



Wellfield Schools



Proposal for the Federation of South Wellfield First School and Wellfield Middle School

1. Executive Summary

This proposal sets out the case for establishing a formal federation between South Wellfield First School and Wellfield Middle School. Both schools have a strong record of collaboration, shared values, and complementary strengths. The federation would formalise existing partnerships, provide greater stability in the face of falling birth rates and financial pressures, and offer a unique, coherent three-tier educational journey for local families.

In light of the 2025 North Tyneside Education Review, it makes discussing working together more relevant as a number of schools have been identified for closure or merging.

a) Context

South Wellfield First School

South Wellfield First School is a thriving two-form entry school with a strong ethos built around the values of being *Safe, Respectful and Ready*. The curriculum is structured through the *Five Wells: ensuring children are Well-rounded, Well-nurtured, Well-read, Well-equipped, and Well-connected*, giving children a broad, balanced start to their education. Despite falling birth rates locally, the school has successfully attracted families by offering a rich curriculum, strong pastoral support, and close community ties. In 2024–25, South Wellfield First was one of only two Whitley Bay first schools to fill all its Reception places on first allocation, reflecting the school's reputation and appeal. The school also benefits from a large and growing nursery, which has been expanded to support younger children and help sustain future intake.

Wellfield Middle School

Wellfield Middle School has served the local community for many years and is built on the 5Cs — *Communication, Creativity, Coherence, Compassion and Community*. The school has a reputation for providing a holistic education that goes beyond core subjects, emphasising personal development, resilience, and community links. Originally designed as a two-form entry school, it has for many years operated with three forms of entry, despite the building not being designed for this capacity. Falling birth rates now make a return to two-form entry more likely, which will bring financial challenges through reduced funding. Governors and leaders recognise that federation with South Wellfield First would help secure the school's long-term future, protect the three-tier system locally, and ensure children enjoy a consistent and high-quality journey from Early Years to Year 8.

North Tyneside Education Review

North Tyneside's 2025 Education Review emerges from a clear demographic and financial imperative: birth rates have declined by around 300 children annually since 2018/19—equivalent to roughly 10 fewer primary classes each year—leading to substantial surplus capacity in school buildings and increasing budget pressures across the borough. The Strategic Education and Inclusion Review, which forms part of



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the council's broader "Ambition for Education" framework, identifies key challenges: financial sustainability, growing SEND demand, post-16 education capacity, and alignment with local planning and school catchment areas. In response, the council launched a six-week consultation (October–November 2025) proposing three first school and primary school mergers and the closure of a middle school alongside adjustments to admission numbers at middle and high schools. These plans, aimed at creating a more efficient, high-quality education system, have sparked strong community engagement—including petitions and local campaigns—but remain grounded in the need to secure long-term sustainability and equity for North Tyneside's children.

2. Rationale for Federation

The governing bodies working party of South Wellfield First and Wellfield Middle Schools are exploring federation as a proactive step to protect the future of both schools, strengthen educational continuity, and respond to the changing local and national context. This is particularly pressing in the current climate of the education review. The reasons for considering federation now include:

1. Falling Birth Rates and Pupil Numbers

- Across Whitley Bay, reception intake numbers are significantly lower than the number of places available. In 2024, there were only 363 children for 450 first school places, contributing to 20% surplus places across North Tyneside.
- Even if the proposals from the Education Review are implemented, this surplus will only reduce slightly to 17%, meaning the challenge of low numbers will persist.
- Lower pupil numbers inevitably mean reduced funding, which risks schools entering financial deficit. Several neighbouring first schools are already in deficit, and although both schools are currently stable, projections show increasing pressure in the next three years.
- The Education Review also proposes reducing Wellfield Middle School's PAN from 90 to 60 to reflect falling pupil numbers. While this may help balance capacity, it will further limit intake and increase financial vulnerability for the middle school in the coming years.
- Federation provides a means to safeguard resources, share leadership capacity, and plan strategically for sustainability in the face of these demographic and financial challenges.

2. Strengthening the Three-Tier System

- Both schools are deeply committed to the three-tier system, which gives children the benefit of a nurturing first school experience followed by the broader opportunities of middle school before transition to high school.
- Without proactive steps, there is a risk that external pressures could force restructuring, closures, or academisation that weaken the three-tier model locally.
- By federating, the schools can "future-proof" their place within the system and protect family choice in the area.

3. Supporting Educational Continuity



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- Currently, children moving from South Wellfield First to Wellfield Middle must apply for a Year 5 place, with no guaranteed transition despite the two schools being next door. This can be stressful for families and disruptive for pupils.
- Federation would remove this hurdle by guaranteeing that children who join South Wellfield First will automatically have a place at Wellfield Middle. This creates a seamless journey from Early Years to Year 8.
- The two schools already share many practices — including curriculum alignment, shared staff training, and a consistent ethos — but federation would allow this to be deepened and formalised.

4. **Financial Sustainability and Efficiency**

- Each school would retain its own budget under federation, but the ability to share leadership roles, specialist staff, and contracts would reduce costs.
- Examples already in place include joint curriculum development and shared professional development. In future, federation could allow for shared appointments in areas such as SEN provision, site management, or subject specialisms, reducing duplication and strengthening provision.

5. **Leadership and Governance Benefits**

- A single governing body will allow for more strategic, “bigger picture” decision-making, ensuring resources are focused on what benefits all children across Early Years to Year 8.
- A shared headteacher across both schools will enable consistent expectations and policy, while still respecting the distinct character of each school.

6. **Acting Now Rather Than Being Forced Later**

- National policy is moving towards greater collaboration and consolidation of schools. There is a stated expectation from government that all schools should be part of a group, federation, or trust by 2030.
 - By federating voluntarily, both schools maintain local autonomy and avoid the risks associated with being forced into a Multi-Academy Trust, where local voice and budgets are diluted.
 - North Tyneside Local Authority has already expressed interest in the schools’ federation process as a potential model for other schools, underlining the timeliness and relevance of this step.
 - The Education Review signals that further structural changes may be necessary in the future, including potential school closures if falling numbers continue. Acting now to federate strengthens both schools and helps protect them against these risks.
 - Wellfield Middle School will need to reduce its PAN from 90 to 60 due to falling birth rates; however, by federating with South Wellfield First School, the combined structure will offer more classes across the federation, helping to mitigate the impact of this PAN reduction and maintain a broader curriculum and staffing stability.
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3. Vision and Values of the Federation

Shared Vision

The federation between South Wellfield First and Wellfield Middle will place families at the heart of education, ensuring that every child experiences a safe, nurturing, and ambitious journey from Early Years through to Year 8. By working as one community of schools, we will create stability for families, strengthen the three-tier system, and provide children with the skills, confidence, and resilience to thrive in the next stage of their education and beyond.

Proposed vision statement:

“Putting families first: a united journey from Early Years to Year 8, where every child is safe, respected, and ready to achieve their best.”

While each school will keep its own well-established values and mottos, the federation will be guided by a simple, shared set of principles that reflect what unites both communities:

1. **Safety and Wellbeing First**

- Children cannot learn unless they feel safe and supported.
- Both schools are committed to a culture where wellbeing, kindness, and inclusion underpin every decision.

2. **Respect and Responsibility**

- Children are taught to value themselves, each other, and the wider community.
- Respectful behaviour and personal responsibility are central expectations across the federation.

3. **Readiness for Learning and Life**

- The federation will ensure that pupils leave Year 8 well-prepared academically, socially, and emotionally for the challenges ahead.
- “Being ready” includes curiosity, resilience, and independence.

4. **Excellence Through Opportunity**

- Every child should achieve their best, supported by high expectations and enriched by a broad, balanced curriculum.
- Shared staff expertise and resources will widen opportunities across both schools.

5. **Community and Connection**

- The schools will celebrate their local identity while also connecting children to the wider world.
- Families are valued partners in education, with the federation acting in their best interests.

Alignment with Existing School Ethos

- **South Wellfield First:** The *Five Wells* (Well-rounded, Well-nurtured, Well-read, Well-equipped, Well-connected) align closely with the federation’s emphasis on safety, wellbeing, preparation, and connection.



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- **Wellfield Middle:** The values of *Ready, Respectful, Safe* and the 5Cs (Communication, Creativity, Coherence, Compassion, Community) dovetail with the federation's focus on readiness, respect, and community.

Together, the federation's values build on these foundations, offering families the reassurance that their child will experience a consistent, joined-up ethos while still benefiting from the unique character of each school.

4. Benefits of Federation

The federation between South Wellfield First and Wellfield Middle is designed to strengthen provision for pupils, families, staff, and the wider community. While each school will retain its own identity and budget, federation will create a platform for greater continuity, stability, and opportunity across Early Years to Year 8.

1. Benefits for Pupils

- **Seamless Transition:** Children at South Wellfield First will be guaranteed a place at Wellfield Middle, removing a key hurdle in the three-tier system. This reduces uncertainty for families and ensures a smoother transition.
- **Consistency of Curriculum:** Alignment of teaching and assessment approaches will mean children experience a coherent and progressive curriculum across both schools, reducing dips at transition points.
- **Enhanced Support for SEND and Vulnerable Pupils:** A federated structure allows for shared expertise (e.g. a single SENCo role), ensuring consistent support strategies from Early Years to Year 8.
- **Access to Specialist Teaching:** Pupils can benefit from subject specialists (e.g. in music, languages, or science) shared across both schools.
- **Wider Opportunities:** Federation opens the door to joint clubs, trips, enrichment projects, and leadership opportunities for children.
- **Greater Sense of Community:** Federation will give families a stronger sense of community and continuity, with shared events, aligned values, and a unified approach from Early Years to Year 8.
- **Vulnerable Children:** Federation will give vulnerable children consistent support and shared safeguarding across both schools, easing transitions and ensuring needs are met seamlessly.

2. Benefits for Families

- **Security of Place:** Families choosing South Wellfield First will know their child has a guaranteed place at Wellfield Middle.
- **Shared Ethos and Expectations:** Parents can expect consistent behaviour policies, values, and communication across both schools.
- **Community Stability:** By federating, both schools are more secure against financial or structural changes, protecting local choice for families.



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- **Stronger Voice in Education:** Federation ensures families are represented in a single, more strategic governing body, with continued opportunities for engagement.
- **Relationships between School and Home:** Federation will strengthen relationships with families through unified communication, shared events, and a consistent approach across both schools.

3. Benefits for Staff

- **Professional Development:** Teachers and support staff will have more opportunities to collaborate, share best practice, and learn from colleagues across both schools, amplifying professional growth through joint training and wider expertise.
- **Career Pathways:** Staff will benefit from broader career development, with opportunities to gain experience across different key stages.
- **Specialist Roles:** Staff with expertise can have an impact across both schools, raising standards and reducing duplication.

4. Benefits for Governance and Leadership

- **Stronger Strategic Oversight:** A single governing body allows for more joined-up decision-making across Early Years to Year 8, focused on the best outcomes for children.
- **Local Autonomy:** Federation maintains local governance and budgets, avoiding the loss of control associated with Multi-Academy Trusts.
- **Succession Planning:** A shared leadership structure provides resilience — for example, if senior staff leave or retire, the federation can deploy leaders flexibly.
- **Efficient Use of Time and Expertise:** Rather than two separate governing bodies making similar decisions, resources are pooled, and strategic focus is sharpened.

5. Benefits for Finance and Resources

- **Efficiency Savings:** Joint procurement (e.g. catering, site management, ICT contracts) can reduce costs.
 - **Shared Services:** Certain roles (such as site manager) could work across both schools, improving value for money while enhancing provision.
 - **Budget Protection:** Each school retains its own budget, but the ability to plan together makes finances more sustainable in the long term. By federating instead of amalgamating, each school retains its capital grant.
 - **Futureproofing:** Federation strengthens both schools' position in a climate of falling rolls and financial challenges. For Wellfield Middle, reducing its PAN from 90 to 60 would normally limit flexibility, but federation creates a larger combined structure, helping to offset this impact and reduce the risk of closure or forced academisation.
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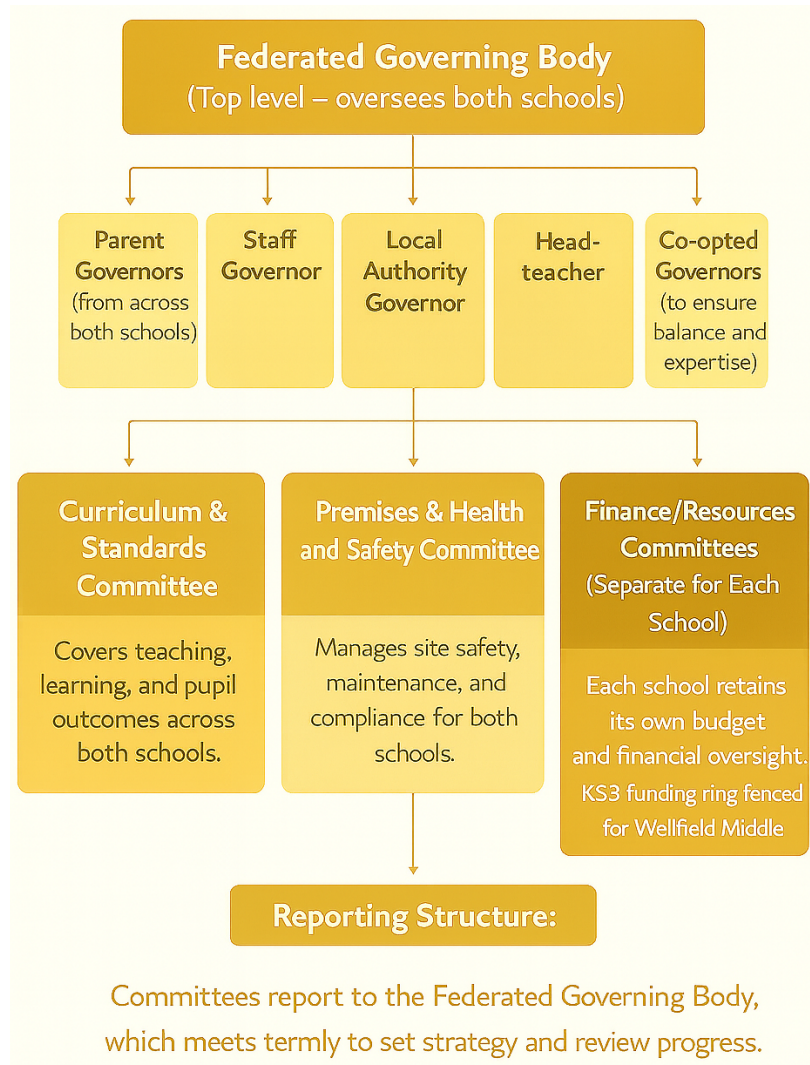


5. Governance and Leadership

A federation is a formal arrangement between schools to share one governing body while retaining each school's individual identity. South Wellfield First and Wellfield Middle would continue to exist as two schools, with their own budgets, admissions, and Ofsted inspections. However, they would be overseen by a single governing body and led by a single headteacher, supported by leadership teams in each school.

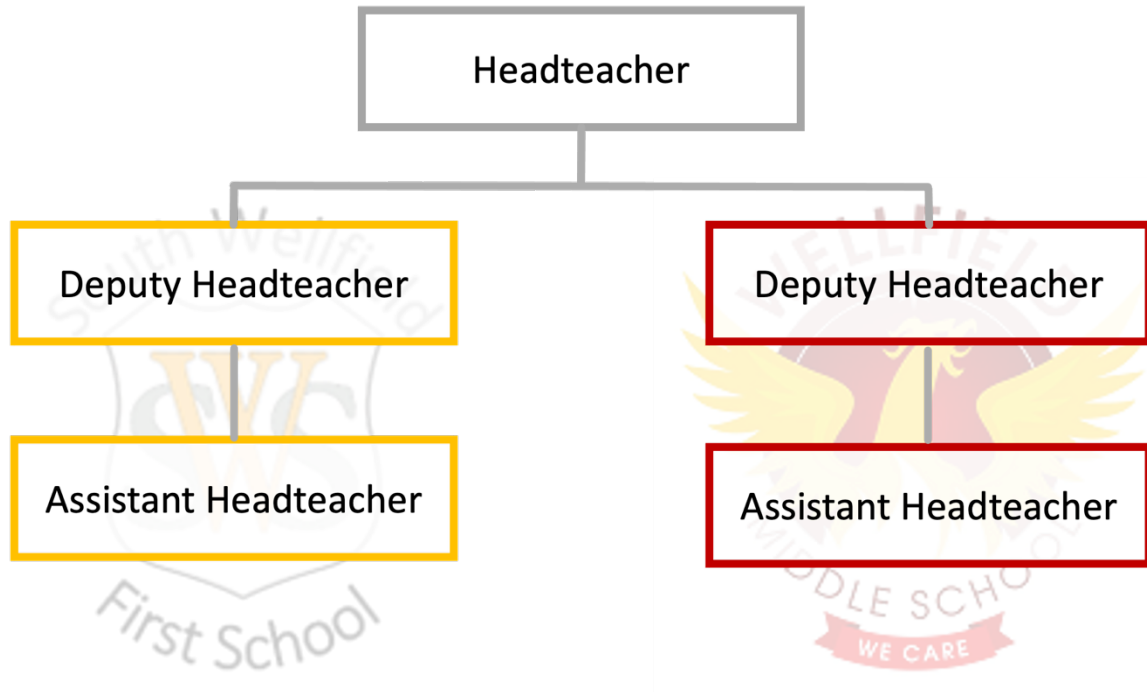
Governing Body Structure

- **Single Federated Governing Body:**
 - The two schools would have one governing body responsible for the overall strategic direction, ethos, and accountability of the federation.
 - Membership would follow statutory requirements:
 - Two parent governors (drawn from across the federation, not two per school).
 - One staff governor.
 - One Local Authority governor.
 - The headteacher.
 - Co-opted governors (number to be agreed) to bring additional expertise and ensure representation from both school communities.
 - Equal representation from both schools will be sought to ensure fairness and balanced perspectives.
- **Committees:**
 - A **joint committee structure** (e.g. Curriculum & Standards, Premises & Health and Safety) would be created to cover shared areas.
 - Each school would retain its own **Finance/Resources Committee** to oversee its delegated budget, as these remain separate. For example, the higher per pupil funding for KS3 would be ring-fenced for KS3.
 - Committees would report into the full federated governing body, which meets termly to set strategy and review progress.



Leadership Structure

- **Headteacher:** A single headteacher would be leader of both schools, accountable to the federated governing body for overall performance, standards, and strategic leadership.
- **Senior Leadership Teams (SLT):**
 - Each school would retain a deputy head and assistant head
 - The headteacher would work across both schools, supported by these deputies and assistants to ensure each school continues to be well-led on a daily basis.
- **Shared Roles:** Over time, some leadership and specialist roles could be shared across the federation, strengthening expertise and consistency.
- **Business Management:** Both schools currently have strong business management capacity. In the medium term, these could be aligned into a single senior business manager role supported by finance officers, creating efficiency and resilience.



Benefits of this Model

- Families will see minimal visible change day to day, as both schools will continue to run as they do now.
 - Staff will retain their employment with their current school but benefit from clearer career pathways and opportunities across the federation.
 - Governors will operate at a more strategic level, focusing on sustainability, educational excellence, and community needs.
 - The headteacher and senior leaders will be able to deploy resources and expertise flexibly across both schools, enhancing provision and value for money.
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6. Risks and Mitigations

Risk	Description	Mitigation Strategy
Resistance to Change from Parents and Community	Concerns about changes to school identity, admissions, curriculum, or leadership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear communication (FAQs, newsletters, town halls) - Emphasise continuity of school identity and operations - Highlight benefits like guaranteed transition and consistency
Staff Uncertainty and HR Implications	Worries about job security, role changes, and cross-site working.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing staff remain with current school - Shared roles introduced gradually and voluntarily - Clear HR policies and union consultation
Governance Complexity and Representation	Risk of imbalance or loss of voice for one school in a single governing body.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equal representation from both schools - Separate Finance/Resources Committees - Use co-opted governors for balance and expertise - Governor training for strategic oversight
Financial Pressures and Budgetary Constraints	Falling birth rates and reduced pupil numbers may impact budgets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexible resource deployment - Shared business management and procurement - Strategic early years planning - Maintain separate budgets with shared services
Misalignment of School Cultures or Educational Approaches	Differences in ethos, curriculum, or policies may cause confusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop shared federation vision and values - Align key policies where beneficial - Continue collaborative planning and training
Admissions and Transition Challenges	Confusion over admissions and progression through schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarify admissions remain separate - Emphasise seamless journey from Early Years to Year 8 - Communicate high school admissions remain unchanged
External Pressures from Local Authority and National Policy	Potential school closures or forced academisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Federation strengthens autonomy and resilience - Avoids forced changes by acting proactively

		- Monitor policy developments and adapt strategy
Leadership Capacity and Succession Planning	Risk of overstretching a single headteacher and leadership transitions.	- Strong SLTs in each school - Succession planning for key roles - Shared leadership roles to build resilience

7. Timeline (Provisional)

Phase	Timeframe	Key Activities	Responsible Parties
1. Working Party Formation & Initial Proposal Drafting	September – October 2025	- Establish working party - Draft initial federation proposal - Identify risks, benefits, governance and leadership structures	Working Party, Headteachers, Governors
2. Review & Refinement of Proposal	October – November 2025	- Review and edit draft proposal - Refine shared vision, values, and strategic rationale - Prepare consultation materials	Working Party, Headteachers, Governors
3. Full Governing Body Meetings	Late October – November 2025	- Present proposal to each school's full governing body - Vote on whether to proceed to consultation	Full Governing Bodies
4. Consultation Period	January – February 2025 (6 weeks)	- Launch public consultation - Host town hall meetings, Q&A sessions - Collect feedback from parents, staff, community	Governing Bodies, Headteachers
5. Review of Consultation Feedback	February 2026	- Analyse feedback - Amend proposal if needed - Prepare final version for decision	Working Party, Governors
6. Final Governing Body Decision	March 2026	- Each governing body votes on whether to federate - If approved, notify Local Authority	Full Governing Bodies
7. Legal and Structural Preparation	March – June 2026	- Draft and sign federation instrument of government - Set up federated governing body	LA, Governors, HR



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		- Confirm leadership and staffing arrangements	
8. Transition Planning	April – July 2026	- Align policies, systems, and roles - Communicate changes to stakeholders - Prepare induction for new governance structure	SLT, Business Managers, Governors
9. Federation Launch	September 2026	- Federation officially begins - Federated governing body and leadership team in place - Begin monitoring and evaluation	All Stakeholders
10. Altered Admissions Process	September 2027	- Wellfield Middle School's admissions policy is rewritten for the September 2027 Year 5 intake	Federation Governing Body

8. Conclusion

The proposed federation between South Wellfield First School and Wellfield Middle School represents a strategic and forward-thinking response to the evolving educational landscape in Whitley Bay and the wider North Tyneside area. By forming a single governing body and aligning leadership across both schools, the federation aims to strengthen continuity, resilience, and educational outcomes for children from Early Years through to Year 8.

This proposal has been developed collaboratively by governors and school leaders, with careful consideration of the benefits, risks, and operational implications. It preserves the unique identities of both schools while enabling shared expertise, consistent policies, and improved resource management.

If approved, the federation will be implemented through a phased and consultative process, ensuring all stakeholders—staff, parents, carers, and the wider community—are informed and involved. The shared vision is to create a stable, high-quality educational journey for all pupils, underpinned by strong governance and leadership.



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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is a federation?

A federation is when two or more schools share a single governing body and one headteacher, while keeping their own identity, budgets, and staff.

Q: Will the schools keep their names and uniforms?

Yes. Both South Wellfield First and Wellfield Middle will keep their names, uniforms, and traditions.

Q: Will my child still learn in the same building?

Yes. Pupils will continue to attend the same school buildings as now. The day-to-day running of each school will remain the same.

Q: Will my child be guaranteed a place in Wellfield Middle if they attend the First School?

Yes, but once the federation consultation process was complete. Under federation, and a review of Wellfield Middle School's admission policy, children at South Wellfield First would have a guaranteed place at Wellfield Middle.

Q: Do both schools need to be foundation schools before they can federate?

Yes. For South Wellfield First School to federate with Wellfield Middle, it would first need to join the North Tyneside Learning Trust and become a foundation school.

This change means:

- Both schools would have the same legal status as foundation schools.
- The federated governing body would become the admission authority for both schools, allowing it to set admissions policies (in line with the School Admissions Code).

Q: Will my child be guaranteed a place in Whitley Bay High School?

No. Admissions to Whitley Bay High School remain unchanged.

Q: Would this change admissions for Wellfield Middle for September 2026?

No, as the admission process is underway.

Q: What does this mean for staff?

Staff will continue to be employed by their current school. In the future, some staff may have opportunities to work across both schools if they wish.

Q: What does this mean for school finances?

Each school will keep its own budget. Federation allows us to share costs and strengthen financial stability.



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Q: Why are we considering this now?

Falling birth rates and financial pressures are affecting many schools locally and nationally. By federating voluntarily, we strengthen our position, protect the three-tier system locally, and avoid the risk of forced changes in the future.

Q: Who will make the final decision?

Both governing bodies will review the proposal. If they agree, it will go out to consultation with parents, staff, and the community. Governors will then make a final decision based on feedback.

Q: When could federation start?

If approved, federation could begin in **September 2026**.



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Myth-Busting: Setting the Record Straight

Myth 1: One of the schools is closing.

✗ Not true. Federation is about protecting both schools for the future. Both South Wellfield First and Wellfield Middle will remain open, with their own names, uniforms, and buildings.

Myth 2: My child will have to move schools earlier.

✗ No change. Children will continue to attend the First School until the end of Year 4, then move to the Middle School in Year 5, as they do now. The middle school will continue to offer Year 5-8.

Myth 3: This is the same as becoming an academy.

✗ No. A federation is different from an academy trust. Both schools keep their own budgets and a high degree of independence. The governing body stays local and focused on our community. There is no intention from either school to join a MAT.

Myth 4: Teachers will be forced to move between schools.

✗ No. Existing staff will stay employed by their current school. Over time, some staff may choose to work across both schools if it suits them, but this will not be compulsory.

Myth 5: The schools are in financial trouble.

✗ Both schools are currently financially stable. However, falling birth rates are affecting schools across the area. Federation is a proactive step to protect our schools' long-term stability and avoid problems in the future.