

Amble First School – Staff Response *(via Citizen Space)*

I am writing on behalf of the staff of Amble First School. The following comments represent the views of some of the staff. Others may choose to respond individually and with different views.

Many staff are keen for the schools to change to a two tier system. We feel that our children would benefit academically, socially and emotionally from spending a further two years in a primary setting. In the previous school year, we lost a number of children to a neighbouring two tier system so we know that this is something that a number of parents appear to prefer.

We are aware that the current KS2 results in the partnership are not as good as they should be. We believe that by allowing the children to stay in primary education we could help to improve these results as we would be able to organise the curriculum more effectively, ensuring clear progression of knowledge and skills. Currently, the middle school faces the challenge of having to design a curriculum for Years 5 and 6 who have all covered different topics in their first schools. This has led to repetition of work for some and lack of coverage for others. Converting to a primary school would enable all children to receive the full curriculum coverage across KS2. With a good knowledge of the individual children and their abilities we would also be well placed to prepare them for the statutory KS2 assessments.

We recognise that there are different views from parents regarding the emotional ability of children to manage the transition from first to middle school. Some children are ready for the change and others not so much. We believe that there are growing numbers of children, particularly SEND children, who find the transition difficult and who would benefit from the stability of a further two years in the same class and with familiar school staff. We have a good understanding of their needs and how to support both the children and their families. By reducing the number of transitions, we could help to keep the same high level of support in place for longer.

Amble First School is slightly different from other schools in the partnership due to the size of the building and the space available to us. We are aware that any change to primary would involve a move for us. This is something that we would welcome. We are increasingly aware of the age of our building and the money that we have to spend on repairs and maintenance. We are also aware of the views of parents who feel that we do not have as much to offer as other schools in the area due to not having a school field. This does limit the opportunities that we can provide for our children. Likewise, the lack of space inside the building can also be challenging. Classrooms are small and space to carry out interventions or work with professionals is extremely limited. As schools we are now required to accommodate increasing numbers of children with an EHCP. At Amble First, we sometimes find it very difficult to support these children as well as we can due to the lack of space to work effectively with them. A move to a new building would hopefully provide us with some more space so that we could support our children better. We are concerned that if we do not move to new premises, prospective parents will look to other schools with better facilities and we may see a further decline in numbers.