

CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL FOR RUSH COMMON PRESCHOOL TO JOIN RUSH COMMON SCHOOL.

In early summer last year, Rush Common Preschool and Rush Common School (part of the Abingdon Learning Trust), started talking about working more closely together to benefit the children and staff in the two settings.

Over time the initial discussions have developed and now it is proposed that Rush Common Preschool merges with Rush Common School.

Both the Preschool and Abingdon Learning Trust are registered as charities, which allows this to happen.

The Preschool would have its own permanent accommodation on the School site. Abingdon Learning Trust are investing in making the accommodation suitable for Preschool education, which will be in the old caretaker's bungalow.

This consultation asks for your views about the merging of Rush Common School and Rush Common Preschool, and the change of age range for the school to include nursery-aged children. We plan on opening the Preschool on the School site for 1 September 2023.

By joining together, the opportunities for the School and Preschool to learn together are maximised – Preschool and Reception staff training together; Preschool children having access to the School site and resources, School staff benefitting from the expertise of the Preschool staff, and vice versa.

The Preschool Manager and her staff will all transfer to become part of the School's staff, and the trustees of the Preschool will be invited to join the local academy board of the school– ensuring that the interests of the Preschool are an important part of the School's governance.

There is operational and financial resilience for both the School and Preschool in joining together.

The Early Years curriculum and goals can be looked at from age 2½ to age 5, giving children a smooth start to their education from starting Preschool into KS1, and then KS2.

The Preschool will transfer with assets and some surplus funds, which the Trust has agreed will only be used for under 5s education.

We want to know what questions or concerns you might have and whether you would support this proposal to merge, or not.

Please send any comments to enquiries@abingdonlearningtrust.org or rushcommonsupervisors@gmail.com titled 'Merger Consultation', or via letter in an envelope marked 'Merger Consultation' to the Preschool or to the School. Your consultation responses should be received by 6 March 2023.

This letter is available on the websites of Rush Common School, Rush Common Preschool and Abingdon Learning Trust. There are some FAQs that follow, which we hope will be helpful.

At the end of the consultation period, all responses will be collated and discussed by both the Preschool trustees and the Abingdon Learning Trust trustees and governors.

At that point the decision whether to go ahead with the merger, or not, will be taken.

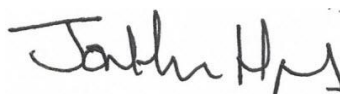
With best wishes,



Barry Jones
Chair, Rush Common Preschool



Debbie Lymn
Chair, Rush Common Local Academy Board



Jonathan Hopkins
Chair, Abingdon Learning Trust

Frequently Asked Questions

How is Abingdon Learning Trust run?

There is an overall Trust Board where strategic decisions are made, and this board has oversight and accountability for all of the schools. This is where policies and procedures are agreed that relate to the schools in the Trust. However, the Board delegates the majority of decisions about how its schools are run to local academy boards of governors, and to the Headteachers. This is because we believe that local decision-making is best, and decisions should be made by the governors and leaders who are closest to where the impact of the decisions are felt, and who know their schools and community well.

How will the Preschool be run?

The Preschool will be a separate part of the school, but fully included in the whole School. It will be run by the Preschool Manager and staff, with the Headteacher having final responsibility and accountability for all education in the School. The Head is held to account for the work of all sections of the School by the local academy board (LAB) and Trust CEO.

How will the Preschool be governed after merger?

Common Preschool trustees (members of the Committee as it currently is) will be invited to join Rush Common School's local academy board. They will ensure that the Preschool interests are represented within the full board.

Will there be more money available?

There will be no more funding available per child - as this is a level set by Oxfordshire County Council, following national guidelines. However, being part of a larger organisation gives opportunities for cost-savings. For example, purchasing of drinks/food and learning equipment as part of a larger purchasing organisation. Rent will no longer be paid as the Preschool is on the school site and is part of the school. Insurances and utilities are likely to be lower. Repairs and maintenance costs fall to the overall school, and staff development and training also.

In this way there should be some savings that can be used to further enhance the children's learning.

Will there be changes to the way the Preschool works with the community?

All of the contacts and activities that the Preschool has with the community will be maintained. We hope that through joint working between the Preschool and School that there will be even more opportunity for community working going forward.

How will staff be affected?

The Preschool staff will transfer to Abingdon Learning Trust as part of Rush Common School, and are protected under the TUPE regulations. This means that there will be no change to salaries or terms and conditions as part of the transfer. At this stage, we expect the Preschool will continue to be run by the Preschool Manager, with a Deputy Manager and staff.....much as now but with the benefit of being part of a larger organisation to take some of the administrative and operational burden, giving more time to work directly with the children.

If my child goes to the Preschool, do they have to go on to Rush Common School?

No. Children in a Preschool setting, even when on a school site, have no entitlement to join the school. A parent who has a child attending Rush Common Preschool can apply for a school place at any school once their child reaches statutory school age.

Similarly, any parent can apply for a place at Rush Common School, whether they have been to Rush Common Preschool or not. It is the Admissions policy for each school that determines whether a child is given a place, and not their Preschool setting.

Will this affect admissions to Rush Common School?

As the Preschool takes children below statutory school age, there is no change required to Rush Common School's admissions policy. The admissions policy is only for children of statutory school age – those who would join Reception or in years 1 – 6.

Children who have attended Rush Common Preschool do not have any greater advantage if their parents apply for a place at Rush Common School.

How can I apply to Rush Common Preschool?

You will need to contact the Preschool Manager about any enquiries related to attending the Preschool. Rush Common School office can also put you in contact with the Preschool. All Preschool places will be determined by the Preschool Manager, based on available places.

What happens with Ofsted inspection?

As the Preschool forms part of the School, Ofsted will inspect the School and the Preschool will be a part of the whole school inspection. There is no separate inspection for the Preschool.

Along with the Reception classes, the Preschool will form part of the Early Years section in the inspection report.

Who is responsible for safeguarding in the Preschool?

Safeguarding is a whole Trust responsibility and the Trust Board is accountable. The local academy board and headteacher are responsible for ensuring that the Trust's policy (which is the Oxfordshire schools' model policy adapted locally) is implemented in the School. The Trust's oversight is robust, and we have regular internal and external audits to ensure that this essential part of education is as strong as it can be.

What happens if I have a complaint about the Preschool?

Each school in the Trust adopts the Trust's Complaints' Procedure, adapting it for its local circumstances. The way to complain is clearly set out, with the aim that before concerns become a complaint, there is open discussion with the setting to identify issues and find solutions. This will be the same for the Preschool.

If a formal complaint is needed, it is usually the Headteacher who receives that complaint, or the local academy board of governors. The Complaints Procedure is then followed.

January 2023