

^{J1} **Questions and Answers**

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

June/July 2026



Overview

The following document records direct questions submitted to stakeholders during the consultation period between Monday 15 June and Friday 10 July, and seeks to provide factual answers without offering opinion.

In response to feedback and so to provide clarity, where a answer has been provided by a stakeholder other than the council, this has been identified at the start of the answer and the text highlighted in blue font.

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 Marrow 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 Diocese of Guildford answers: “The Guildford Diocesan Board of Education (GDBE) is the religious authority for Marrow 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, Marrow 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 Marrow C of E Infant School, and	Marrow 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.

would this change under Option 1?	In Option 1, the proposed C of E primary model would also be VC 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?	The Diocese of Guildford answers: “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”.	This is a matter of opinion, but the Diocese of Guildford’s view is that: “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 are not currently any 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.

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 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.
Why are there no consultation meetings planned in regard to the Merrow Schools amalgamation proposals?	Two consultation meetings were held during the first period of consultation, both of which explored the merits of the options proposed in the second consultation. The record of those meetings, in the form of a Questions and Answers document, has been published on the website and remains available for public view.

	This second period of consultation has commenced as a response to the feedback provided in the first consultation. The opportunity for respondents to ask questions has been provided by way of submission to a dedicated email address and the publication of a second Questions and Answers document. This document is updated regularly throughout the consultation period as questions are submitted – we aim to update it weekly at the maximum as answers must be co-ordinated between different stakeholders, but will strive for quicker updates where possible. It possible, as occurred at the public meetings in March, that questions are asked in person which must be taken away for a full response to be provided.
Could you clarify what would happen if the Diocese of Guildford did not support the amalgamation of the schools into a Foundation (non-Church of England) primary. It would be helpful to understand: • whether both options are equally deliverable; • whether the Diocese has confirmed that it would support Option 2 if that were the preferred outcome of the consultation; • if not, what the alternative course of action would be.	To respond to the points in turn: - In terms of physical delivery of a primary school, both options will deliver the same alterations to the building on the junior site regardless of whether the school is Foundation or C of E. In terms of deliverability because all parties agree on that option, this is not yet confirmed because there has been no formal decision making in this process yet, either from the Diocese or from the Council. - The Diocesan Board of Education has not yet confirmed if it would support Option 2 if it were the preferred outcome of the consultation, but they have supported the second period of consultation with two options being explored. - If either proposal does not proceed, then the schools will remain as they are as infant and junior schools on separate sites operating under a single Federation.
What specific educational, governance or strategic advantages Surrey County Council believes Option 1 offers compared with Option 2?	The Council does not believe that either Option 1 or Option 2 offers any specific educational, governance or strategic advantages more so than the other option. The educational and strategic advantages for the school lie in its amalgamation into a single primary school rather than in whether it is a C of E or Foundation primary school.
Does Surrey County Council consider either	Again, the Council considers that any additional protection in terms of stability of pupil numbers, economies of scale and

option to provide greater protection against future closure, merger or other structural change?	future structural changes lie in the overall amalgamation of the schools, rather than with a specific option over the other.
Does the Diocese would have any additional influence over future decisions relating to academy conversion, governance or school organisation under Option 1 compared with Option 2?	In Option 1 the Diocese would continue to be a stakeholder in the C of E school and would have input into future decisions about academy conversion, governance and any future school organisational proposals. In Option 2, the Diocese would not have any influence or input about academy conversion, governance or school organisational choices. It should be noted that the Diocese would be a consultee for school organisational choices by virtue of the school being located in the geographical boundary of the diocese (in the same way as the Diocese is a consultee for school organisational changes at any other school in that same boundary).
Given the statement that neither option is considered more sustainable than the other, what factors will ultimately guide the recommendation of one option over the other?	The council maintains a position of neutrality to either option and its priority has always been to promote the future sustainability of the schools through the process of a proposed amalgamation. The recommendation of one option over the other will be guided by the responses to the consultations (both this current consultation and the first consultation in March/April). These responses will be analysed and reviewed, with a decision being made by the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning as to how to proceed before issuing any legal notices. It should be noted that this decision could be for one of the options consulted on or to cease progress with the proposal altogether.
In what ways would a C of E primary school benefit from being part of a larger Diocesan group of schools, that could not be achieved as a Foundation primary school or, in the future, as part of a larger multi-academy trust?	The Diocese of Guildford answers: “All 82 Church of England schools in the Diocese of Guildford, have access to support and advice on matters related to the Christian character of their schools including Religious Education, Collective Worships and preparation for SIAMS inspections. As part of the wider family of Church schools, headteachers and governors can attend networking, conferences and training events organised by the Diocesan Board of Education which include: • Termly Heads & Chairs briefings • SIAMS Spotlight training • R.E. Subject leader training • Leadership and Governor conferences • Early Years & Foundations Stage Networks • School Business Manager briefings • SENDCo networks • Year 6 Leaver’s Services at Guildford Cathedral

	In addition, our wider range of support services are available to Church schools including: • Strategic HR service • Buildings & Estates service • School Improvement Services • Headteacher performance management support Most of these events are provided free of charge or at subsidised rate by the DBE to Church of England schools in the Diocese of Guildford. Church of England Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) can access this support at cost.” The Council notes that majority of the statutory support provided by the Diocese relating to the Christian character of the school would not be required in Option 2 if the school were a Foundation primary school. Furthermore, it also acknowledges that networking, conferences and training events can also be accessed via several other providers both as a standalone foundation school or as part of a multi-academy trust in the future. Relationships between schools at a local area level, for example as part of quadrant groups, phase councils, planning areas etc are not dictated by the type or status of a school as collegiate working across all school types is encouraged and facilitated.
Please could you explain under both options how much of the financial and operating responsibility with the governing body and how much with the LA? In the consultation process document, it seems to imply the LA have less responsibility under the foundations option and more falls on the governing body. Could you especially explain which things (buildings, human resources, legal advice etc) the governing body and the LA will be financially responsible for?	In Option 1, the primary school would be voluntary controlled, as the current infant school is. In Option 2, the primary school would be foundation, as the current junior is. In a voluntary controlled school, the Local Authority is: - The employer of staff (although this is funded from the school's budget) - The admissions authority responsible for setting admissions arrangements In a Foundation school, the Governing Body is: - The employer of staff (although this is funded from the school's budget in the same way as above) - The admissions authority responsible for setting admissions arrangements In both types of school, the LA is responsible for the maintenance of the buildings and site, and the governing body can choose to procure chargeable services, such as HR, legal etc, from any provider in the same that they can choose caterers etc. Ultimately, in both types of school, the governing body alongside the Headteacher and the school leadership team would have responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the school.

Can you tell me which stakeholder (council, diocese or school) have provided which answers in the Q&A document please?	Apologies that this was not made clear. The Q&A document has been amended so that it includes attribution of answers that are not provided by the council – both through a written acknowledgement and by highlighting the text in a different colour.
Can I change my response to the consultation if I have changed my mind?	Yes, of course. You will need to contact schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk so that we can remove your original response from our analysis and you can then resubmit a different response. Your email will need to provide sufficient information about your previous response so that we can identify it to remove it.
If pupil numbers continue to reduce, the long-term feasibility of the school must be a risk. In this event, does either Option provide greater assurance that the school ground on Shepherd Drive would not be sold for houses.	The proposed arrangements for land ownership in each option are outlined further above in this document. In the event of a school on the site closing in Option 1, land ownership would remain jointly with the LA and the Diocesan trustees. In the event of a school on the site closing in Option 2, land ownership would revert from the Foundation (or the Governing Body) to the sole ownership of the LA. In either case, the LA cannot offer a guarantee as to what decision would be taken in the future as to how to proceed with a future use for the site if the school should close. We must acknowledge that, in both options, there will be a new unitary authority in place, and we also cannot predict how demographic changes may influence any decision making that far into the future . However, we can confirm that currently the intention of Surrey County Council would be to ensure that both school sites in consideration in this proposal are retained for future educational use.
Are you able to check that respondents can only select an option once and not register their choices multiple times?	No. We are unable to ask for identifying personal details as part of consultation responses under GDPR regulations. Therefore, we are unable to ascertain whether any party has responded multiple times and rely on the appropriate conduct of respondents.
When can I expect to see the consultation analysis and when will a final decision be made? Will this be based solely on the results of this consultation?	The consultation closes on Friday 10 th July. Already we have had more than 700 responses, and so this will take some time to read and analyse so an analysis will not be completed before the end of the school term on 22 nd July. Given that the schools will then be on their summer holidays, we will not publish the completed analysis until the start of the autumn term in September 2026, to primarily reflect the availability of the school as a key stakeholder to respond to questions from their pupil and parent communities and provide reassurance.

	We are currently anticipating that there will be an interim decision made by the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning in late September 2026. This decision could be: • to proceed with issuing legal notices for either one of the options consulted on, • to consult on a different option • to not proceed with either option
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