that are being operated by several primary school federations within the county, and the action that is proposed by the following federated governing boards to ensure compliance 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 regulations'). In the following three cases the proposals made by the federated governing boards will require that consultation is undertaken:

- BAWB (Bainbridge, Askrigg and West Burton) Federation
- Reeth and Gunnerside Schools Federation
- The Federation of Middleham (VA) & Spennithorne (VC) CE Primary Schools

1.2 The report also provides information about a proposal made by the Federated Governing Board of the Synergy Schools Federation to amalgamate Aiskew, Leeming Bar Church of England Primary School and Leeming and Londonderry Community Primary School with effect from April 2026. This proposal will also require that a consultation is undertaken.

1.3 The report seeks the Executive Member's approval for four consultation exercises to be undertaken relating to the proposals made by the above federated governing boards.

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 This report provides information about the alternative school organisation models that have been considered by each governing board, and the proposals that have been made for the future school organisation arrangements within each of the federations.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 The DfE's guidance, 'Federations: guidance on the governance processes' defined a federation as 'two or more maintained schools operating under the governance of a single governing body' but identified that each school within a federation is treated as an individual school, including for admissions purposes.

3.2 Through the provision of a formal framework for collaborative working for schools, federations have been identified as providing the potential for a range of benefits including shared governance and leadership, enhanced educational opportunities and resource efficiency.

3.3 The following four federations within North Yorkshire further developed their models to include at least some cross-federation class structures. These involve pupils in one or more-year groups from within each of the federated schools being educated at schools that the individual pupils are not registered. In each case the federated governing board provided transport for some pupils to move between the schools involved in the federation. These federations are:

- BAWB (Bainbridge, Askrigg and West Burton) Federation
- Reeth and Gunnerside Schools Federation
- The Federation of Follifoot and Spofforth CE Primary Schools
- The Federation of Middleham (VA) & Spennithorne (VC) CE Primary Schools

3.4 The federated governing boards established these arrangements in response to falling roll numbers, and the arrangements have been successful in enabling the federated schools to achieve efficiencies whilst continuing to offer a broad and balanced curriculum to all pupils.

3.5 During summer 2024, the council received legal advice that the models that had been established by the federations noted above were 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.

3.6 This advice was provided to each of the federated governing boards with a request that they consider the school organisation options available to them and make proposals for their future organisation which would take account of local circumstances including transport, school funding arrangements and which would enable compliance with the regulations to be achieved.

3.7 Each federated governing board were requested to consider the four school organisation models that are described in Section 4 below and were provided with indicative school funding models that set out the potential impact upon the federation's budget arising from each of the options. They were asked to develop a proposal which represented a sustainable solution for the federation whilst enabling them to achieve compliance with the admissions and registration regulations.

3.8 In addition to the above, the Council has also received a proposal from the Governing Board of the Synergy Federation for the amalgamation of Aiskew, Leeming Bar Church of England Primary School and Leeming and Londonderry Community Primary School with effect from April 2026. This proposal has been made in response to low pupil numbers on the roll of each school, and to provide a basis for the continued improvement of the educational provision for pupils. The schools are already compliant with admissions and registration requirements.

4.0 SCHOOL ORGANISATION OPTIONS CONSIDERED TO ACHIEVE COMPLIANCE WITH THE ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRATION REGULATIONS

4.1 The Council advised the federated governing boards of the following potential solutions to enable compliance to be achieved:

- Continue as separate primary schools with pupils receiving their education at the school at which they are registered
- Establishing one primary school at one of the existing school sites, closing one school
- Establishing one primary school to operate from the existing sites through amalgamation; or
- Restructuring the primary schools to establish separate infant and junior schools to operate from the existing sites.

4.2 Each of the four governing boards reviewed each of the options prior to reaching a conclusion about their preferred option, taking account of the specific circumstances that applied to the schools in their federation.

4.3 The table below provides a summary of the issues considered: -

Description	
1.Continue as two separate primary schools.	This option would require teaching all seven primary groups in each primary school, with all pupils receiving their education at the school at which they are registered.
2. Become one primary school on one of the sites.	This option, which would involve school closure, and all pupils being educated at the remaining school (subject to parental choice). The continuing school would receive funding as a single school in accordance with the usual school funding arrangements.
3. Become one school across several sites.	This option would involve the amalgamation of the federated schools into a single primary school that could operate at more than one site. It would require the technical closure of the other school. The continuing school would receive funding as a single school in accordance with the usual arrangements, and the funding would include an element of split site funding.
4. Restructure as separate infant and junior schools.	This fourth option involves the retention of separate schools but with revised age ranges and a transition at age 7, between two schools (subject to parental preferencing). The schools would receive funding in accordance with the usual arrangements but with smaller age ranges available for admissions.

4.4 Having undertaken a detailed appraisal of the options for the future organisational arrangements of their schools, as detailed above, and having reviewed a range of implications arising from each option, including financial implications, the Governing Boards of three of the federations have requested that the Council undertake consultations on their proposals to restructure into separate infant and junior schools.

5.0 EACH FEDERATIONS' CONSIDERATION OF THE OPTIONS AND THE PROPOSALS MADE BY THE FEDERATED GOVERNING BOARDS

5.1 The federated governing boards considered each of the options identified above and submitted the linked proposals set out below for consideration:

5.2 <u>BAWB (Bainbridge, Askrigg and West Burton) Federation</u>

The Federated Governing Board of BAWB suspended teaching at West Burton Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School with effect from September 2024, due to the low number of pupils on roll at the school for the academic year 2024-2025. Pupils registered at the school continued to be educated at the other schools within the federation.

The table below provides a summary of the Federated Governing Board's conclusions:

Description	Why was the option <u>Discounted</u> or <u>Recommended</u>?	Result

1.Continue as three separate primary schools.	The Governing Board did not consider there to be sufficient pupils on roll at the schools for this to be a viable option.	Discounted
2. Become one primary school on one of the sites.	The Governing Board concluded that there would be insufficient space on one school site for the full age range, including nursery provision.	Discounted
3. Become one school across two or three sites.	Utilising the indicative financial model provided by the council, the 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 and close one school	The 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 solution than Option 3 above. The Governing Board concluded that it should propose that West Burton CofE (VC) should be closed, and that the proposed infant and junior schools should be established at the other two sites. The Governing Board noted that either school may not be the nearest suitable school (for transport eligibility purposes) for all children living in the proposed joint catchment area.	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 processes to enable them to be implemented.

The the following linked proposals have been requested for consideration by the Council:

- That West Burton Church of England (VC) Primary School should be closed (this is detailed further below, in section 6 of this report)
- That the age range of Bainbridge Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School should be changed from 3-11 to 3-7 such that it should become Bainbridge Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Infant and Nursery School
- That the age range of Askrigg Voluntary Controlled Primary School should be changed from 4-11 to 7-11, such that it should become Askrigg Voluntary Controlled Junior School;
- That the two remaining schools should have a shared catchment area that comprises an amalgamation of the current catchment areas of the three schools.
- To establish a Published Admissions Number (PAN) of 15 at each of the two schools
- That the proposal be implemented from 1 September 2026

5.3 Federation of Follifoot and Spofforth Schools

The table below provides a summary of the federated governing board's conclusions arising from their consideration of the options:

Description	Why was the option Discounted or Recommended?	Outcome
1.Continue as two separate primary schools.	The Federated Governing Board considered that this was the most suitable option, but noted the requirement for works to be completed at Follifoot CofE (VC) Primary School to enable Reception aged pupils to receive their education the school.	Recommended
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.	The Federated Governing Board did not consider this to be a suitable proposal.	Discounted

Currently children in reception class are registered at Follifoot but are educated alongside their peers in Spofforth. The Federated Governing Board have advised the council that it is their intention to undertake works at Follifoot CofE (VC) Primary School to achieve compliance with the regulations by providing their Follifoot registered reception pupils with their education at the Follifoot school site in the summer term of 2026, this will support their transition into Year 1. All new pupils after this date will be educated at the site at which they are registered.

This change will not require that a statutory process is undertaken and does not require the council to take any further action.

5.4 Reeth and Gunnerside Schools Federation

Description	Why was the option Discounted or Recommended?	Result
1.Continue as two separate primary schools.	The 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 Governing Board concluded that there would be insufficient space on one school site for the full age range, including nursery provision.	Discounted
3. Become one school	Utilising the indicative financial model provided by the council, the Governing Board identified that this option would result in a significant	Discounted

across two sites.	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.	
4. Restructure as separate infant and junior schools.	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. 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.	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.

Arising from their consideration of the options the Federated Governing Board have submitted the following linked proposals for consideration by the Council:

- That the age range of Reeth Community Primary School is changed from 4-11 to 4-7, such that the school becomes Reeth Community Infant School
- That the age range Gunnerside Methodist (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School is changed from 4-11 to 7-11, such that the school becomes Gunnerside Methodist (Voluntary Controlled) Junior School
- That the schools would have a shared catchment area, comprising an amalgamation of the existing schools' current catchment areas; and
- The Local Authority approves through its discretion a 'nearest gate in the federation' policy for home school transport, which would be conditional upon the federation continuing to provide support with inter-school transport where that is required.
- To establish a Published Admissions Number (PAN) of 15 at each of the two schools
- That the proposal be implemented from 1 September 2026

5.5 <u>The Federation of Middleham (VA) & Spennithorne (VC) CE Primary Schools</u>

The table below provides a summary of the Federated Governing Board's conclusions arising from their consideration of the options:

Description	Why was the option <u>Discounted</u> or <u>Recommended</u>?	Result
1.Continue as two separate primary schools.	The 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 Governing Board concluded that there would be insufficient space on one school site for the full age range, including nursery provision.	Discounted

3. Become one school across two sites.	Utilising the indicative financial model provided by the council, the 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.	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. 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.	The Governing Board requested that the Council undertake consultation of a proposal to establish this option on the basis of the linked proposals below.

Arising from their consideration of the options the Federated Governing Board have submitted the following linked proposals for consideration by the Council:

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

5.7 School organisation proposals for Church of England schools would also require approval from the Diocesan Board of Education, and for Gunnerside Methodist Primary School from the Methodist Church.

6.0 The Proposed Closure of West Burton Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School

6.1 West Burton Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School is a rural school. The DfE's guidance (Opening and closing maintained schools. Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers, October 2024) notes that decision makers are expected to adopt a presumption against the closure of rural schools. However, the guidance confirmed that this does not mean that a rural school will never close but that the case for

closure should be strong and clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area.

6.2 The school has a capacity for 51 pupils and there are currently 14 pupils on the school's roll.

6.3 In 2013 Askrigg and Bainbridge schools formed a collaboration and in 2014 West Burton joined the collaboration. In 2016, the BAWB Federation was created and "BAWB" refers to the first letter of each school name. Due to the organisation arrangements that were implemented by the Federation, 22 pupils received their education at the school and the remaining pupils were transported to the other schools within the federation, where they received their education alongside peers from other schools. West Burton Church of England Primary School was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2023 which judged the overall effectiveness of the school to be Good.

6.4 The BAWB Federation's Governing Board temporarily suspended teaching at the West Burton Church of England (VC) Primary School site with effect from 1 September 2024, and transported pupils registered at the school to either the Bainbridge or Askrigg sites, according to their age. This decision was taken because of the low numbers on the school roll, and because of issues associated with the transport of pupils between the various school sites, this included a loss of learning time within in the school day. The Federated Governing Board considered that the decision was necessary to ensure the continued provision of high-quality education within the federation.

6.5 There are currently three neighbouring schools located within 10 miles of West Burton Primary School, including the two federation schools at Askrigg and Bainbridge. Across the three schools there is a combined net capacity of 163 places but there is currently a total of 85 surplus places.

6.6 As noted above, the Federated Governing Board's proposal regarding the closure of West Burton Church of England (VC) Primary School forms part of a series of linked proposals which includes a proposal for the school's catchment area to be combined with those of Bainbridge and Askrigg.

6.7 The council will engage with the parents of all pupils who are registered on West Burton's roll to discuss the requirement for them to apply for an alternative school place should a closure be agreed, including if it is their intention to transfer to either of the proposed infant or junior schools in the federation.

6.8 The school site is wholly owned by a charitable trust and will revert to the trust if a decision is made for it to close.

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

7.1 The Federated Governing Board of Middleham (VA) & Spennithorne (VC) CE Primary Schools has requested that the category of Spennithorne Church of England School is changed from Voluntary Controlled to Voluntary Aided as part of a series of linked school organisation proposals.

7.2 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 easier;
- the inspection processes under the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools framework would be more aligned.

7.3 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.

7.4 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 board under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE).

7.5 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% statutory contribution to all capital works funded from school condition allocation funding or Devolved Formula Capital.

8.0 How will the federated schools operate?

8.1 In all cases, the federated governing boards have confirmed their intention to continue to operate as federations in order that they can continue to derive the benefits associated with doing so, and which are identified at 3.2 above.

8.2 Under the proposed new structure, children would be taught at the school in which they are registered within the BAWB (Bainbridge, Askrigg and West Burton) Federation, Reeth and Gunnerside Schools Federation, and The Federation of Middleham (VA) & Spennithorne (VC) CE Primary Schools. the following would also apply:

8.3 <u>Transition</u>

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.

8.4 <u>Admissions</u>

Pupils on roll at the infant school would not automatically transfer to the 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.

Admissions to maintained and voluntary controlled schools would continue to be managed by the local authority in accordance with its admission policy for community and voluntary

controlled schools. The governing bodies of voluntary aided schools would continue to control their own admissions.

8.5 Maintained Schools with a Religious Designation

Schools changing their age range would retain their existing status (community, voluntary controlled or voluntary aided) and those which currently have a religious designation would retain this.

8.6 Admissions Catchment Areas

Under the proposals, the infant and junior schools within each federation would serve the catchment areas which are currently separately served by each primary school. For this reason, the catchment areas within each federation would be merged, with each extended to include the other.

8.7 Home to school travel implications

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 individual proposals.

Each federation has asked that special considerations or discretion be given to pupils already on roll at the point that consultation is 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 BAWB (Bainbridge, Askrigg and West Burton) Federation, Reeth and Gunnerside Schools Federation and The Federation of Middleham (VA) & Spennithorne (VC) CE 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.

The tables below identify the expected number of pupils within each federation by year group, and who have been assessed as having eligibility for assistance with home to school travel from their existing home address to the school at which they are registered (i.e. under either the 2019 Home to School Transport Policy or the 2024 Home to School Travel Policy).

BAWB Federation – Sept 2025

Year Group	Askrigg CE	Bainbridge CE	Total
Reception		1	1
Y1	2	1	3
Y2	1	6	7
Y3	2	2	4
Y4		5	5

Y5	2	1	3
Y6	3	4	7
Total	**10**	**20**	**30**

Reeth and Gunnerside Schools Federation – Sept 2025

Year Group	Reeth Community Primary School	Gunnerside	Total
Reception	6	5	11
Y1	5	4	9
Y2	6		6
Y3	7	5	12
Y4	2	1	3
Y5	6	5	11
Y6	3	5	8
Total	**35**	**25**	**60**

The Federation of Middleham (VA) & Spennithorne (VC) CE Primary Schools – Sept 2025

Year Group	Middleham CE (VA) Primary School	Spennithorne CE VC Primary School	Total
Reception	2		2
Y1	2	1	3
Y2	1	4	5
Y3	2		2
Y4	1	3	4
Y5	2		2
Y6	2		2
Total	**12**	**8**	**20**

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.

8.8 Sites and Buildings

The Federated Governing Board of Follifoot and Spofforth CE Primary Schools has noted the requirement for works to be completed at Follifoot CofE (VC) Primary School to enable Reception aged pupils to receive their education the school.

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 land adjoining Spennithorne CE Primary School is Trustees of the Ferrand Family Irrevocable Trust.

There would be no necessity for landlord consent for a change of age range at Askrigg. The landlord, Yorebridge Educational Foundation, recently signed a lease agreement with NYC from 1/04/2024 – 31/03/2049. 'The Authorised Use' of the premises is educational use only, with no specific mention of age-range.

The West Burton Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary site is managed but not owned by the Council. The absence of any information in the NYC deed packet would

indicate that the whole site is owned by a trust. A note from 1989 states that the deeds for the school are held by the Church Authority.

8.9 Learning and Progress

In each case the federated governing boards have 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 taught 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 the governing board and approval of local authority officers, schools within federations can continue to request to amalgamate budgets.

8.10 Pupil Numbers and Proposed Published Admission Numbers (PANs)

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.

8.10.1 BAWB Federation

As of January 2025, there were 44 pupils registered at Bainbridge Church of England Primary School, 14 pupils registered at West Burton Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary and 33 pupils registered at Askrigg Voluntary Controlled Primary School. These numbers do not reflect pupils being educated at the three schools, since teaching is currently grouped 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	Bainbridge Infant	Askrigg Junior	Bainbridge Infant	Askrigg Junior
Reception	11		11	
Year 1	10		11	
Year 2	5		10	
Year 3		16		5
Year 4		12		16
Year 5		10		12
Year 6		10		10
Total	26*	48	32*	43
Potential 9 further pupils from 35 houses with existing permissions and 35 Local Plan houses				+9

Based on May 2025 school census and assumes all pupils currently enrolled at West Burton CE transfer to Askrigg or Bainbridge

*Not including nursery pupils

Currently, the PAN of Bainbridge Church of England Primary School is 12, the PAN of West Burton Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary is 12 and the PAN at Askrigg Voluntary Controlled Primary School is 12. Given the pupil forecast of circa 11 Reception pupils across the Federation, it is not proposed to combine these individual PANs to make a combined PAN of 36. Instead, it is proposed to increase the PANs at the retained Askrigg and Bainbridge sites to 15 allowing choice for parents and accommodating all children within the buildings, which have net capacities of 79 and 84 places respectively. The proposed PANs of 15 would accommodate combining three Reception intakes and takes account of future pupil projections.

It is important to ensure sufficient school places in the local area. BAWB schools are currently in the Outer Wensleydale school place planning area and, even with the proposed closure of West Burton CE, there would remain surplus spaces in the locality.

8.10.2 Reeth and Gunnerside Schools Federation

As of January 2025, there were 58 pupils registered at Reeth Community Primary School and 35 pupils registered at Gunnerside Methodist (Voluntary Controlled) 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	Reeth Infant	Gunnerside Junior	Reeth Infant	Gunnerside Junior
Reception	15		15	
Year 1	18		15	
Year 2	11		18	
Year 3		17		11
Year 4		13		17
Year 5		6		13
Year 6		18		6
Total	44	54	48	47
Potential +9 pupils from 35 houses with existing permissions and 0 Local Plan houses				+9

Based on May 2025 school census

Currently, the PAN of Reeth is 8 and the PAN of Gunnerside is 7. It is proposed to increase the PANs at both schools to 15. This increase is to accommodate combining two Reception intakes and takes account of future pupil projections.

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

8.10.3 Pupil Numbers and Proposed PANs at the Federation of Spennithorne and Middleham

As of 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 grouped together by year 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

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. This increase is to accommodate combining two Reception intakes and takes account of future pupil projections.

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.

9.0 The Proposal to Amalgamate Aiskew, Leeming Bar Church of England Primary and Leeming and Londonderry Community Primary Schools

9.1.1 Aiskew, Leeming Bar Church of England Primary and Leeming and Londonderry Primary Schools are part of the Synergy Schools Federation, which is a federation of six primary schools within North Yorkshire, for which governance is provided via a single federated governing board and leadership by an Executive Headteacher. The schools, which have adjacent catchment areas serving the Leeming area, south of Bedale, joined the federation in 2024 and 2021 respectively.

9.2 Both schools have low numbers of pupils on roll. Aiskew Leeming Bar has a net capacity of 103 places, with 47 pupils on roll in the May 2025 census, while Leeming and Londonderry has a net capacity of 56 places, with 24 pupils on roll in the May 2025 pupil census. Both operate similar two class structures that involve Reception and Key Stage 1 cohorts being educated in one class, and Key Stage 2 children in other classes.

9.3 Following the incorporation of Aiskew, Leeming Bar Church of England Primary School into the Synergy Federation work has been undertaken to improve the quality of the education provision within both schools and the federated governing board have undertaken consideration of alternative models for the organisation of the schools to allow for further improvement in learning.

10.0 School Organisation Options Considered by the Federated Governing Board

10.1 The board have considered the following options for the future organisation of their two schools: -

- Continue as two separate 4-11 primary schools with pupils receiving their education at the school at which they are registered
- Establishing one primary school at one of the existing school sites, eg close Leeming and Londonderry.
- Establishing one primary school to operate from both existing sites; and

10.2 The 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.

10.3 The table below provides a summary of the issues considered:

Description	Why was the option Discounted or Recommended?	Result
1.Continue as two separate primary schools.	This option would involve all year groups, from Reception to Year 6, in both schools. An advantage of this option is that no parents or children are unsettled. However, pupils are taught in whole key stage classes, with multiple year groups in one class and socialisation with similar aged peers is not improved. Curriculum is more limited that in classes with smaller age-ranges. The Governing Board did not consider that there are sufficient pupils on roll at either school for this to be a viable option, and it was agreed that this would have the potential to have a negative impact upon the quality of the schools' educational provision.	Discounted
2. Become one primary school on one of the sites.	This second option would involve the closure of one school. Teaching all pupils in one building with larger peer groups would enable peer group teaching and selection of the site at Aiskew would give pupils better access to outside space. However, the federation board considered that there would not be adequate space on either site for the age range, which would now include nursery aged children. The option would also result in a significant reduction in the revenue received compared to that currently received by the federation which the governing board considered would have a detrimental impact. In particular, it would mean that a proposed new structure of four classes would not be affordable.	Discounted
3. Become one school across two sites.	This option involves amalgamating into a 4 –11 Primary School, with a governor led nursery, across the two existing sites, with the technical closure of one school and the expansion onto an additional site of the other school. The federation board noted a joint catchment area could be served and that this option would gain	The Governing Board requested that the Council undertake consultation

	split site funding which would result in a smaller reduction in revenue received compared to Option 2. This would mean that the new class structure of four classes could be afforded. With only two-year groups in each class, teaching all pupils in larger peer groups would help their socialisation. With the two sites there could be space to extend early years provision and operate a pre-school.	of a proposal to establish this option.

10.4 Having undertaken a detailed appraisal of the options for the future organisational arrangements of the schools, as detailed above, and reviewed a range of implications, the Governing Board has requested that the Council undertake a consultation on their proposal to amalgamate Leeming and Londonderry Community Primary School and Aiskew Leeming Bar Church of England Primary School.

11.0 The Federated Governing Board's Proposal

11.1 The Federated Governing Board have proposed the following: -

- That Aiskew Leeming Bar Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School and Leeming and Londonderry Community Primary School amalgamate with effect from 13 April 2026
- That this would be achieved through the technical closure of Leeming and Londonderry Community Primary School and the expansion of Aiskew Leeming Bar Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School onto an additional site (the Leeming and Londonderry School site)
- 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 15

11.2 Under the proposed new structure, all children would be registered at the primary school but the governor led nursery and Reception children would be taught in the EYFS classes at the Leeming and Londonderry site. Another 3 classes, consisting of Year 1 & 2 children in one class, Years 3 & 4 in another, and Y5 & 6 children in another, would be taught at the Aiskew Leeming Bar site. The single primary school would continue to be funded and supported by the local authority with staff employed by the local authority.

11.3 Pupils would transfer from one site to the other at the start of Year 1 via a managed transition. Teachers would be better able to plan for the change and develop a better understanding of the needs of pupils in different key stages within the context of an amalgamated school.

11.4 Under the amalgamation proposal there would also be the flexibility to change the age of transfer at the beginning of an academic year, should pupil numbers dictate

11.5 Currently each school has a separate Ofsted inspection, but the single school would have a single Ofsted inspection.

11.6 An important part of the proposal is that the single primary school would remain part of Synergy Schools, under a single federated governing board and would continue to be led by an Executive Headteacher. Admissions to the school would be managed by the local authority in accordance with its admission policy for community and voluntary controlled schools.

11.7 <u>A Maintained School with a Religious Designation</u>

The Federated Governing Board have proposed that Aiskew, Leeming Bar Church of England Primary School would be the continuing school. As a result, the amalgamated school would retain the existing denominational status and would be a voluntary controlled school with a Church of England designation.

11.8 The Federated Governing Board have undertaken informal consultation with the Diocese of Leeds during their consideration of the options, and the Diocese will be consulted as part of the proposed consultation exercise.

11.9 School Place Sufficiency

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places available locally to meet the requirements of pupils locally. Utilising projected pupil numbers in 2025/6, including pupils from new open market housing, Aiskew Leeming Bar Church of England Primary School is forecast to have a pupil roll of 47 while Leeming and Londonderry Community Primary School is forecast a pupil roll of approximately 24 pupils. The schools have net capacities of 103 and 56 respectively and 77 and 29 pupils currently living within the two catchments.

Currently, the PAN of Aiskew Leeming Bar is 14 and the PAN of Leeming and Londonderry is 8. It is proposed to that the PAN of the amalgamated school will be 15. This increase will accommodate combining the two Reception intakes and takes account of future pupil projections.

11.10 There are 8 other primary schools within the Outer Bedale school place planning area and there will be an overall reduction in places.

DfE No.	Outer Bedale Primary School	Net Capacity	NOR 2025 - May	Position 2026/27	-/+ capacity (May 2025)
3001	Aiskew, Leeming Bar CE	103	47	49	56
3337	Burneston CE VA	133	117	137	16
3020	Crakehall CE	106	113	118	-7
2063	Hunton and Arrathorne CP	70	86	90	-16
2040	Leeming and Londonderry CP	56	24	26	32
2166	Leeming RAF CP	280	156	143	124
2133	Snape CP	52	30	25	22
3124	St Nicholas CE, West Tanfield	70	44	47	26
3119	Thornton Watlass CE	51	21	12	30
		921	**638**	**647**	**283**

11.11 The above table shows that across the area there is a general surplus of places.

12.0 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES

12.1 Through continuing with the federations and ensuring school communities are collaborating closely, all of the proposals outlined above, if implemented, will contribute to the 'Place and Environment' vision in the Council Plan. Through supporting pupils to have a good quality of life, they will also contribute to the 'Health, Wellbeing and People' vision in the Council Plan.

13.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

13.1 A detailed appraisal of alternatives to the each of the alternatives that have been proposed by each federated governing boards is provided within this report above

13.2 Having undertaken the detailed option appraisal outlined in Section 4 above, the Governing Boards informed parents and the local community about their proposals for the future organisational arrangements of each school.

14.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1 Capital Position

Capital investment is not included within the proposal.

14.2 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. Under the BAWB proposal all funding for West Burton CE VC Primary School would cease.

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

14.4 Based on the proposal taking effect during the start of 2026/27 financial year, and other things being equal, the governing boards have determined the optimum funding position, based on best estimates of revenue funding for each financial year for the individual schools within the federations. 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.

15.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

15.1 Legal advice has been provided to the federations by North Yorkshire Council that explains that the school that the child is admitted to, and is registered at, on their admission register, is required to educate the child, at that physical school. Whilst there are provisions that allow schools to educate a pupil offsite, the formal arrangements that the federations have been using go beyond the parliamentary intent. Furthermore, whilst the federation arrangements are in place for the governing board, the schools remain individual legal entities. Therefore, legally, statutory proposals would need to be agreed by the following bodies:

BAWB (Bainbridge, Askrigg and West Burton) Federation
i) North Yorkshire Council would publish proposals to close West Burton Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School.
ii) The federated governing board would publish proposals for of Bainbridge Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary and Nursery School to change the age range of the school to 3 to 7 years.
iii) The federated governing board would publish proposals for Askrigg Voluntary Controlled Primary School to change the age range of the school to 7 to 11 years.

Reeth and Gunnerside Schools Federation
i) North Yorkshire Council would publish proposals for Reeth Community Primary School to change the age range of the school to 4 to 7 years.

ii) The federated governing board would publish proposals for Gunnerside Methodist (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School to change the age range of the school to 7 to 11 years.

The Federation of Middleham (VA) & Spennithorne (VC) CE Primary Schools
i) The federated governing board would publish proposals for Spennithorne Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School to change the age range of the school to 4 to 7 years.
ii) The federated governing board would publish proposals for Middleham Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School to change the age range of the school to 7 to 11 years.
iii) The federated governing board would publish their proposal to change the status of Spennithorne from a Voluntary Controlled to a Voluntary Aided school

15.2 In order that the proposal by the Synergy Federation can be progressed the following statutory proposal would need to be agreed:
(i) North Yorkshire Council would publish proposals to amalgamate Aiskew Leeming Bar Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School and Leeming and Londonderry Community Primary School through the technical closure of Leeming and Londonderry Community Primary School and the expansion of Aiskew Leeming Bar Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School onto an additional site (the Leeming and Londonderry school site).

15.3 These proposals will follow the DfE's statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers. (DfE, 'Opening and closing maintained schools. Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers' and 'Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools. Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers'

16.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

16.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached (Appendix 4).

17.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

17.1 A Climate Change Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached (Appendix 5)

18.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS AND TIMESCALES

18.1 A period of six weeks of consultation is proposed. An indicative timetable is set out below.

18.2 The final decision on the linked proposals would be taken by the Executive (or by the Executive Member if there are no objections) and, if agreed, the proposals would be implemented from 1 September 2026

Anticipated Key Dates

All dates are subject to approvals at each stage.

Consultation opens	22 Sept 2025
Public meetings	During Sept and Oct 2025
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
Implementation	1 September 2026

19.0 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

19.1 Separate staff consultation processes, including meetings for staff and their professional associations and unions, would run in parallel with these consultations.

20.0 CONCLUSIONS

20.1 The current school organisation arrangements that are being operated by five federated governing boards are 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, and action is required to be taken to implement compliant arrangements.

20.2 The federated governing boards, including Synergy Federation's governing board, have undertaken a thorough assessment of the different school organisation options available to them and have made proposals that will achieve or maintain compliance and provide a sustainable basis for the future provision of education within each locality.

20.3 Where the proposals made require that statutory processes are undertaken, each federated governing boards and council officers agree that it is desirable that the views of the school community and key stakeholders should be sought on the school organisation proposals.

21.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

21.1 To ensure that the school organisation arrangements operated by the above federated governing boards are compliant with the legislation and guidance that govern the arrangements for school admissions and registration.

22.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

22.1 The Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills is recommended to: -

1. Note the action that is proposed by the Federated Governing Board of <u>The Federation of Follifoot and Spofforth CE Primary Schools to achieve compliance with the regulations; and</u>

2. Give approval to consult on the following proposals:

<u>BAWB (Bainbridge, Askrigg and West Burton) Federation</u>

- That the age range of Bainbridge Church of England Primary should be changed from 3-11 to 3-7 such that it should become Bainbridge Church of England Infant and Nursery School
- That the age range of Askrigg Voluntary Controlled Primary School should be changed from 4-11 to 7-11, such that it should become Askrigg Voluntary Controlled Junior School

- That West Burton Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School should be closed; and
- That the two remaining schools should have a shared catchment area that comprises an amalgamation of the current catchment areas of the three schools.
- The PAN will be 15 at each school, to reflect the pupil forecast.

Reeth and Gunnerside Schools Federation:

- That the age range of Reeth Community Primary School is changed from 4-11 to 4-7, such that the school becomes Reeth Community Infant School
- That the age range Gunnerside Methodist (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School is changed from 4-11 to 7-11, such that the school becomes Gunnerside Methodist (Voluntary Controlled) Junior School
- That the schools would have a shared catchment area, comprising an amalgamation of the existing schools' current catchment areas
- The Local Authority approves through its discretion a 'nearest gate in the federation' policy for home school transport, which would be conditional upon the federation continuing to provide support with inter-school transport where that is required.
- The PAN will be 15 at each school, to reflect the combined pupil forecast

The Federation of Middleham (VA) & Spennithorne (VC) CE Primary Schools:

- That the age range of Spennithorne Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School be changed from 4-11 to 4-7 such that the school becomes Spennithorne Church of England Infant School
- That the age range of Middleham Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School be changed from 4-11 to 7-11 such that the school becomes Middleham Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Junior School
- That the schools would have a shared catchment area, comprising an amalgamation of the existing schools' current catchment areas
- The PAN will be increased to 20 places at each school
- That the status of Spennithorne Church of England School is changed from Voluntary Controlled to Voluntary Aided

The Synergy Federation:

- That Aiskew Leeming Bar Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School and Leeming and Londonderry Community Primary School amalgamate with effect from 13 April 2026
- That this would be achieved through the technical closure of Leeming and Londonderry Community Primary School and the expansion of Aiskew Leeming Bar Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School onto an additional site (the Leeming and Londonderry school site)
- That the schools would have a shared catchment area, comprising an amalgamation of the existing schools' current catchment areas
- The PAN for the school will be 15

Home to school travel discretionary arrangements

- 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 BAWB (Bainbridge, Askrigg and West Burton) Federation, Reeth and Gunnerside Schools Federation and The Federation of Middleham (VA) & Spennithorne (VC) CE schools for the duration of their education at the schools within the federation, subject to there being no change in their circumstances.

Stuart Carlton

CORPORATE DIRECTOR – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE.

Report prepared by: Mark Ashton, Strategic Planning

Action Agreed ……..Executive Member
Date:

Action Requested ……..Corporate Director
Date:

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Example Consultation Papers
Appendix 2 – Maps showing future catchment area proposals
Appendix 3 – Indicative Pupil Forecasts under proposals
Appendix 4 – Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix 5 – Climate Change Impact Assessment