

Grange View First School Governors' Response

We want to offer the best possible education for all pupils whilst ensuring the long-term viability of the schools in the partnership. We outline below our support for moving to option 2 - a 2 tier approach in the partnership.

Consistency of learning and teaching

Based on the current key stages of the national curriculum there is a natural break at the end of key stage two. The staff in our first schools are best placed to continue the educational journey of the children in their schools by building on their strengths and responding to their needs based on the knowledge that has been built up over 5 or 6 years. In addition, the accountability then lies with one establishment. In addition, with the KS2 SATs assessments being a judgement of all four years we can continually build on their prior knowledge accurately with established provision maps for all curriculum subjects. This would also avoid the repetition that often happens at middle school with the non-core subjects where the National curriculum allows schools choose the Geography and History topics, they cover in KS2. This would also provide a benchmark based on national standards for a secondary school to begin working with at the start of Key Stage 3.

Pupil Progress

Whilst there is a difference for all pupil groups, the gap widens for disadvantaged pupils.

Partnership data shows that the current system is negatively impacting most on the disadvantaged. Often when moving to a new school or key stage it can be a daunting and intimidating experience for the children, where standards can slip, where we believe that if they remain in the same setting for the remainder of time in KS2 they are already confident and familiar with the schools procedures and teaching and would return ready to build on prior learning. These are the pupils that we know will benefit from the continued high levels of pastoral support that the first schools are experienced in and already offer to all our families.

Parental Pressure

All first schools in the partnership are aware of escalating parental dissatisfaction with the current system, coupled with the increasing move to a two-tier system in other neighbouring partnerships. The impact of this is shown by a growing number of children leaving at Year 4 or earlier and moving out of the partnership; this is impacting negatively on all school budgets. The creation of Warkworth Primary School also caused parental uncertainty and an increased number of families are moving schools earlier. A two-tier system would bring our partnership in line with the majority of the rest of the country.

Transition Issues

The practicalities of arranging a smooth transition in the middle of a key stage has historically proven difficult for all schools involved and continues to do so. The additional time and effort this entails could be more positively spent accelerating the progress of the pupils in their current settings.

Earmarked Funding

We are grateful that NCC have already earmarked millions of investments for the partnership. Before this is formally allocated, we feel that it is essential to consider the long-term structure of our partnership for this money to be spent most effectively to best meet the educational and wellbeing needs of the children we support.

To turn Primary, we understand that Amble First School would require a new building. There is an opportunity to do this with the funding earmarked and the potential site availability with the re-development of James Calvert Spence College. The additional focus on SEND provision within the partnership is a welcome one and we fully support this.

Summary

The implementation of the primary/secondary system will provide stability, consistency and continuity for pupils throughout their primary and secondary years which is in line with the National Curriculum and key stage assessments.

The first schools have rigorous assessment in place that would be continued into years 5 and 6. Reorganisation will remove the phase transfer in the middle of key stage 2, enabling the remaining schools to take full accountability for whole key stages. Successful implementation of this system will highly likely begin to stem the flow of pupils to other schools outside the partnership.

As governors, we can assure you that we have the commitment, drive and determination to make this proposal work.

**Governors' response from
Grange View C of E First School
Grange Road
Widdrington
Morpeth,
NE61 5LZ**