

**Notes from governors meeting - Bedlington Whitley Memorial CE First School
8th May 2019 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.**

PRESENT:

6 members of the Governing Body, including Headteacher
Assistant Director (School Effectiveness) The Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle: Jo Warner

NCC Officers:

Head of School Organisation and Resources - Sue Aviston

School Organisation Manager - Lorraine Fife

Project Support Officer - Jacqui Pearson

Sue Aviston presented the powerpoint to the group.

SA highlighted that it is useful for the Governing Body to provide a joint response if they have a consensus of thoughts and opinions. This also includes any thoughts on catchment areas between the 3 schools and if all 3 schools should maintain a catchment area or just the first schools.

Questions which were raised during and following the presentation were:

1. Did Meadowdale have a larger catchment area before the Primaries in Choppington?

A. Yes, as a middle school, the catchment area encompasses the catchments of its two feeder first schools. About 4 - 5 years ago there was an amendment to its catchment area when Choppington became a primary and therefore no longer fed to Meadowdale.

2. How many pupils have school transport here?

A. The number of pupils are very low so they will not be impacted as their transport arrangements are already in place; current arrangements in place for pupils would not be affected by any changes to organisation approved by Cabinet at a later date.

3. What is the result on Bedlington academy of Meadowdale losing Years 7 & 8?

A. Council officers need to ensure there are sufficient local places for all primary and secondary age children. Therefore, we will be speaking to the leadership team of both Bedlington Academy and St Benet Biscop Catholic to see how additional places could be created in these year groups from September 2020.

4. Meadowdale are changing their age range, so in effect opening a new school. How can this be done in comparison to the First Schools?

A. Meadowdale Academy are not opening a new school, just changing the age range, gaining at the lower years and losing at the upper years. The Council is not the decision making body for the academy. The Council has given their

point of view, which is not in support of the Primary Academy due to the over capacity to the Regional Schools Commissioner.

5. How can the Academy pull strings and get away with it?

- A. It's not that they are pulling strings. They are an Academy and work to different admission policies to the LA and can run their school differently to what the LA maintained schools do. There are 2 secondary academies, which are moving away from Year 9 intake which has been motivated through parental choice and most parents moving children in at Year 7 intake to ensure they have a place at the high school..

6. Would we be allowed to do what the Middle school are doing and change the age range, open a new school? Where does this sit with the LA?

- A. The decision making bodies are different. Academies go direct to the Secretary of State for decisions and the LA maintained schools go through the process of FACS and then Cabinet members decide.

In terms of new school, the LA and Governing Bodies can't open new schools. Only Free Schools or Academies can be opened and these are not by the LA. Meadowdale are maintaining Years 5 and 6 so it is not a brand new school, they are deducting 2 year groups from the top and adding to the bottom of their age range.

Changes happen for example Richard Coates changed to Primary School to retain a church school in the village of Ponteland following school reorganisation.

7. Just thinking about SEND data, where does this sit, with home school or hosting school? Should it sit with an ARC unit?

- A. The data sits with the home school.
ARC is something that you can think about.

8. Thinking about transition, if Year 4 moves to Year 5 in Middle School (Meadowdale) and become part of the primary school (while there are still Year 6 pupils so technically not a primary school at this point, is it not confusing?

- A. For 2 years transition the school will be known as ...school and then ... primary school. So, Meadowdale Academy and then will become Meadowdale Primary Academy for example.

- B. Action point (LF):** find out Meadowdale's age ranges / changes etc - will they retain for 4 years or delay a year and open to all?
JW mentioned that this is a challenge to the Governors to maintain the partnership working in a tight community. The LA have had 3-4 months of discussions and didn't achieve an outcome.

There were lots of discussions about the catchment map and the green map showing the current Meadowdale catchment is huge.

It was reiterated that the LA manages catchment areas, including academies and this is why a question has been asked as part of the consultation process. For example,

Ponteland Middle has no catchment area. We can do the same in this instance, if that is the response received back from consultation. The catchment can be first schools (end in Year 6) and then move to the Bedlington Academy catchment from Year 7, OR, is it fair for Meadowdale to have the current catchment area (split in to 3 not 2).

9. What is the significance for Governors?

- A. It's really around transport to the school and if the catchment is cut, pupils may not now be eligible for transport.

10. What's the impact?

- A. To have your own children in catchment.
- B. The admissions policy
- C. Where do children go when the school is full?

Year 4 Whitley Memorial pupils can move to Year 5 in Meadowdale but they will need to apply to move to Meadowdale as the assumption is that pupils will remain in the Primary school. This is all parental choice. If pupils are to remain in Whitley Memorial, parents don't need to do anything.

JW posed a question to the Governing Body to address their response as what if versus greater good and it can work vice versa. The idea is to be ready for any eventuality. Meadowdale has catchment (currently covers all 3), there will be siblings in reception, Year 4 of Whitley Memorial, catchment of Meadowdale, likely for Whitley Memorial pupils in Year 4 to move to Meadowdale.

There is a perception in the top end of Belington you are more likely to get in to St Benet Biscop High School - it was suggested at the meeting that Whitley Memorial can create a FAQ and dispel some myths, e.g. Christian ethos puts you higher up the policy list rather than location.

There may be some factors for making parents move such as:

1. Science labs
2. MFL
3. Play space
4. Rugby spaces
5. Changing Rooms
6. Closer to secondary schools

It was suggested that Whitley Memorial sends out a questionnaire to parents to see what they are thinking, what benefits can the school highlight to retain pupils. What can you offer? The school is distinctive, the child is the most important and given opportunities.

Marketing is hard but you need to be clear of your ethos. A C of E school is different.

When trips are planned, all children are offered and not names drawn out of hats for a certain number of pupils. There is a forest school which gives pupils the opportunity to go on to Guides and Beavers.

Above all, go through the process with integrity.

Three smaller distinctive schools could work in the area.

Governing Bodies are passionate at the expense of another school e.g. getting smaller, redundancies.

You have the expertise to take in the younger children, rather than Meadowdale, who may need to bring in a level of expertise and qualifications.

JW confirmed that Early Years have ratios to meet per pupil to staff.

SUBMIT A JOINT RESPONSE FROM GOVERNING BODY AND ONE JOINT FROM STAFF.