



Northumberland County Council

Consultation on School Structures in Coquet Partnership

Notes of Meeting

Meeting:	Red Row First School – Staff Meeting
Location:	Red Row First School, Red Row, Morpeth, NE61 5AS
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Date & Time:	Wednesday 18 th May 2022 at 3.30 pm
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Present:	
<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>Union</u>	Andrew Gibson (GMB)
<u>Representatives</u>	Hannah Gregory (Unison)
<u>Red Row First</u>	Headteacher
<u>School</u>	Seven Members of Staff (Teaching and Non-teaching)

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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Outlined the work that had been done with school leaders in the partnership over the last year.
4.	<u>Outcomes of Discussions with School Leaders</u>
	<p>Briefly summarised the outcomes of discussions held with school leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 'Vision for the Coquet Partnership' agreed. The vision included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ improved educational outcomes/offer for all pupils. ○ improved and extended SEND offer. ○ ensuring that the community supports the model. ○ ensuring that schools work together to further develop the partnership, creating a sustainable and viable model of education for the future. ○ ensuring best value for the capital investment by NCC. • Main views from school leaders regarding the current structure and a two-tier structure. Noted that both models had their pros and cons.
5.	<u>Standards in the Coquet Partnership</u>
	<p>The standards in the partnership were summarised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KS2 standards have been a concern for several years. • 2019 is the last validated data (2020 and 2021 data is not validated due to Covid). • 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. • KS4 and KS5 performance was much improved, particularly in relation to Progress 8 and Average Point Score.
6.	<u>Viability and Sustainability</u>
	<p>SA advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth rate in the partnership remains steady (this is not the case in other parts of the county). • Challenge for this partnership is retention of pupils (approximately 25% of pupils leave the partnership to attend schools in other areas). • 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.)
7.	<u>What are the Proposals</u>
	<p>SA outlined the proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council is consulting on two proposals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Model A – this is the current structure. ○ 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). • 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. • As part of the consultation, we are asking for other ideas.
8.	<u>What are the Implications of the Proposals for Staff in the Coquet Partnership</u>
	<p>SA briefly outlined the implications for staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If Model A remains in place - no implications for staff apart from the annual 'business as usual' decisions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If Model B is implemented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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. ○ 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”. • 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. • Trade Unions are aware of the consultation and can be contacted, if required, by individual members.
9.	<u>Special Educational Needs in Coquet Partnership</u>
	<p>SA shared predicted forecasts for SEMH and ASD pupils and advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is currently no specialist provision within the Coquet partnerships for pupils with SEND. • 60 pupils with SEND leave the partnership to be educated in 11 different provisions. • Increases of SEMH and ASD are being seen across the county and nationally. • 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. • 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. • Stressed that although co-located Amble First School and the SEND provision would be separate schools with their own entrances, outdoor areas and facilities. • This is the Council's suggestion, however, other ideas for meeting SEND demands are welcomed.
10.	<u>Other Implications of Model A and Model B</u>
	<p>LF outlined the implications under both models as follows:</p> <p><u>Catchment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposing no changes to catchment areas under either model. <p><u>Admissions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposing no changes to admission arrangements for nursery/reception pupils. • Under Model B, admission into James Calvert Spence College would change from Year 5 to Year 7. <p><u>Timeline</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential timeline for Model B would be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ September 2022/2023 – operate as currently. ○ 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. ○ 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. ○ September 2026 – Year 6 pupils from primary schools would transfer to James Calvert Spence College into Year 7. • 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.

	<p><u>Early Years</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following discussion with colleagues from early years it is believed that there is sufficient, good provision within the partnership. • We are therefore not proposing to increase early years provision as part of this consultation. <p><u>Transport</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposing no changes to eligibility for home to school transport under either model. • 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. <p><u>School Buildings/Capital Allocation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As stated, the Council has allocated £25.5m towards investment in school buildings within the partnership. • Officers will be developing indicative budgets for any potential building work required under either model. This would include the SEND provision. • Outcomes from the consultation, together with the indicative costs, presented to Cabinet for consideration.
11.	<u>Next Steps</u>
	<p>LF advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consultation runs until midnight on 29th June 2022. • Good to have a response from you, as a governing body, to the proposals. However, can also respond as an individual. • Public event scheduled for Saturday 16th June at Amble Masonic Hall. • Feedback and responses will be analysed, and report presented to FACS and Cabinet Committees in September. • 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.
	<u>Questions</u>
	<p><i>Q - Would staff have an opportunity to look around schools prior to making any applications?</i> Yes, there would be an opportunity.</p> <p><i>Q – Is two-year old provision deemed to be adequate within the partnership?</i> Yes.</p> <p><i>Q – Would the SEND proposals have a separate capital budget?</i> Potentially, yes. We have £17m in the Council's budget for SEND across the County, but this is for the whole of Northumberland and not just for the Coquet partnership. We also have some Central Government funding (£1.2m for this year and £2.4m for next year). However, there is a massive demand for SEND. Aiming to launch, hopefully in September, the SEND Capacity Strategy.</p> <p>SA advised that the costs would be what they were, especially given the current market challenges. It would be up to the business case to make the rationale to support any change.</p> <p><i>Q – Would it not be possible to come to a decision before 31st October as this is a key date in relation to school admissions regarding phase changes. November would prevent the current Year 3 pupils becoming Year 5.</i> No that isn't the case. What does impact any change is being able to complete all the building works required. Any changes need to be well-managed transitions and recruitment to staffing structures etc. takes time.</p>

Have done it in the past when a school has gone into special measures, parents have applied for a middle school place pending a decision by Cabinet.

Q – Feel the current Year 3 are getting the worst deal. Established that the current structure isn't working, and we have established where we would like to go. The current Year 4 are ready to go to middle school. However, Year 3 will have a further year to wait prior to transfer, knowing that it doesn't work. How are we going to manage their parents?

James Calvert Spence College has been receiving significant support, locally and nationally (eg. Opportunity North -East, Ambition Institute). There has been lots of support for this school to improve. We are looking at data from 2019 as there hasn't been any recent validated data to say it has improved significantly. Hopefully this year's results will show an improvement. The local authority is putting significant support into the school as well as the Regional Schools Commissioner. The last SIP report shows the school is making significant progress and Ofsted have judged the school to be taking effective action. We are saying that the school could be much better rather than it has failed.

This is another reason why the staffing protocol is vital. If staff know have a post/job to go to their input into children's education will be no different. Being able to provide stability for staff means children will be looked after and protected.

Q – Following what happened previously with Druridge Bay Middle School many parents and residents within the community think this is a done deal

It is really important that parents and residents' views are expressed whether those views are good, bad or indifferent. However, it was stressed that it was not a referendum and not about the numbers for or against something. The views of individuals who are directly impacted hold greater weight with the Council's Elected Members.

If any parents would like to attend the public event but have trouble getting to the venue, they need to let the headteacher know as the authority can arrange transport if required.

SA finished the meeting by thanking staff for attending the meeting. Meeting closed at 4.30 pm.