

¹ **Questions and Answers**

on the options for the future of
Merrow C of E Controlled Infant School
and Merrow Junior School

June 2026



Overview

The following document records direct questions submitted during the consultation period between Monday 15 June and Friday 10 July, and seeks to provide factual answers without offering opinion.\ This questions and answers document will be updated weekly during the consultation period, with a finalised version published once the consultation period has ended.

Please note, questions and answers from the public meetings during the initial period of consultation in March 2026, can be found [here](#). Please note, these relate to the specific proposal to amalgamate the two schools to form a Church of England primary school.

Questions and answers

For ease of review, where any questions have been repeated, we will provide one definitive answer. Responses have been provided by either the Council, the School or the Diocese as relevant or a combination of all/some of the relevant bodies as and where appropriate.

Question	Answer
What is the difference between the Governing Body of a Foundation school and in a Voluntary Controlled C of E school?	The governing body at a Voluntary Controlled C of E school typically consists of: - Headteacher - Parent governors - LA governor - Staff governor - Co-opted governors - Foundation governors (no more than 25% of the GB and usually appointed by the diocese or church, and including the local rector/vicar/minister) The governing body of a Foundation school consists of: - Headteacher - Parent governors - LA governor - Co-opted governors - Partnership governors - Staff governor The current Merrow Schools Federation governing body consists of: - Headteacher - Partnership governors - Foundation governors (including the local rector/minister/vicar) - Co-opted governors - Local Authority governor - Parent governors - Staff governor (details of the current governing body can be found here)

How will the land ownership work in both proposals?	The infant school site (Kingfisher Court site) is currently owned jointly by the Local Authority and trustees on behalf of the Diocese of Guildford. The junior school site (Sheeplands Avenue site) is currently owned by the 'Foundation', that being the governing body of the school. In Option 1, - the Sheeplands Avenue site would revert to Local Authority ownership upon closure of the junior school - the infant school age range would be extended to primary and it would move to the Sheeplands Avenue site. - the LA would own majority of the Sheeplands Avenue site, with a proportionate amount being transferred to the ownership of the diocesan trustees to mirror the current proportions of ownership at the Kingfisher Court site - in return, the Kingfisher Court site would become entirely owned by the Local Authority and the LA would endeavour to retain the site for educational purposes. - If the C of E Primary school were to close in the future on the Sheeplands Avenue site, the site would remain majority owned by the Local Authority with a proportion owned by the Diocesan trustees In Option 2: - the Sheeplands Avenue site would remain in the ownership of the governing body - the junior school age range would be extended, and it would become a primary school - land ownership at Kingfisher Court site would not change with the LA owning majority of the site and the diocesan trustees owning a proportion. - If the Foundation primary school were to close in the future on the Sheeplands Avenue site, the ownership of the site would revert to the Local Authority on closure.
What if I don't want the schools to amalgamate at all?	The schools being separate infant and junior schools is the current status quo and as it already exists, is not something that is being consulted on in this period. However, if you would still like to respond to the consultation without picking either option, you can do so by emailing directly to schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk with the subject "Marrow

	Consultation Response” and your name, relationship to the school (parent, governor, local resident, staff member etc) and your response to the consultation. We will then group any replies received which do not choose either option and consider them as a separate group in our consultation analysis.
Please provide details of: • the support currently provided to Merrow CE Infant School by the Diocese; • whether any direct or indirect charges are made to the school for this support; • whether any elements of this support are unique to the Diocese or whether they are otherwise available to a Foundation Primary School through alternative providers.	The Guildford Diocesan Board of Education (GDBE) is the religious authority for Merrow CE Infants school under the DBE Measure 2021. It has a statutory duty set out in the measure to provide support to its Church schools for religious education, collective worship and the development of the Christian character of the school. In addition, the GDBE also chooses to offer a range of services to its Church of England schools including Human Resources (HR), buildings and estates, leadership development, school improvement, teacher training and professional development for school staff. As at 22nd June 2026, Merrow C of E Infant currently receives the following support and/or services from the Diocese: <i>Support that is provided as part of the DBE’s statutory support at no charge as part of the DBE Measure 2021</i> - R.E. curriculum support - Collective worship and assembly guidance - SIAMS Inspection support - Support for the Christian character and ethos <i>Support provided which is chargeable</i> - HR - Leadership development - Teacher Training - Professional development networks for example EYFS and SEND - There are other alternative companies who offer similar/all/some chargeable services, including the council.
What financial contribution, if any, is currently made by the Diocese towards the running, maintenance or development of Merrow C of E Infant School, and would this change under Option 1?	Merrow CE Infant School is a Voluntary Controlled (VC) school and does not receive financial contributions from the diocese. As a VC school, the Local Authority is the responsible body for the school for maintenance. It also provides operational funding, which is delivered to the school via the LA by way of central government pupil funding. In Option 1, the proposed C of E primary model would also be Voluntary Controlled so there would be no changes and the Local Authority would continue to be the maintaining authority for the school.

	In Option 2, the proposed foundation primary model would remain Foundation and so would be funded in the same way as the current junior school with pupil funding from central government via the LA. Please note, in this response we are taking 'financial contributions' to mean specific, formal, routine funding streams provided by the Diocese of Guildford to the school. We are not including any one-off financial donations or fundraising that may come from other institutions associated with the diocese, such as from the local church community.
Would a C of E designation place any restrictions on the future choice of Multi Academy Trust compared with a Foundation Primary School?	Yes. It has been agreed and is expected that Church of England schools will join Church of England Trusts except in exceptional circumstances, when the Diocesan Board of Education gives its consent and approval for an alternative to be considered. The Department for Education (DFE) and the National Society for England and Wales have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding which sets out the protocols and processes for when a Church of England school becomes an academy and joins a Multi-Academy Trusts. A copy of the MoU is available here. The Guildford Diocesan Board of Education published its academy strategy in 2022 and a copy can be found on the Diocesan website here.
The consultation document emphasises that a Church of England school is open to children of all faiths and none and exists to serve the whole community. However, the C of Es national strategy (widely available online) includes a stated ambition towards "Doubling the number of children and young active disciples in the Church of England by 2030". Given that church schools are widely recognised by the Church as part of its mission, how should parents understand the role of a Church of	The Church of England's commitment to education is set out in its vision 'Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good'. Church schools serve their local communities and have done for over 125 years because they are open and accessible to all. Most Church schools use admissions policies that are inclusive of children of all faiths and none. Voluntary Controlled schools such as Merrow CE Infant school use the admissions criteria set by the Local Authority, not the diocese, so there can be no element of faith-based criteria used. The Church of England's wider mission strategy refers to its activity in its churches and its children and youth groups. It does not, and never has, attempted to use Church schools as a means to evangelise or proselytize children of any age.

England Primary School in supporting those objectives?	
What criteria will be used to determine whether Option 1 or Option 2 is taken forward, and what weight will be given to consultation responses when making that decision?	The responses to the current consultation will be reviewed and analysed once the consultation period has finished. An analysis of the responses, like the one produced after the previous period of consultation, will be published on the consultation website. There are no specific criteria to determine which option will be taken forward. All consultation responses, to both this consultation and the previous one, alongside the subsequent analyses, will be considered by the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Lifelong Learning before a decision is taken as to how to proceed.
It would be helpful to understand: • whether either model offers greater long-term protection or stability for the school • whether there are operational, financial, governance or legal advantages to either option • whether one option is considered more sustainable strategically over time	The long-term protection and stability for the two schools that is sought to be provided through this proposal comes through the actual amalgamation of the two schools into one school, rather than through which model the amalgamated school becomes. The same is also true of the operational and financial reasons which underpin the proposal to amalgamate the schools, and for the same reason, neither option is considered more sustainable than the other (although it should be noted that a primary model is considered more sustainable than an infant/junior model, hence the proposal to amalgamate the schools). The current infant/junior model means that the Federation is having to fund the operation of two sites when the schools only have sufficient pupil numbers for one school. This means that both school buildings are operating with empty rooms which the Federation are still needing to pay to heat and light. The operational and financial advantages of this proposal come from the consolidation of the two schools on to one site as a primary school, rather than from either option of a C of E or Foundation primary school.