

Consultation Response Report on the Federation of the Governing Bodies at Pencoedtre and Whitmore High Schools

A group of people standing in front of a building

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# Introduction

The governing bodies of Pencoedtre High School and Whitmore High School jointly approached the Vale of Glamorgan Council in January 2025 to request their assistance in consulting on a formal federation involving both schools. If agreed, this federation would commence with effect from September 2025.

The federation of schools is a legal process that enables schools to work together through a formal structured process by sharing a Governing Body that will make decisions in the best interest of the schools, staff, and pupils within the federation.

Both existing governing bodies have a strong record of working collaboratively and this is already impacting positively upon both schools. The consultation proposed establishing a single Governing Body to govern both schools. If agreed, both schools would continue to have their own individual identity with regards to name, culture and ethos, and would continue to manage their own individual budgets.

Both governing bodies and the Vale of Glamorgan Council are responsible for promoting high educational standards and for delivering efficient secondary education. Having effective leaders in our schools is considered central to this responsibility. The consultation presented the case for a change to the leadership and governance arrangements at both schools. This report outlines the feedback received during the consultation undertaken from 3 March – 14 April 2025. It provides an overview of the responses received and highlights any key issues and comments raised by stakeholders. The report has been prepared jointly by the Governing Bodies of both schools with support from the Local Authority.

# Outline of the consultation process

The consultation was designed to ensure that both governing bodies consider all perspectives when assessing the merits of the proposal. The consultation process gave consultees the opportunity to learn about the proposal and for both governing bodies to hear the views of all those with an interest so that they can be considered before any decisions are made.

Formal consultation was conducted through a consultation document and response form distributed electronically to prescribed consultees and published on the Schools and the Council’s website on the 3rd March 2025. The consultation document outlined the proposal being considered, the rationale for the proposal and the details of the consultation process. The consultation document and the response form were available for stakeholders with hardcopies available on request.

The consultation document was distributed to the following:

Table 1: List of groups consulted as part of the consultation process

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Staff (teaching and non-teaching) at Whitmore and Pencoedtre High Schools | Local Authority |
| Parents/Carers and pupils at Whitmore and Pencoedtre High Schools | Barry Town Council |
| Central South Consortium Joint Education Service | Staff union representatives |
| Central South Consortium Joint Education Service | Primary and Secondary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan |

Consultees were invited to complete a formal consultation response form which could be completed in hard copy or online via the Council’s website at:

[Federation of the Governing Bodies at Pencoedtre and Whitmore High Schools](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/living/schools/Consultations/Federation-of-the-Governing-Bodies-at-Pencoedtre-and-Whitmore-High-Schools.aspx)

Only responses to the consultation given in writing (either via post or the online survey) have been included in this report.

## Consultation Questions

Consultees were asked for their opinion on the key question for the proposal:

**Do you support the proposal to establish a Federation of the Governing Bodies at Pencoedtre and Whitmore High Schools? If you support or do not support the proposal, then please explain why.**

Consultees were able to respond to the question with Yes or No. Consultees were also offered the opportunity to comment further:

|  |
| --- |
| **If you would like to suggest any changes or alternatives to the proposals, please detail these below.** |

|  |
| --- |
| **Any other comments?** |

# 

# Consultation responses

20 individual responses were received by the consultation closing date. The breakdown of responses to each proposal are detailed in the tables and charts below.

It has been noted that not all consultees provided a response to each of the questions and that some forms were not fully completed. In these cases, we have accepted the responses to the questions that they have chosen to answer.

Table 2: Responses in detail

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Annex** | **Description** |
| **Annex A** | A summary of key issues raised by consultees in favour of the proposal and the Governing Bodies responses can be found at Annex B. |
| **Annex B** | A summary of key issues raised by consultees not in favour of the proposal and the Governing Bodies responses can be found at Annex B. |

## Responses to proposal on the Federation of the Governing Bodies at Pencoedtre and Whitmore High

During the consultation period, 45% of responders were in favour of the proposal and 55% opposed to the proposal.

Table 3: Breakdown of consultation responses

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Total (individual) responses:** | **Total in support** | | **Total not in support** | |
| **Number** | **Number** | **%** | **Number** | **%** |
| 20 | 9 | 45% | 11 | 55% |

Chart 1: Split of responses supporting or not supporting the proposal.

Not in Support In Support

As Table 4 and Chart 2 below show, the majority of the largest group of respondents were parents or guardians, with a total of 7 responses of which 3 (43%) were in support of the proposal and 4 (57%) were not in support of the proposal.

The next largest respondent group related to members of staff with a total of 5 responses, 2 of which were in support of proposal (40%) and 3 (60%) not in support of the proposal.

It should be noted respondents were able to tick more than one option (e.g. they could be a parent and a member of staff).

Table 4: Breakdown of consultation responses by role

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Respondent role** | **Support** | **Not support** | **% Support** | **% Not Support** |
| Pupil | 0 | 1 |  | 100.00% |
| Governor; | 3 | 0 | 100.00% |  |
| Member of Trade Union | 0 | 2 |  | 100.00% |
| Local Resident; | 0 | 1 |  | 100.00% |
| Member of Staff\*; | 2 | 3 | 40.00% | 60.00% |
| Parent or Guardian \*; Governor\*; | 1 | 0 | 100.00% |  |
| Parent or guardian\*; | 3 | 4 | 43.00% | 57.00% |
| **Total Support and Not supporting** | **9** | **11** | **45.00%** | **55.00%** |
| Total Responses | **20** | |  |  |

Chart 2: Split of consultation responses by role

### Process following Close of Consultation Period

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Dates** | **Process** |
| 3 March 2025 – 14 April 2025 | 6-week Consultation. |
| 14 April - 5 May 2025 | Consider responses to consultation. |
| 2 June 2025 | Publish a consultation report summarising the responses received together with the governing bodies comments on both schools and the council websites. |
| Wc 16 June 2025 | Final decision of governing bodies made.  Decision published on both schools and the council websites. |
| Late June 2025 | Governors to liaise with the Council over the new Instrument of Government and election and appointment of new governors. A copy of the new instrument of government must be sent to Welsh Ministers. |
| Late June 2025 | Single governing body meets to elect chair and vice chair |
| September 2025 | Federation fully established |

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# Annex A - A summary of key themes raised by statutory consultees in favour of the proposal

This section summarises the key themes raised during the formal consultation period in favour of the consultation. The key themes present an overview of responses and are not intended to be verbatim. All written responses have been made available in full to both governing bodies for their consideration.

## Key themes raised in support of the proposal:

### Providing equal opportunities in Barry

Some respondents stated that federation would provide the same opportunities for pupils attending both school and provide children across Barry with same opportunities for success. A respondent commented that this is the best solution for a better education for all children across Barry and will help deliver a joint sixth form across both schools.

Response:

The governing bodies of both schools have discussed the proposed arrangements with the Council, and all are in support of this proposal. With a shared sixth form, a shared Executive Head Teacher, and some senior leaders taking on joint responsibilities, federation would provide the best environment to ensure positive outcomes across both schools, ensuring the most appropriate strategies for change and approach to teaching and learning so that children can access the same high standard of education and support.

This proposal was designed with all our pupils' interests in mind. Working together through a single governing body structure enables schools to raise standards and maintain local education provision by sharing resources, staff, expertise, and facilities and sharing best practice. A single governing body also provides an effective and accountable mechanism for schools to pool resources, including staff and budgets, release capacity in the senior management team and benefit from economies of scale and efficiencies, for example with external contractors.

### Positive changes to Governance and Leadership

Making the current leadership team, with an Executive Headteacher across both schools, permanent was seen as beneficial and federation is the next positive step.

Response:

Both schools have experienced positive changes since the appointment of a seconded Executive Headteacher. As existing arrangements to support collaboration have been working well, it is considered beneficial to create a more permanent structure to ensure sure both schools can continue to thrive, and improvements can be made for the benefit of all students and staff. Following on from the creation of a permanent Executive Head post, this federation would also provide stability in both management teams and governance. Although the schools will share a single governing body, the schools would retain their separate legal status, have separate budgets and will be subject to their own Estyn Inspection.

### Community Impact

Respondents commented that the proposal would create cohesion between both schools, strengthen community ties and promote a sense of unity.

Response:

Both governing bodies strongly believe that the proposal would positively impact on the Barry community by strengthening already robust relationships between both schools and fostering a sense of unity. This federation is intended to improve educational outcomes and offer significant support to local families and the wider community. The shared ethos and efficiencies would be designed to benefit all, ensuring pupils receive excellent education and staff enjoy improved opportunities for development. This proposal, if progressed would help support a more vibrant, connected, and resilient education community in Barry. A shared ethos and budget efficiencies through shared contracting arrangements would benefit both schools.

Positive identity

Some respondents felt that one governance structure across both schools would ensure each school retains the independence to maintain its own identity.

Response:

Sharing a governing body would maximise collaborative oversight whilst maintaining each school's individual character and ethos. Schools that federate remain as separate legal entities with their own budgets, name, character, ethos & school uniform. The benefits are found in the operational and management aspects of school management. Streamlined policies, increased opportunities, shared facilities, economies of scale with financial issues and robust leadership. ￼

# Annex B - A summary of key issues raised by statutory consultees not in favour of the proposal

This section summarises the key issues raised during the formal consultation period that were not in favour of the proposal. The key issues present an overview of responses and are not intended to be verbatim. All written responses have been made available in full to the governing bodies for consideration.

### Key themes raised in opposition to the proposal:

### Not sustainable, leading to declining standards

A respondent commented that both schools are too large to be effectively managed as one entity and that the proposal may not be sustainable in the long term. This proposal would result in less time spent focusing on each individual school. Respondents expressed concerns about the potential for declining standards at Whitmore High if good staff are shared.

Response:

Federation is not amalgamation, and both schools would remain separate in terms of identity, staffing and pupils. Shared governance via federation is designed to enhance collaboration and efficiency; avoiding bureaucratic duplication whilst ensuring that both schools receive the required attention and support. Both schools would be led by a single governing body to drive school improvement, share best practice, policies and facilities where appropriate to do so.

There would be no requirement for existing staff to work across both schools although opportunities to share good practice and developmental opportunities would be facilitated by federation. There would be no expectation for existing staff to work across both schools although opportunities for the creation of new roles that can be shared across schools i.e. administrative, ICT and peripatetic teachers may be explored.

Both governing bodies are committed to ensuring that the proposed changes would not negatively impact on either school. Staff terms and conditions would not change as a result of this federation; policies would be streamlined offering an opportunity to consider the best on offer at both schools.

Strategic and financial planning would mean that jobs would be better protected in any period of contraction and that specialist staff could be used to best effect. The federated governing body may appoint new staff to work within both schools in the Federation, this could include shared teaching and support staff.

The Council is committed to maintaining and improving on existing high standards and ensuring that both staff and pupils continue to thrive.

## Fairer approach

One respondent expressed their concerns that it is unfair that the children have a choice of a failing or a successful school based on where they live.

Response:

This is one of the reasons why federation has been proposed by the two schools, to reduce the difference in experience so that no matter where in Barry someone lives, they have access to the best education experience. Making relevant changes to the Governing Body structure is designed to provide a much fairer approach to support both schools and share excellent practice with each other. The changes to leadership and governance have already seen positive changes across Pencoedtre, whilst maintaining education standards at Whitmore. As reflected in the consultation document, working together through a single governing body structure would enable both schools to raise standards and maintain local education provision by sharing resources, staff, expertise, and facilities and sharing best practice. A single governing body would also provide an effective and accountable mechanism for schools to pool resources, including staff and budgets, release capacity in the senior management team and gain economies of scale and efficiencies. This opportunity to federate will allow pupils better education opportunities.

The admission arrangements at catchment areas for each school would not be changed as a result of this proposal. The Council is the admissions authority for both schools. The Councils normal admission arrangements, procedures and oversubscription criteria apply to both schools on application at either the year 6 transfer stage or an application to transfer in year. Where parents do not receive an offer of their preferred school, the statutory right of appeal is offered.

### School Identity and Performance

Respondents expressed concerns regarding existing school identity and performance. They believe that the schools have always been run as separate entities and should continue to operate independently.

Response:

Schools that federate remain as separate legal entities with their own budgets, name, character, ethos & school uniform. While the proposal aims to foster collaboration, it also respects the individuality of each school. Measures will be put in place to ensure that both schools continue to operate independently while benefiting from shared resources.

Both governing bodies and the Council are committed to supporting both schools equally to ensure fairness for all students, regardless of their place of residence. Pencoedtre would continue to receive targeted support to address its challenges without compromising the standards at Whitmore. We would also work to retain good staff by creating a positive and supportive environment across both schools. Our goal is to enhance the educational experience for all students and staff involved.

### Personal Experiences

Respondents shared personal experiences highlighting the divide created between the two schools, particularly with relation to admission decisions. Additionally, children with anxiety faced significant challenges due to the negative perceptions of Pencoedtre.

Response:

The admission arrangements currently in place would not change as a result of this proposal. It is understood that school admission decisions can have an emotional impact on children and families. We are committed to work together to minimise any divide and ensure that all students feel supported and valued, regardless of the school they attend.

Both schools have a wealth of experience in supporting families, particularly those challenges faced by parents with children experiencing anxiety. The federated governing body would be committed to improving existing perceptions of Pencoedtre. By fostering positive relationships and ensuring fair access to quality education, we aim to strengthen community ties and enhance the overall well-being of all students and families involved.

### Stepping stone to amalgamation (NASUWT)

The NASUWT felt the proposal is a stepping stone to amalgamation of both schools. Given that the schools are to maintain their separate identities and status, staff from both schools must be represented on the new Governing Body.

Response:

There are no existing plans to amalgamate both schools. Any such proposals would be subject to a separate consultation process. A previous proposal to amalgamate Bryn Hafen and Barry Comprehensive school was not progressed based on sound arguments against the proposal.

Schools involved in a federation remain separate legal entities maintaining their own separate budgets. The schools coming together under a single governing body, will drive school improvement, share best practice, staff and facilities and provide better value for money. The schools will continue to have their separate legal entities with their own budgets, name, character, ethos & school uniform. Federation is not amalgamation.

The development of a new governing body would require careful consideration and both governing bodies are committed to ensuring that there would be an equal balance of staff representatives and other representatives from both schools as part of the new governance arrangements in order to ensure effective transition and governance. The process of appointment of new governors will be fair and transparent across both schools and would be outlined to all stakeholders in the latter part of the summer term 2025 should this proposal be taken forward.

### Proposal is unnecessary

A respondent commented that the proposal is misleading and unnecessary. The current structure of the two schools, and the permanent appointment of the Executive Head Teacher is working well and therefore there is no reason to change the current structure.

Response:

The current structure of the two schools will not change. The work undertaken by the two governing bodies will be brought together but this will not impact on the schools' structures other than the Executive Head Teacher having to report to one body rather than two.

The Governing bodies are proposing the change as we believe that it is in the best interest of both schools including, staff, pupils and governing bodies. The leadership changes over the past few months have seen many positive changes and both governing bodies are committed to driving this forward.

Whilst the federated schools would continue to have their own individual identity with regards to name, culture and ethos and would also continue to manage their own budgets, this process involves establishing a single Governing Body. The federation of schools is a legal process which enables schools to work together through a formal structured process by sharing a governing body that will make decisions in the best interest of all the schools, staff and pupils in that federation. No staff changes are proposed as a result of this proposal. All staff will remain on existing single school contracts. New contracts will be for each individual school, unless the role is more suited to a cross-school contract, such as roles which are specific to Sixth Form.