



# Northumberland County Council

## Consultation on School Structures in Coquet Partnership

### Notes of Meeting

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<b>Meeting:</b>	Amble Links First School – Governors’ Meeting
<b>Location:</b>	Amble Links First School, Links Avenue, Amble, Morpeth, NE65 0SA

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<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	Monday 23 <sup>rd</sup> May 2022 at 5.00 pm
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<b>Present:</b>	
<u>NCC</u>	Sue Aviston (Head of School Organisation and Resources)
<u>Representatives</u>	Lorraine Fife (School Place Planning and Organisation Manager) Deborah Anderson (Project Support Officer)
<u>Amble Links First School</u>	Headteacher Eight Governors

<b>1.</b>	<b><u>Welcome and Introductions</u></b>
	<p>SA welcomed everyone to the meeting and those present were noted above.</p> <p>NCC Officers briefly outlined their roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SA - Head of School Organisation and Resources for the local authority. Has a range of responsibilities, one of which is school re-organisation.</li><li>• LF - School Place Planning and Organisation Manager. Responsibilities includes managing the consultation process, ensuring it runs smoothly and meets statutory guidelines etc.</li></ul>
<b>2.</b>	<b><u>Purpose of Meeting</u></b>
	<p>SA outlined the purpose of the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To explain the proposals which were approved by Cabinet on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022 and currently being consulted on.</li><li>• To provide an opportunity for governors to ask questions about the proposals.</li><li>• Brief, but not verbatim, notes would be published as part of the report to Cabinet.</li></ul>
<b>3.</b>	<b><u>Context and Rationale for the Proposals</u></b>
	<p>SA explained the background:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Council has allocated the Coquet partnership funding (£25.5m) to replace or refurbish its school buildings.</li><li>• Prior to any work commencing the Council seeks assurances that it is investing in a structure that will deliver improved outcomes and will be viable and sustainable for generations to come.</li><li>• Outlined the work that had been done with school leaders in the partnership over the last year.</li></ul>

<b>4.</b>	<b><u>Outcomes of Discussions with School Leaders</u></b>
	<p>Briefly summarised the outcomes of discussions held with school leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A 'Vision for the Coquet Partnership' agreed. The vision included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ improved educational outcomes/offer for all pupils.</li> <li>○ improved and extended SEND offer.</li> <li>○ ensuring that the community supports the model.</li> <li>○ ensuring that schools work together to further develop the partnership, creating a sustainable and viable model of education for the future.</li> <li>○ ensuring best value for the capital investment by NCC.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Main views from school leaders regarding the current structure and a two-tier structure. Noted that both models had their pros and cons.</li> </ul>
<b>5.</b>	<b><u>Standards in the Coquet Partnership</u></b>
	<p>The standards in the partnership were summarised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KS2 standards have been a concern for several years.</li> <li>• 2019 is the last validated data (2020 and 2021 data is not validated due to Covid).</li> <li>• In 2019 only 27% of students met the expected standard for Reading, Writing and Maths - worst result in the county and nationally. This is a significant concern to the local authority and Regional Schools Commission.</li> <li>• KS4 and KS5 performance was much improved, particularly in relation to Progress 8 and Average Point Score.</li> </ul>
<b>6.</b>	<b><u>Viability and Sustainability</u></b>
	<p>SA advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birth rate in the partnership remains steady (this is not the case in other parts of the county).</li> <li>• Challenge for this partnership is retention of pupils (approximately 25% of pupils leave the partnership to attend schools in other areas).</li> <li>• As school budgets are predominately based on pupil numbers this equates to a loss of funding for schools. (Potentially an additional £1m would be available across the partnership if those pupils were retained.)</li> </ul>
<b>7.</b>	<b><u>What are the Proposals</u></b>
	<p>SA outlined the proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council is consulting on two proposals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Model A – this is the current structure.</li> <li>○ Model B – this is a change to a primary/secondary structure of education (all first schools extend their age range up to age 11 and James Calvert Spence College reduces its age range to become an 11-18 secondary school).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Due to site constraints with the Amble First site, we are proposing that Amble First School relocates to the South Avenue site and takes up part of the building.</li> <li>• As part of the consultation, we are asking for other ideas.</li> </ul>
<b>8.</b>	<b><u>What are the Implications of the Proposals for Staff in the Coquet Partnership</u></b>
	<p>SA briefly outlined the implications for staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If Model A remains in place - no implications for staff apart from the annual 'business as usual' decisions.</li> <li>• If Model B is implemented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ First Schools would need to redesign their curriculum and staffing structures - there could be opportunities to look at the leadership structure and recruit additional staff.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ James Calvert Spence College would need to redesign its staffing structure as it would no longer need teaching staff for Years 5 and 6. Those staff would be deemed to be “at risk”.</li> <li>● Aim is to protect staff and retain the good teaching which is already in the partnership. NCC officers would work with headteachers in the partnership to develop a staffing protocol which all schools in the partnership would be asked to adopt. This would provide stability for both the staff and pupils.</li> <li>● Trade Unions are aware of the consultation and can be contacted, if required, by individual members.</li> </ul>
<b>9.</b>	<b><u>Special Educational Needs in Coquet Partnership</u></b>
	<p>SA shared predicted forecasts for SEMH and ASD pupils and advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There is currently no specialist provision within the Coquet partnerships for pupils with SEND.</li> <li>● 60 pupils with SEND leave the partnership to be educated in 11 different provisions.</li> <li>● Increases of SEMH and ASD are being seen across the county and nationally.</li> <li>● The capital funding, which has been allocated to the Coquet partnership, together with funding from Central Government and other Council funding gives us the opportunity to meet capacity needs locally.</li> <li>● As local authorities can't open new schools the Council is proposing to create a satellite provision, run by Barndale House School, which would be co-located alongside Amble First School on the South Avenue site.</li> <li>● Stressed that although co-located Amble First School and the SEND provision would be separate schools with their own entrances, outdoor areas and facilities.</li> <li>● This is the Council's suggestion, however, other ideas for meeting SEND demands are welcomed.</li> </ul>
<b>10.</b>	<b><u>Other Implications of Model A and Model B</u></b>
	<p>LF outlined the implications under both models as follows:</p> <p><u>Catchment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Proposing no changes to catchment areas under either model.</li> </ul> <p><u>Admissions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Proposing no changes to admission arrangements for nursery/reception pupils.</li> <li>● Under Model B, admission into James Calvert Spence College would change from Year 5 to Year 7.</li> </ul> <p><u>Timeline</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Potential timeline for Model B would be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ September 2022/2023 – operate as currently.</li> <li>○ September 2024 – Year 4 pupils would remain at their current first school and become Year 5. James Calvert Spence College would not receive Year 5 and would operate from Year 6 upwards.</li> <li>○ September 2025 – Year 5 pupils would move up to become Year 6. Pupils in Year 6 at James Calvert Spence College would move up to Year 7.</li> <li>○ September 2026 – Year 6 pupils from primary schools would transfer to James Calvert Spence College into Year 7.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● The current (2022) Year 3 pupils would be the last year group to transfer into Year 5 at James Calvert Spence College. The pupils in Year 2 pupils would become the first Year 5 pupils in the primary schools.</li> </ul>

	<p><u>Early Years</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following discussion with colleagues from early years it is believed that there is sufficient, good provision within the partnership.</li> <li>• We are therefore not proposing to increase early years provision as part of this consultation.</li> </ul> <p><u>Transport</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposing no changes to eligibility for home to school transport under either model.</li> <li>• If Model B implemented pupils in Years 5 and 6 wouldn't have as far to travel which could result in a small saving for the Council's Home to School Transport budget. However, this wouldn't have any bearing on the outcome of this consultation.</li> </ul> <p><u>School Buildings/Capital Allocation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As stated, the Council has allocated £25.5m towards investment in school buildings within the partnership.</li> <li>• Officers will be developing indicative budgets for any potential building work required under either model. This would include the SEND provision.</li> <li>• Outcomes from the consultation, together with the indicative costs, presented to Cabinet for consideration.</li> </ul>
<b>11.</b>	<b><u>Next Steps</u></b>
	<p>LF advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The consultation runs until midnight on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2022.</li> <li>• Good to have a response from you, as a governing body, to the proposals. However, can also respond as an individual.</li> <li>• Public event scheduled for Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> June at Amble Masonic Hall.</li> <li>• Feedback and responses will be analysed, and report presented to FACS and Cabinet Committees in September.</li> <li>• Cabinet would decide whether or not to approve and move to formal "statutory" consultation. If formal consultation approved this would be for four weeks and Cabinet would make a final decision in November 2022.</li> </ul>
<b>12.</b>	<b><u>Questions</u></b>
	<p><i>Q – Stated that 25% of pupils attend other schools. Do any pupils come into this area?</i> Yes we do get a few pupils attending from outside of the Coquet partnership, but nowhere near the same level.</p> <p><i>Q – Under Model B a lot of work would be required to convert all the first schools into primaries. Is there more funding available?</i> The Council can't implement a change unless there is sufficient funding available. Prior to Cabinet coming to a decision, they will be presented with indicative costs for each model. Work is being undertaken to look at indicative costs and these will be included in the report to Cabinet.</p> <p><i>Q – Construction costs are high at present. Is there a chance that the proposals might not go ahead?</i> It will be up to officers to ensure that the business case stacks up and is strong. Really lucky in Northumberland that our Elected Members understand that education is a priority.</p> <p>SA advised that it wasn't about addressing current issues with the building but about converting first schools to become primaries with the required accommodation based on the standard design. However, there might be opportunities to address existing issues if it was cost effective.</p>

*Q – Are we to assume the numbers of children are not increasing despite all the house building in the area?*

Do keep a watch on the data and we are seeing that in other areas too. Birth rate is steady in Coquet, but the issue is a lot of children go out of the partnership to be educated. The house building is not adding growth but is sustaining what is already here.

*Q – The ambition is to retain staff. Will there be pressure to take ‘at risk’ staff?*

There won't be pressure but an understanding that with the right training and support staff could be re-trained to develop the right skills to teach primary.

*Q - Will there be additional support around budgeting for staffing structures?*

Yes, finance colleagues will work with schools and help to develop budgets.

*Q – How big will the satellite SEND provision be and will pupils be full or part-time?*

Potentially a 50-place provision and it would be run as a special school. Pupils wouldn't be admitted without an EHCP. Give reassurance that it would be totally separate from Amble First School, just located on the same site.

SA finished the meeting by thanking the governors for taking the time to attend. Meeting closed at 6.15 pm.