



# Northumberland County Council

## CABINET

**Date: 11 October 2022**

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### **The Outcomes of Consultation on Berwick Partnership Organisation**

Report of the Joint Interim Director of Children's Services - Audrey Kingham

Cabinet Member for Children's Services: Councillor Guy Renner-Thompson

Report prepared by: Sue Aviston, Head of School Organisation and Resources

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### **Purpose of Report**

This report sets out the feedback received from stakeholders arising from Phase 1 of informal consultation with stakeholders in the Berwick Partnership area and other relevant parties on whether any models of organisation that may be brought forward with specific proposals for schools (Phase 2) should consist of only 3-tier models of organisation or include 3-tier and 2-tier (primary/secondary) models of organisation.

This report sets out the findings of Phase 1 consultation and as a result of feedback received, Cabinet is recommended to approve Phase 2 consultation with stakeholders in the area served by Berwick Partnership and other interested parties on specific proposals for individual schools in the partnership within both a 3-tier and a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure, including some school closures. This would consist of a 15-week (school weeks) consultation beginning on 31 October 2022.

The outcomes of Phase 2 consultation would be brought back to Cabinet at a later date, at which point Cabinet may be requested to approve the publication of statutory proposals.

### **Recommendations**

#### **It is recommended that Cabinet:**

- 1) Review the feedback from the Phase 1 pre-Consultation set at paras. 21-54 when coming to the next stage decision.
- 2) Take into consideration that Phase 1 consultation began on 23 May and was extended to 12 August to allow sufficient time for interested parties to respond.

- 3) Approve the Phase 1 consultation has identified significant support for both the current 3-tier and the 2-tier (primary/secondary) systems of school organisation.
- 4) Approve the initiation of Phase 2 pre-consultation for 15 school weeks setting out specific proposals for individual schools in the Berwick Partnership within both the 3-tier and 2-tier structure of organisation as set out at paras. 56 and 57, in the light of the significant support expressed for both models of organisation by consultees and taking into account the wider issues of viability and sustainability of schools, post-16 and post-18 provision, improved educational outcomes and capital investment in school buildings.
- 5) As part of Phase 2 pre-consultation, approve consultation on the proposals set out at para. 59 to establish additional SEND provision within the Berwick area specifically to address the growing number of children and young people being diagnosed with a primary special educational need in Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and Autism (ASD).
- 6) Approve the draft proposed models of school organisation within both the 3-tier and 2-tier structures suggested as the basis for consultation, including proposals for school closures.
- 7) Note the £39.896 million already identified in the Council's medium-term financial plan for investment in schools in the Berwick Partnership, including for the replacement and remodelling of Berwick Academy.
- 8) Approve expenditure of up to £250k for the development of the outline business case in relation to recommendation 7.
- 9) Delegate the decision to undertake further consultation on the proposal, if necessary, to the Joint Interim Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.
- 10) Note that local authorities do not have powers to propose or change the organisation of academies; therefore, any proposed changes to the organisation of Berwick Academy and St. Cuthbert's Catholic First School as part of a wider partnership reorganisation would need to be consulted on by the Trustees of those academies and taken to the Regional Schools Director for a decision.
- 11) Be aware should Cabinet approve a second stage of consultation, the outcomes presented to Cabinet may include a recommendation to permit the publication of statutory proposals in relation to relevant maintained schools, including closure proposals.

### **Link to Corporate Plan**

These proposals are most closely linked to the Council's priority for Learning (achieving and realising potential, but it is also strongly linked with the priority for Connecting (having access to the things you need).

### **Key Issues**

1. On 12 April 2022 Cabinet approved the initiation of Phase 1 of pre-statutory consultation on whether schools, parents and the wider community of stakeholders with an interest in the Berwick area preferred the current 3-tier organisation of schools in the partnership or whether they believed a 2-tier(primary/secondary) organisation of schools would be better placed to address the issues facing the partnership.
2. The background and rationale for the Phase 1 pre-consultation are set out fully in the Report of The Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children’s Services, 12 April 2022, provided in the Background Papers to this report.
3. Phase 1 pre-consultation began on 23 May and concluded at midnight on 12 August 2022; this equated to 11 weeks, 8 of which were within school term-time in line with DfE guidance. The method and format used to carry out consultation is set out at paras. 14 to 20, while the feedback and analysis are summarised in paras. 21 to 52.
4. As the feedback received from schools, parents and other interested parties during Phase 1 pre-consultation indicated that there was significant support for both the 3-tier and the 2-tier systems within the partnership, Cabinet is recommended to approve the initiation of Phase 2 pre-consultation setting out specific proposals for individual schools both within a 3-tier and a 2-tier (primary/secondary) organisation of schools.
5. It is proposed that Phase 2 pre-consultation would last for 15 school weeks, commencing on 31 October 2022 until 3 March 2023. It is envisaged that this extensive consultation period would enable all interested parties sufficient time to respond effectively, as well as enabling officers to carry out the required number of school meetings and public events with contingency for rescheduling where necessary, for example due to inclement weather.
6. The Phase 2 pre-consultation would include the development of an online consultation document via the Council’s Citizen Space facility, with hard copies available on request. The link to the consultation document would be sent directly to those Governors, staff and parents relevant to those schools most directly impacted; however, it would also be made available on the Council’s website to enable any interested party to respond. A ‘padlet’ containing additional information and Frequently Asked Questions would also be set up as part of the consultation process.

In addition to the models of school organisation and proposed SEND provision set out at paras. 56, 57 and 59, the Phase 2 consultation would focus on a range of factors, including:

- Viability and sustainability of schools, including finance
- Educational outcomes
- Catchment areas
- Buildings
- Home to School Transport
- Impact on staff of schools and academies
- Sport and Recreation
- Rurality and wider community issues

7. A report setting out the results of Phase 2 pre-consultation, should it be approved, would be brought back to Cabinet at a later date. A request to publish statutory

proposals on changes to schools in the Berwick Partnership may also be included in that report, including possible school closure proposals.

## Background Information

8. The Council has allocated £39.896 million in capital funding within its Medium-Term financial Plan for capital investment in education within the Berwick partnership of schools.
9. Before committing to such investment in these schools, it was agreed that assurance would need to be sought that the organisational structure within the Berwick Partnership is viable and sustainable in the medium to long-term through the retention of the majority of students in all phases, and that the agreed structure is the most likely to lead to improved educational outcomes for all children and young people in the Berwick area.
10. Council officers began working with headteachers in the Berwick Partnership in April 2021 and over a 12-month period in workshops and meetings explored a number of possible models of organisation that would meet this requirement, including the current 3-tier model structure. In addition, the question of whether Belford Primary, Wooler First and Glendale Middle Schools should remain within the Berwick Partnership was also discussed.
11. Throughout the work undertaken with the Berwick Partnership, headteachers and school governors understood that whatever structure was ultimately agreed, this possibly would have to be within the context of some other fundamental changes, such as a reduction in the current number of schools in the partnership, including some schools moving to other partnerships as noted at para. 3. The issues facing the partnership that would necessitate the need for changes to the current organisation of schools in Berwick are:
  - Education Outcomes (note overall results for middle schools and Berwick Academy in summer 2022 are not yet verified and are not included in the information below):
    - While KS1 assessments are not published, all but one of the 13 first and primary schools are graded Outstanding or Good by Ofsted.
    - Based on the last verified results in 2019, middle schools in the Berwick Partnership and Belford Primary have above average scores at KS2 and (although Glendale Middle results are slightly below average) at the end of Year 6. All 3 middle schools are graded 'Good' by Ofsted.
    - Berwick Academy's GCSE results in 2019
      - Grade 5 in English and Maths (strong pass) - 21% compared to Northumberland and England average of 43%
      - Progress 8 and Attainment 8 scores were below the Northumberland and England average
      - The school has reported improved outcomes in these measures in 2020 and 2021, although these are not able to be compared to 2019 due to differences in assessment.
    - Berwick Academy's 'A' level results in 2019
      - Progress score was the same as the average for England
      - The average grade was a D+, compared to the Northumberland and England average grades of C+

- Viability and Sustainability of schools and surplus places

- The number of children being born within the Berwick Partnership area has been falling for a number of years and is predicted to continue (see Table1):

**Table 1**

<b>Current Phase</b>	<b>Average cohort size</b>
High School (Year 9 to 11)	221
Middle School (Year 5 to 8)	222
First School (Reception to Year 4)	200
Reception 2022 to Reception 2025	165

- There are already significant surplus places in first schools in the partnership, with 182 pupils on roll in Reception in January 2022 with capacity for 293 pupils in schools. As can be seen from Table 1, these surplus places are predicted to increase in the coming years and schools will compete more and more for pupils. As cohorts move through the school phases, the middle and high schools will also feel the impact of falling pupil numbers on their budgets. Currently there are 4 schools forecast to be in deficit budget by 2024/25, with 8 forecast to be in deficit by 2025/26 - 9 schools currently have an in-year deficit.
- Compounding the fall in pupil numbers is the continuing drift of pupils into neighbouring partnerships, into Scotland and into private education (see Table 2):

**Table 2**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Attending Alnwick Schools</b>	<b>Attending Scottish Schools</b>	<b>Attending Private Schools</b>	<b>Total</b>
High (Yr9-11)	103	48	32	183
Middle	27 (5 in primary)	32 (14 in primary)	35	94
First	28	3	9	40

The above data equates to 28% of high school (Year 9 to Year 11) students living in the Berwick area choosing to attend other schools. Of students in the Berwick area of middle school age, 10% choose to attend these schools; at first school phase, just 4% of pupils living in the Berwick area attend these schools. In economic terms, at high school phase these student numbers equates to around £915k while at middle school phase this equates to £470k.

While there will be a variety of reasons why students attend certain schools, for example distance from home being a factor, while some parents would send their children to private schools in any event. However, some feedback received during the informal meetings with schools, via the community survey in Autumn 2021 and from Phase 1 consultation indicates there is a level of dissatisfaction with the offer at high school phase and some parents are choosing an alternative pathway even earlier in their children's educational journey.

12. A high-level survey was also carried out with the wider Berwick Partnership community in Autumn 2021 to gauge their key priorities when considering school organisation in the area and to assist in formulating the next steps in the process.
13. As a result of the work undertaken with schools and the initial community survey, Cabinet was recommended to approve Phase 1 pre-consultation with all stakeholders and interested parties on whether the current 3-tier or 2-tier (primary/secondary) structures would be the most likely to achieve long-term viability and sustainability for education in the partnership, as these had been identified as the two preferred models of organisation.

### **The Phase 1 Pre-Consultation Process**

14. Phase 1 pre-consultation began on 23 May and closed on 12 August, with the purpose of ascertaining from schools, parents and all interested parties whether they believed the current 3-tier system or a 2-tier (primary/secondary) model of school organisation would be better placed to achieve improved educational outcomes throughout the educational pathway of students in the area and that would also support viable and sustainable schools by retaining more students in Berwick schools up to the end of Year 13.
15. A consultation register of relevant stakeholders was drawn up and is included at Appendix 2 of this report.
16. A consultation document was developed, including a questionnaire, setting out data and information relating to schools including Ofsted gradings, education outcomes and pupil data and information. The document also set out data and information relating to the growth in the need for specialist provision in the Berwick area, particularly in relation to children and young people with primary needs in SEMH and ASD. The document also asked consultees if they had any views on the sufficiency of provision in early years and post-16 and post-18 education. The full document is attached to this report at Appendix 1.
17. The consultation document was circulated directly to parents, staff, Governors and other stakeholders in the Consultation Register via an electronic link. The link to the document was also published on the Council's website, on Twitter and Facebook and a notice highlighting the consultation displayed in the local libraries in the Berwick area.
18. In addition, a dedicated consultation 'padlet' was set up to hold the consultation document, frequently asked questions and other relevant information for stakeholders.
19. Council officers ran two public events during the consultation period and one event for school staff only as follows:
  - 13 July - Public event in Belford
  - 14 July – Staff only event in Berwick
  - 16 July - Public event in Berwick
20. Council Officers and Headteachers were on hand throughout the events to assist with questions, queries or provide additional information where necessary. The two public events were attended by 32 parents and members of the community, 16 staff

members and 10 governors. The staff only event was attended by 28 members of staff and three governors.

### **Feedback from Phase 1 Pre-consultation**

21. This section of the report summaries the feedback from Phase 1 pre-consultation on the substantive question of whether the current 3-tier organisation of schools or a 2-tier (primary/secondary) model would be better placed to address the issues facing Berwick Partnership outlined in para. 11.
22. A total of 365 (347 online and 18 written) responses were received to the Phase 1 consultation. For context, there were 2,323 pupils on roll in Berwick schools in Reception to Year 13 in January 2022.
23. Responses from the Governing Bodies of schools were as follows (full responses are included in the Background Papers to this report):
24. Belford Primary School

The Governing Body of Belford Primary School is unanimously in favour of Belford Primary School becoming an official member of the Alnwick Partnership. The reasons for this decision are:

- Since becoming a primary school none of the children have progressed to Berwick.
- To enable smooth transition for children, staff attend meetings in Alnwick as well as Berwick, even though no children transition to Berwick, and this greatly increases the demands on staffs' time.
- There is very little difference in distance between Belford/Alnwick and Belford/Berwick however parents don't benefit from free home-to-school transport to their choice of school only because Belford is officially part of the Berwick Partnership.

Regarding the proposals to change the arrangement for schooling in Berwick the governors felt that it was for the schools in Berwick and surrounding area to express their views on the proposed changes.

An extract from their response states:

*"We know that this has been a contentious issue for generations of parents and children attending our school and feel it is only right that the proposal for us to become part of the Alnwick Partnership is now approved."*

25. Berwick St Mary's CE First School

The Governing Body supports the proposal to move towards a 2-tier system of education. We are aware of the work, information shared and discussion of options available and feel the 2-tier model offers the best opportunities for children and families in the future.

An extract from their response states:

*“We firmly believe St Mary’s is well equipped to meet the need of the transition, with both the staff and provision suited to continuing to provide an excellent education to the children and families we serve.”*

26. Holy Trinity CE First School

The Governing Body stated that Holy Trinity is a popular school, well-respected by parents and the community, with a strong offer so the governors are confident it would continue to thrive in either system.

Governors’ previous response was felt to be solely for 3-tier. However, the governors did not rule out 2-tier, but would have liked a more detailed model to be put forward before they could fully support it. The proposal is vague and the governors questioned whether it would result in better outcomes.

An extract from their response states:

*“We have said all along that we would be willing to go primary (and think we could do so successfully) if that was proven to be the will of parents and in the best interest of students.”*

27. Lowick CE and Holy Island CE First Schools (Federated Governing Body)

The Federated Governing Body of Lowick and Holy Island First Schools feel that they have the appropriate team, leadership and premises to make 2-tier work well. Children would have the chance to mature for two more years before a key transition and allow Holy Island children to be educated locally before moving to Longridge.

An extract from their response states:

*“It will bring our partnership into line with north of the border and south of our area.”*

28. Hugh Joicey CE First School

The Governing Body of Hugh Joicey First School believe there is a real potential for Ford in terms of changes into Primary particularly as a rural school in the west of the partnership.

An extract from their response states:

*“There is no change from the preference and this will benefit Ford best out of all of the options. Preserving a rural presence for children to undertake either First or Primary is of utmost importance with links to the community and church.”*

29. Norham St Ceolwulf’s CE First School

The Governing Body of Norham St Ceolwulf’s CE First School feels it would be in the best interests of our community and the education of our children if the school went primary. It believes that it has the capacity to successfully transition into a primary setting and provide an excellent and full key stage 2 experience.

An extract from their response states:



*“The majority of Governors believe becoming a primary school will enable our children to be better prepared for their next stage of education, as staff will be able to fully support the expectations of key stage 2, whilst at the same time providing the continued pastoral excellence of our village setting, which caters for the needs of children/community of the Tweed Valley.”*

30. Scremerston First School

The Governing Body’s consensus is that 3-tier works well in Berwick and that would be the system the Governors would like to keep if possible, with the necessary adjustments due to falling rolls.

An extract from their response states:

*“However, if the final decision is to go 2-tier in Berwick, we feel that our site is flexible enough and has space to accommodate additional year groups relatively easily.”*

31. Spittal First School

The Governing Body of Spittal First School believes that schools in the Berwick Partnership should be organised within a 3-tier structure. The first and middle schools are, in the majority, good and produce results in line with or above national averages. Extending the academy year groups downwards to include years 7 and 8 does not automatically guarantee improved standards and risks adversely affecting the current standards of attainment.

In relation to Glendale Middle and Wooler First Schools the governors believe the schools should remain in the Berwick Partnership. However, if the majority of pupils currently transfer to Alnwick the schools should move partnership but this could impact further on numbers in the Berwick Academy catchment, adding to financial pressures. The governors also believe that Belford Primary School should remain in the Berwick Partnership for the same reasons, but stated that this should be a decision made by these individual schools.

In order to meet the growing numbers of children and young people being assessed as having SEMH and ASD within Berwick the governors suggested investment in new purpose built provision for The Grove School and investment in SEMH/ASD provision within the Berwick partnership.

The governors stated there should be a wider range of Post-16 opportunities based in Berwick so the children do not have to travel. This includes access to a broader range of experiences and opportunities which link to industries in the area (including the wider North East area).

An extract from their response states:

*“However, as far as Spittal School is concerned we are prepared to accommodate children under either a two or three tier system.”*

32. St Cuthbert’s RC First School

The Governing Body of St Cuthbert’s RC First School supported the 2-tier option.

An extract from their response states:

*“At our local Governing Board meeting held on June 27th the general consensus was that we all support the 2-tier option.”*

### 33. Tweedmouth Prior Park First School

The Governing Body of Tweedmouth Prior Park First School are of the opinion that the partnership should change to 2-tier education. It is better for the children to have fewer changes of schools during their education, the move is better placed at the end of a key stage and the children have more time to settle into secondary school before having to choose GCSE options. Economics of being a primary school would enable them the resources to provide the better breadth and depth of learning.

Governors believed that the moves of Glendale Middle, Wooler First or Belford Primary Schools from Berwick to Alnwick Partnership was a decision for those schools, and their governing bodies, to make after full consultations with their stakeholders.

Governors understand and support the need for additional resources, including staff and premises, to meet the needs of the growing number of children assessed as having SEMH and ASD within Berwick. Children should be able to receive their education close to their home community.

The Governing Body is aware that the falling birth rate is having an effect on surplus places within early years provisions and know the challenges this presents to existing nurseries, both school and private providers. We believe that the local authority should be facilitating more discussion on this topic as part of the next stage of planned organisation of education within the Berwick Partnership as it will impact on the finances of some Primary Schools.

The Governors were pleased to see the improvements in secondary education and recognise the value of these improvements continuing to provide an important part of Post-16 education in Berwick. The relative isolation of Berwick does mean plans for wider post-16 education will have to be made on a broader regional, rather than just a local perspective

An extract from their response states:

*“We would like to stress the urgency of clear plans for the future of education within the Berwick Partnership. Our school will not be alone in having to make very difficult financial choices in the next year that could cause unnecessary damage to the education of our pupils and hurt members of our staff if we do not have a clear plan in place. We must all recognise that difficult decisions must be made about merging or closing well-loved schools alongside the pleasure of bringing new investment in enhanced educational facilities to Berwick.”*

### 34. Tweedmouth West First School

The Governing Body of Tweedmouth West First School are unanimous in their opposition to moving to a 2-tier system.

As a priority the governors want the facilities at the Grove School to significantly increase in capacity to meet the needs of the community. The specialist support

provided by the Grove school is an asset to be proud of. Governors also want to see the issues within the Academy tackled appropriately and believe both the Grove School and the Academy require new suitable buildings in order to achieve this.

Governors raised concerns of the lack of robust scientific, independent assessment and evidence. Interviewing all stakeholders (community members, parents, school employees and students) and thematically analysing the results to come to reliable conclusions in order to specify where the issues lie and why they exist, would allow evidence-based solutions to be drawn (eg. is community opinion of the academy a problem, or is it the culture within the academy?) Both issues would be tackled very differently. Why, specifically, are parents sending their children elsewhere? Governors cannot assume we know. Broad consultations and questionnaires, mixing problems and solutions, are not specific enough.

Concerns over staff wellbeing was discussed throughout this process. Job insecurity leads to increased work-related stress, which, according to the HSE, is the biggest cause of absenteeism in the UK. Employers are legally responsible for preventing and not contributing to work-related stress and carrying out stress risk-assessments, where possible.

An extract from their response states:

*“As things stand, currently we are not convinced that a move to a two-tier system is the correct decision. Rather, we believe a two-tier system is likely to create more issues than it may solve for our unique and rural arm of Northumberland and would not build on the successes and positive elements that we already have. Namely, our first schools, middle schools and the Grove School.”*

### 35. Wooler First and Glendale Middle Schools (Federated Governing Body)

The Federated Governing Body of Wooler First and Glendale Middle Schools supported the 2-tier option.

An extract from their response states:

*“Our governors and I can confirm that our view remains the same with regards to structure for our schools here in Wooler - primary/secondary being the preference.*

### 36. Berwick Middle School

Berwick Middle School Governors are firmly of the opinion that the Berwick Partnership should remain 3-tier. The schools in Berwick are part of a highly successful 3-tier partnership and our children benefit from outstanding pastoral support in all our schools. Ofsted have rated almost all of our eighteen local schools ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ and two have been rated ‘Requires Improvement’ but they are improving quickly.

Children in middle schools’ benefit from the nurturing environment and achieve success in their learning through an exciting, stimulating curriculum and from all the extra-curricular events and activities they are involved in. The ethos is to give children as many ‘first-time’ experiences as possible, to develop a love of learning all round and a passion for the subjects they find personally engaging.

Middle schools have specialist subject staff with the expertise and experience to shape the curriculum for Year 5 and 6, guide class teaching and target children's learning ready for the key stage 2 SATs tests. Subject specialists also have an overview of the GCSE curriculum for their area so are ideally placed to shape the curriculum for Year 7 and 8 pupils, targeting children's learning towards GCSE in readiness for when children move on to study GCSE subjects at the high school.

In the 2019 SATs tests Berwick Middle performed above both Northumberland and national averages. Data also shows that the attainment of pupils in a 3-tier system is above the national average and nationally middle school pupils go on to do better in their GCSEs.

Middle school children go through many social, emotional and physical changes in those crucial four years and at Berwick Middle they receive excellent pastoral support which ensures they thrive. They leave, at the end of Year 8, well prepared to move to their high school. Under a 2-tier system they switch to a high school at age 11, ready or not!

Under 2-tier there is a very strong focus on achieving results in English and Maths in the key stage 2 SATs tests and there can be less focus on the broad curriculum that pupils need. When pupils transfer to secondary school there can again be, right from the start, a very strong focus on achieving GCSE results even though that's five years away. Pupils can be deprived of the rich curriculum they need to make informed GCSE choices.

An extract from their response states:

*"A move to the 2-tier system in Berwick would mean:*

- *our Middle School age children losing the diversity of educational experiences in their enriching curriculum*
- *a protracted changeover period of perhaps several years with new builds, moves, restructuring etc.*
- *disrupting the educational experience of very high numbers of our children during all that changeover*
- *a reduction in parent choice for our children*

### 37. Tweedmouth Middle School

Tweedmouth Middle School's Governing Body submitted a 26 page response to the consultation and it is summarised below. Overall, the Governing Body believes that the current 3-tier structure will be better able to deliver improved outcomes and safeguard viability for future generations.

They state that the most successful model is that of the independent sector where there is a middle (*Preparatory Common Entrance – 9-13 year olds*) and high (*senior/college – 13-18 year olds*) school system. Here it is held that 11-13 years olds do better in the top two years of a 'middle school' setting than in the bottom two years of a 'high school' setting. Why should our existing middle schools, already rated good by Ofsted, not continue to flourish in a thriving 3-tier system. Certainly, at Tweedmouth Middle School, we have colleagues and contacts with significant

independent sector 'middle school' framework experience which means that we know we are already working well towards that goal.

With regards to alternative options for school organisation in the Berwick Partnership, Tweedmouth Middle School is wholeheartedly committed to supporting fully the strong vision for a successful school which sees Tweedmouth Middle continuing to thrive, as a middle school, as part of a flourishing 3-tier system. It is our aim to ensure it duly receives the recognition it deserves for becoming the Ofsted outstanding rated school we know it can be.

Governors felt convinced that a move to the 2-tier primary/secondary system is not only wholly unnecessary but risks exacerbating the issues facing Berwick of financially sustainable viability and educational outcomes.

By consolidating existing first schools into the most financially and sustainably viable of their existing premises and by including as much 2-4 year old pre-reception provision as possible the issue of surplus places in first schools would be addressed whilst retaining the current first school phase. This addresses the financial sustainability of first schools. Currently the town's middle schools are fairly full and financially well managed. Therefore, there is no case for re-organising them on the grounds of financially sustainable viability.

Berwick Academy is clearly not financially sustainably viable. The issue is that there are 183 high school aged students attending schools out of the Berwick partnership and this number doesn't include the number of sixth form students attending other schools but also VI<sup>th</sup> form colleges in Newcastle. By re-organising the Berwick partnership to follow the 2-tier system it would couple flagging numbers of Year 9 to 13 students with thriving numbers of Years 7 to 8 students from middle school thus bring the 'new' secondary school close to that of the current capacity of the high school and obviating the need to 'attract back' or 'recapture' the number of students travelling to other schools. Governors feel this is an insufficiently unambitious way of attempting to deal with the financially unsustainable Academy and does a disservice to our young people.

Governors also highlighted concerns about the erroneous assumptions about key stage (Year 7 and 8) education in middle schools, and the mistaken impression that poor GCSE results at the high school stemmed from slippage in standards of teaching and learning in Years 7 and 8 in middle schools. It is not true. To deploy the argument that GCSE success lies in students beginning secondary school in Year 7 so that the school has a full five years to drill children to get the highest marks, when they sit their exams, is wholly wrong and anti-educational. GCSE courses are designed to be delivered over the course of two years (Years 10 and 11). In majority of schools this is preceded by a "taster" year where the timetabled curriculum is devised to include lessons in the full range of subjects the school offers. Whilst this does facilitate "getting ahead" with the GCSE specification it is ludicrous to suggest that a school needs to begin that process from the start of Year 7. Research shows

that middle schools prepare Years 7 and 8 pupils for GCSE significantly better than secondary schools do.

Tweedmouth Prior Park First School, other than Berwick Academy, is the only school within the partnership to have an Ofsted rating less than 'good'. However, any potential shortfall in educational outcomes is no longer discernible given the Ofsted rating of 'good' for middle schools and the above County and national expected standards for KS2.

Tweedmouth Middle School Governors believes that to address the financial viability of the high school, it requires Berwick Academy to deliver what will 'attract back/recapture' those students leaving the area. A re-organised secondary school, within a 2-tier system, and bolstered financially from funding generated by Year 7 and 8 students from closed-down middle schools will, by no means, guarantee improvements in 'Educational Outcomes'. Governors would also be very concerned if it was assumed that by re-organising to 2-tier that all those who attend schools elsewhere would be "attracted back" purely by the allure of a shiny new building. Published exam statistics and Ofsted ratings of "good" or "outstanding" remains the overriding deal-breaker for the majority of people. For Berwick Academy the perceived problems with its GCSE results remain. It is unfortunate that public perceptions have, and not without justification, deteriorated over the years that they have become entrenched. Public opinion, especially locally, has been influenced by schools' exam results, particularly Berwick Academy's GCSEs. This will not change but presents a considerable challenge that must be overcome in order to win people over to whatever is proposed for Berwick schools.

In relation to the questions about whether Glendale Middle, Wooler First and Belford Primary Schools should remain in the Berwick Partnership or move to the Alnwick Partnership the governors did not give an indication either way. In the absence of any real and useful information about what the post-reorganisation educational landscape might look like in north Northumberland the governors felt it was impossible to make any validly informed judgements but did offer some important closely associated issues which they felt merited careful consideration:

- The views of the communities of those schools ought to matter the most.
- A move to Alnwick would mean Duchess High School 'absorbing' years 7 and 8 children from Glendale Middle. It would also mean year 6 children from Belford Primary flowing straight on through to year 7 at The Duchess High School. This presumably would displace, within a couple of years, many of the secondary age Berwick based children who currently travel to attend Alnwick schools instead of feeding through to Berwick Academy.
- If these schools moved to Alnwick there could be public perceptions that the move had been orchestrated to 'trap' children within schools in Berwick.
- The combined number of Berwick based children currently attending Scottish and Private schools exceeds those currently attending Alnwick schools. Rather than re-capturing Alnwick bound Berwick children, if the situation is not handled

carefully, those children will seek out the Scottish or Private School alternatives instead; or look further afield resulting in a move away from Berwick altogether.

With regard to suggestions for how additional specialist provision could be delivered, the governing body commented that those with first-hand experience of the system as it currently operates will have invaluable insights to share, but that professional bodies and specialist agencies must also be consulted. Governors agreed that children should not have to travel far to access the support they need. This is wholly insupportable and, assumed, incredibly inefficiently expensive.

The Grove School is consistently outstanding and is to be thoroughly commended. However, it needs new expanded premises with plenty of outdoor space which would greatly enhance the educational experience of the children.

Governors did question the data within the consultation document in respect of ASD and SEMH children. From speaking to teachers/teaching assistants they state there are more children in September 2022 than is reported within the data. They also questioned irregularities with the forecasted year-on-year increases.

In respect of suggestions for how specialist provision could be delivered, governors attempted to coherently assimilate what they gleaned from various sources but found that it was a bewildering disparate picture, suggesting a system struggling to cope and for too many children not really working well. Three major points did stand out:

- The importance of retaining the 3-tier system.
- The obsession, often frustratingly, with inclusion that brings pressures to see 'mainstream integration' as the ultimate goal.
- Considered crucial that a complete and holistic overview of ASD provision (in the whole of the Berwick Partnership and not just in Berwick Partnership Schools) needs to be conducted.

Similarly, governors were perplexed by the data in the consultation document relating to SEMH numbers and wondered how the numbers had been forecast and if the analytical methodology had sufficiently factored in the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Suggestions on how additional specialist provision could be delivered the governors suggested:

- Creation of a designated centrally-based, appropriately qualified and skilled SEMH County Co-ordinator accountable for overseeing SEND SEMH provision throughout all schools under the local authority's remit. This would promote a consistently clear, coherent and co-ordinated approach.
- There needs to be one SEMH Local Area Schools Co-ordinator for each of the geographically associated group of schools.
- Then there needs to be co-ordinated collaborative co-operation between the region's SEMH Local Area Schools Co-ordinators, overseen by the SEMH County Co-ordinator. Staff from all school should meet regularly for INSET, training, support sessions and opportunities to share best practice.

Governors noted that in respect of Early Years Provision there is widely available good provision with no Ofsted-identified concerns. They did wonder if consolidating all early year's provision within existing first schools, especially if it were free-funded from the age of two makes the most valuable use of space available due to existing surplus places and greatly facilitates early identification, intervention and support for SEND.

In respect of Post-16 provision governors suggested that all potential provision for Post-16 alternatives to GCSE/A Levels should be scoped out thoroughly for our children, young people and later-in-life learners.

The Governing Body of Tweedmouth Middle School hoped that whatever is decided that there is as little disruption as possible for children and their families in relation to lead-up to any re-organisation, managing the transition and issues of recruitment and retention of staff.

Extracts from their response states:

*“It is the educational ethos inculcated in children – the life-long-lasting love of learning and keenness to succeed instilled in them – by good teachers, led by a good head, and filtering through to families, and the wider school community locally as a whole, which does most to drive up standards. MIDDLE SCHOOLS DO THIS BRILLIANTLY.”*

*“We see no merit in an alternative, substantially re-organised 3-tier, first-middle-high system; not when appropriately minimal tweaking, of things as they are, aimed only where they are necessary, at certain parts of the system, would suitably suffice; coupled with maximal initiative, input and investment targeted at key areas involving the one part of the system where all that is needed most.”*

### 38. Berwick Academy

Berwick Academy Trustees made a resolution in 2022 to pursue a 2-tier structural change to the education system in Berwick in the belief that this would ensure long-term financial stability, build trusted relationships with students and parents and improve educational outcomes.

Falling numbers of school aged children in Berwick and surrounding communities is having an impact on resources in the education sector. Financial benefits of Years 7 and 8 in Berwick Academy could be invested to support all students to thrive but especially those with SEND or barriers to learning.

Students move schools at a time of great physical and emotional change and as we do not have trusted relationship with parents, due to not knowing them, the mistaken belief develops that these changes happen because the child has moved to the Academy. Students come to us at a time of greatest hormonal changes and developmental insecurity, a time when building new trusted relationships is the most challenging. Building effective relationships in Years 7 and 8 is essential for supporting young people to flourish through the secondary and post-16 phase.



When students arrive at high school they are expected to make GCSE options choices within the first term, sometimes with only a few weeks of studying a new subject. Option choices would be based on experience of two previous years of study with specialist staff.

The Trustees noted that there are currently 326,733 schools in the UK and of these 21,445 are primary schools (including first) and 11,228 secondary schools (including middle and 16-18 provision). There are only 102 middle schools in the UK. Any comparative data needs to be viewed with extreme caution given the statistically small number of middle schools.

An extract from their response states:

*“The resolution to pursue a 2-tier structural change to the education system in Berwick is not about academisation, the £40m or individual schools. It is about improving educational outcomes for all students across all stages of education, ensuring long-term financial stability of education provision across Berwick and the surrounding community and building trusted relationships with students and parents ensuring the best support can be provided for children and young people.”*

#### 39. The Grove Special School

The Governors at The Grove Special School felt unable to comment on the 2-tier/3-tier question. However, they wished to strongly state their commitment to the development of SEND in the partnership and as part of this the development of a larger Grove School, which would be able to meet the needs of the children in the partnership that they currently do not have space for.

An extract from their response states:

*“The Grove School can offer Outstanding support to pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning difficulties and will also support the development of any further SEND provision in the partnership. We however would intend to remain with our current criteria for places in our school.”*

#### 40. School Staff working in Schools in Berwick Partnership

First School staff:

17 responses received  
6 in favour of 3-tier system  
8 in favour of 2-tier system  
3 selected the didn't know

Middle School staff:

39 responses received  
37 in favour of 3-tier system  
2 in favour of 2-tier system

High School staff:

17 responses received  
0 in favour of 3-tier system  
17 in favour of 2-tier system

## Responses and Evidence Collated from Other Sources

### 41. Response from the Newcastle Diocesan Education Board (NDEB)

The NDEB would seek to ensure the continuance of a Church of England presence in Berwick which gives parents the right to choose a Church of England school for their child(ren).

In initial pre-consultation, all six Church of England Schools directly affected indicated a preference for becoming primary. The Diocesan Director of Education attended workshops with headteachers/stakeholders, open consultation meetings in the partnership and listened to the views of parents/carers. It recognises that there has been robust debate about the correct model for Berwick and appreciates the challenges of the number of 'tiny' and 'rural' schools as well as pressures on all schools of falling roles and the detrimental impact of this on school budgets.

The NDEB would wish to avoid the continuation of a "mixed economy" of both first and primary schools in nearby geographical areas which was a result of the closure of Belford Middle School, a decision that was supported at the time to sustain a rural village's access to education.

Should the outcome of this consultation be to move to 2-tier this would mean schools on the border of the partnership would be in line with those of the neighbouring Alnwick partnership. This would be seen positively by NDEB to ensure consistency and choice for parents and children living in the area.

With regards to Glendale Middle and Wooler First School the NDEB would wish to support the views of the Governing Body of those schools. However, it does have a concern that losing a number of children from the partnership may jeopardise the viability of key stage 3 and 4 in Berwick.

Considering the geographical location of Belford the NDEB would suggest that Belford Primary should remain within the partnership.

The NDEB are aware and supportive of the offer from Berwick St Mary's C of E First School to support children with special educational needs and disabilities within the partnership and welcome this potential opportunity provided the correct investment is made to the building and surrounding grounds to support this.

With regarding EYFS provision, NDEB noted the capacity already available in the area, but would support any enhancements to this provision. In relation to post-16 provision the NDEB would support a partnership approach from all stakeholders to ensure the needs of all students are met.

An extract from their response states:

*"In light of these discussions the NDEB is of the opinion that a 2-tier system would be the most beneficial way forwards for the children of the partnership. The NDEB does not wish to suggest an 'alternative option'."*

### 42. Response from the Diocese of Hexham of Newcastle

No response was received from the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.

43. Summary of feedback from Town and Parish Councils in the Berwick Partnership area

Written responses to the consultation were received from two Parish Councils, Adderstone with Lucker and Belford. Both Parish Councils asked for Belford Primary School, and its education catchment area, to be moved into the Alnwick Partnership.

**Individual responses including parents, grandparents and members of the community**

44. In total 6,376 consultees were sent a link to the Phase 1 pre-consultation document and questionnaire directly and 365 responses were received to the consultation. The questions posed in the consultation document were as follows:

- *Do you think schools in the Berwick Partnership will be better able to deliver improved outcomes and safeguard their viability for future generations if they are organised within the current 3-tier (first/middle/high) structure or if they are reorganised to the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure?*
- *Do you have an alternative option for school organisation in the Berwick Partnership that would address the issues outlined in this document that you would like us to consider?*
- *Do you think Glendale Middle school and Wooler First should remain in the Berwick Partnership or move to the Alnwick Partnership?*
- *Do you think Belford Primary School should remain in the Berwick Partnership or move to the Alnwick Partnership?*
- *Do you have any suggestions on how additional specialist provision could be delivered within the Berwick Partnership in order to meet the growing numbers of children and young people being assessed as having SEMH and ASD in this area and to enable them to receive their education within or as close to their home communities as possible?*
- *Do you have any comments about the current level or availability of early years provision in the Berwick Partnership area?*
- *Do you have any suggestions on what Post-16 provision would be useful to assist young people in the Berwick Partnership area to support their academic or technical development?*
- *Do you have any general or additional comments that you would like the Council's Cabinet to consider in relation to any of the issues raised in this consultation document?*

45. Consultees who supported the 3-tier system and reasons

194 (53%) supported the view that schools in Berwick should remain organised within the current 3-tier system.

Of this group,

- 45 were parents of first school pupils
- 43 were parents of middle school pupils
- 7 were parents of high school pupils
- 6 were staff of first schools
- 37 were staff of middle schools
- 0 were staff of high schools

The main reasons given for selecting the 3-tier system were:

- 11-year-olds are too young to be with 16 and 18 year olds.
- Middle Schools offer a key transition period for students allowing them time to become more confident, develop more independence and prepares them for the next stage of their education.
- Middle Schools offer a nurturing environment to children where they feel secure and happy. Numbers in the Academy will become too high and children will get lost in the system.
- Why change a system that is working well, both academically and pastorally. Outcomes at First and Middle Schools are at or above both local and national figures. The problem lies with how the academy performs and delivers education.
- The 3-tier system and Middle Schools works well for Berwick. Pupils are usually ready to move at the end of Year 4 and Middle Schools offer access a broad curriculum with specialist teachers and a variety of extra-curricular activities.
- 2-tier doesn't provide better education or improve outcomes. In Alnwick The Duchess' High School's Ofsted judgement and GCSE performance have declined since its transition to 2-tier.
- The 3-tier system is a proven system that works well and is particularly suited to rural areas.

#### 46. Consultees who supported the 2-tier system and reasons

142 (39%) supported the view that schools in Berwick should reorganise to a 2-tier(primary/secondary) system.

Of this group,

- 45 were parents of first school pupils
- 12 were parents of middle school pupils
- 6 were parents of high school pupils
- 7 were staff of first schools
- 2 were staff of middle schools
- 17 were staff of high schools

The main reasons given for selecting the 2-tier system were:

- Middle school system is out of sync and outdated. Two-tier is the recognised system in operation across most areas of the country and matches with national curriculum stages.
- Would be one less transition which in effect would reduce disruption and stress for pupils.

- With two-tier there would be greater accountability for Key Stages. Schools would be responsible for specific stages of the curriculum which would enable improved outcomes, instead of splitting key stages within the current three-tier system.
- Would allow for better GCSE preparation. Pupils joining the high school in Year 7 would give them time to settle in and see what the subjects are before making important decisions. It would also enable teachers time to get to know the pupils and their abilities.
- CPD for middle school teachers is difficult to acquire so they either need to do primary or secondary CPD.
- A two-tier model is more sustainable and financially viable.

47. Consultees who selected 'don't know' option in relation to which system would be better able to meet the challenges facing the Berwick Partnership

29 (8%) were not able to identify which system they believed would be better at achieving improved educational outcomes and viable and sustainable schools.

Of this group,

- 10 were parents of first school pupils
- 5 were parents of middle school pupils
- 0 were parents of high school pupils
- 3 were staff of first schools
- 0 were staff of middle schools
- 0 were staff of high schools

The main reasons given for selecting the 'don't know' option are:

- Under-decided or had mixed feelings as can see benefits of both systems.
- No information to indicate what a 2-tier or 3-tier system would look like (eg. would all first school convert to primary schools or would some close).
- Not convinced that moving to 2-tier would solve the problems and improve outcomes.
- Funding is the issue, not which tier system is in place.

48. Consultees who responded to the question 'Do you think Glendale Middle school and Wooler First should remain in the Berwick Partnership or move to the Alnwick Partnership'?

28 (8%) of consultees who responded to this question had a direct link with the Wooler and Glendale schools as a parent of a pupil on roll, governor or member of staff.

Of this group

- 8 favoured the schools remaining in the Berwick Partnership
- 16 favoured the schools moving into the Alnwick Partnership
- 4 selected the 'Don't know' option

49. Consultees who responded to the question 'Do you think Belford Primary should remain in the Berwick Partnership or move to the Alnwick Partnership'?

28 (8%) of consultees who responded to this question had a direct link with the Belford Primary as a parent of a pupil on roll, governor or member of staff.

Of this group

- 2 favoured the schools remaining in the Berwick Partnership
- 26 favoured the schools moving into the Alnwick Partnership
- 0 selected the 'Don't know' option

50. Suggestions on how additional specialist provision could be delivered within the Berwick Partnership in order to meet the growing numbers of children and young people being assessed as having SEMH and ASD in this area and to enable them to receive their education within or as close to their home communities as possible

192 comments were submitted by consultees for increasing specialist provision with the Berwick Partnership area which were able to be themed as follows:

- Rebuild and expand The Grove School to increase capacity to cater for children with a wider range of issues. Any rebuild of the school should include outdoor and green space for the children.
- Additional alternative provision sites that offer small group intervention work on short-term placements with close links to mainstream schools to support graduated returns.
- Primary and Secondary Schools should have an outreach unit/primary support base where a child could be on partial timetables.
- Specialist provision for those children who don't meet special school criteria/thresholds.
- There is a gap between school provision and the specialist provision at the Grove. The Grove is very particular about its intake and perhaps needs to widen its criteria for the children it will accept. Could the Grove expand its remit to cater for that intermediate level of specialist support?
- Provide additional training for staff.
- Funding increased to enable more specialist staff to be employed.
- Locally provision should be a priority, pupils should not have to travel out of their catchment area to receive their education, despite any additional needs they may have.

51. Comments about the current level or availability of early years provision in the Berwick Partnership area?

128 comments on current early years provision were submitted by consultees which were able to be themed as follows:

- Early Years provision in Berwick was viewed to be of a high standard and offered a wide range of options for parents.
- Some indications that there was insufficient provision, depending on which community you lived in but particularly around Wooler.
- Childcare for under twos and wrap-a-round care were specific areas where provision was lacking.
- As the birth rate is falling there are a number of surplus places which means that providers are in competition with each other.
- Encourage partnership working for early years provision, including private providers, to ensure consistency of curriculum, common goals and values.

52. Suggestions on Post-16 provision in the Berwick Partnership area to support their academic or technical development

102 comments were submitted by consultees in relation to the Post-16 provision within the Berwick Partnership area which were able to be themed as follows:

- Further investment in post-16 education is needed within Berwick.
- More advice, including careers guidance, would be beneficial.
- More choice in relation to subjects and courses on offer.
- Transport, including free transport, to nearest provider.
- Different pathways need to be considered including vocational, technical and practical skills. There needs to be a focus on local employment opportunities.
- Attract college provision into the area.
- Work in partnership with Northumberland College and Universities.
- Specialised Post-16 SEND unit and specialized sixth form.
- Merged sixth forms.

53. Alternative Proposals to the 3-tier and 2-tier structures

Consultees put forward 115 comments in respect of alternative proposals to the 3-tier and 2-tier (primary/secondary) systems. These alternative proposals were able to be themed as follows:

- Rural catchment areas catered for. There could be three first stage schools prior to the Academy (two in urban areas and one in a rural area). This would cater for the rural catchment and provide choice to parents.
- Two smaller schools could work together to be infant (to KS1)/primary to reduce the number of good rural first schools that may have to close.
- Keep first schools and have school for 9-18 where the 9-11 are kept separate and the 16-18 are also kept separate. The management and teaching staff can cover all three age groups as appropriate. Therefore, spending less money on staff and infrastructure and more on the children's education and facilities.
- 2-tier system but with Post 16 operating separately from the schools (High School operated to Year 11 and then there was a community college for year 12 and beyond). This would allow for better quality post-16 provision which could then provide for young people and adults from the North of Northumberland and the Borders.
- Scremerston could be the "rural hub" for the Berwick partnership bringing together all rural communities. Using the expertise of the middle schools to support in the development of key stage 3 onwards.
- Years 7 and 8 on one site and Years 9-13 in another. This model could be adopted in the Berwick Partnership Schools, using Tweedmouth Middle School for years 7-8, and building a new school to replace Berwick Academy for years 9-13. That way the children would not only remain in Primary school for two more years, but they would also maintain the advantages (that they currently enjoy in the Middle School) of a smaller, safer and more nurturing environment in the lower years, before moving to the larger site for older pupils; all within a 2-tier system.
- Merge the two Berwick Middle Schools onto one site and an acknowledgement that Middle Schools deemed secondary relinquish their

autonomy, in-order to be directed, supported and led by an overall secondary HT and School Leadership Team capable of ensuring that curriculum and culture within the school is overarchingly focussed on delivering massively improved attainments at the end of KS4 and KS5 for all pupils.

### Commentary on Alternative Models

The alternative models above relating to the establishment of an age 9-18 school, the merger of the 2 middle schools and a separate Post-16 provision from Berwick Academy were not supported during pre-consultation discussions with schools in the partnership.

Some of the aspects of the proposals relating to first school provision may be able to be explored during Phase 2 consultation in light of the proposed models at paras. 55 and 56. Consultees would again be requested to submit alternative proposals or additions to the proposals during the next phase of consultation, if approved.

### **Commentary on Consultation Feedback and Conclusion**

54. It is constantly reiterated during consultation on school structures that they are not referendums. However, while feedback from Phase 1 consultation has been interesting, it has not been conclusive in relation to a favoured model of organisation for the Berwick Partnership.

Of the 15 Governing Bodies responsible for schools in the Berwick Partnership, 9 have responded that they are in favour of a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure of education. 7 of this group are first schools, 1 is the Governing Body of Wooler and Glendale, and the final governing body are the Trustees of Berwick Academy. 4 schools are strongly in favour of retaining the 3-tier structure, made of 2 of the town's first schools and the 2 town middle schools. 2 schools have indicated they do not have a preference for either structure, although 1 of these is The Grove which would not be impacted by reorganisation of the other schools. Therefore, it would seem that the majority of the educational professionals in the partnership favour the 2-tier (primary/secondary) system. It should also be noted that the Church of England Newcastle Diocesan Education Board (NDEB) has indicated that it would favour a 2-tier system over a mixed-system of education in the Berwick area; 6 of the 17 schools in the partnership are CE faith schools.

However, responses from parents, staff and the wider community appear to be split almost equally in relation to the 3-tier or 2-tier debate. Firstly, the number of responses received to Phase 1 consultation was less than the number of responses to the community survey in Autumn 2021, being 365 and 436 respectively – it would be unwise to speculate as to whether this is due to apathy from stakeholders or a lack of detail on proposals for the individual schools with which they associate themselves. Secondly, there is a no majority preference from respondees for either the 3-tier or 2-tier system; first school parents and staff are split in relation to preference, high school staff are wholly in favour of 2-tier, while middle school staff and parents are mostly in favour of 3-tier.

However, given the feedback submitted by respondees to this Phase 1 consultation in relation to the benefits and negatives of both systems, it is proposed that it would not be appropriate to take forward only one model of organisation of schools into Phase 2. Therefore, Cabinet is recommended to approve Phase 2 consultation on both a



revised 3-tier model and a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system of organisation, which are set out at paras. 56 and 57 and which reflect the changes required to schools in the light of the issues set out in the Background to this report.

## Proposed models of organisation and provision for the Berwick Partnership

### 55. Current 3-tier Structure of schools in Berwick Partnership

<b>School</b>	<b>Number on roll Jan 2022</b>	<b>Capacity (net no. Pupils able to be educated in the building)</b>	<b>Forms of Entry in each year group (1FE = average class of 30 pupils)</b>	<b>Planned Admission Number (PAN – the number of children admitted to the school at usual transition point in September)</b>
Belford Primary	79	187	1	30
Berwick St Mary's CE First	63	114	1	30
Holy Trinity CE First	149	150	1	30
Holy Island CE First	2	25	0.2	5
Hugh Joicey CE First	59	73	0.5	15
Lowick CE First	21	50	0.3	10
Norham CE First	25	50	0.3	10
Scremerston First	55	90	0.6	18
Spittal First	130	171	1.3	40
Tweedmouth Prior Park First	124	150	1	30
Tweedmouth West First	118	150	1	30
Wooler First	103	150	1	30
St Cuthbert's	71	75	0.5	15
Berwick Middle	338	456	3.8	114
Glendale Middle	117	169	1.4	42
Tweedmouth Middle	346	440	3.1	93
Berwick Academy	523 (inc 6 <sup>th</sup> Form)	916	7.5	225

### 56. Proposed model for a revised 3-tier system of schools in Berwick

<b>School</b>	<b>Number on roll Jan 2022</b>	<b>Proposed Capacity (net no. Pupils able to be educated in the building)</b>	<b>Proposed Forms of Entry in each year group (1FE = average class of 30 pupils)</b>	<b>Proposed Planned Admission Number (PAN – the number of children admitted to the school at usual</b>
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				transition point in September)
Belford Primary	Moves into Alnwick Partnership and catchment area reduced			
	79	187	1	30
Berwick St Mary's CE First	Reduces PAN and opens on-site specialist SEN provision			
	63	75	0.5	15
Holy Trinity CE First	149	150	1	30
Holy Island CE First	2	25	0.2	5
Hugh Joicey CE First	59	73	0.5	15
Lowick CE First	21	50	0.3	10
Norham CE First	Closes and catchment split between Tweedmouth PP/West and Hugh Joicey			
Scremerston First	Closes and catchment split between Tweedmouth PP/West and Spittal			
Spittal First	Reduces PAN			
	130	171	1	30
Tweedmouth Prior Park First And Tweedmouth West First	Schools amalgamate on Tweedmouth Prior Park site and retain Tweedmouth West's DfE number and URN			
	Tw PP – 124 Tw W - 118	300	2	60
Wooler First	Converts to become a primary, moves into Alnwick Partnership			
	103	210	1	30
St Cuthbert's	71	75	0.5	15
Berwick Middle	338	456	3.8	114
Glendale Middle	Closes			
Tweedmouth Middle	346	440	3.1	93
Berwick Academy*	Reduces PAN			
	523 (inc 6 <sup>th</sup> Form)	740	6	180

\*Note the Trustees of Berwick Academy would need to agree to reduce the PAN

57. Proposed model for a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system of schools

School	Number on roll Jan 2022	Proposed Capacity (net no. Pupils able to be educated in the building)	Proposed Forms of Entry in each year group (1FE = average class of 30 pupils)	Proposed Planned Admission Number (PAN – the number of children admitted to the school at usual transition point in September)
Belford Primary	Moves into Alnwick Partnership and catchment area reduced			
	79	187	1	30

Berwick St Mary's CE First	Becomes primary, reduces PAN and opens on-site primary specialist SEN provision			
	63	105	0.5	15
Holy Trinity CE First	Becomes primary			
	149	210	1	30
Holy Island CE First	Becomes primary			
	2	35	0.2	5
Hugh Joicey CE First	Becomes primary			
	59	105	0.5	15
Lowick CE First	Becomes primary			
	21	70	0.3	10
Norham CE First	25	70	0.3	10
Scremerston First	Closes and catchment split between Tweedmouth Prior Park and Spittal			
Spittal First	Becomes Primary and reduces PAN to 30			
	130	210	1	30
Tweedmouth Prior Park First	Becomes primary			
	124	210	1	30
Tweedmouth West First	Becomes primary			
	118	210	1	30
Wooler First	Converts to become a primary and remains in Berwick Partnership			
	103	210	1	30
St Cuthbert's*	Becomes Primary			
	71	105	0.5	15
Berwick Middle	Closes			
Glendale Middle	Closes			
Tweedmouth Middle	Closes			
Berwick Academy*	523 (inc 6 <sup>th</sup> Form)	1100	6	180

\*Note the Trustees of Academies would need to agree to change the age range of their academies before seeking approval from the Regional School's Commissioner.

58. The proposals for Belford Primary, Wooler First and Glendale Middle Schools set out at paras. 56 and 57 would potentially have an impact on schools in the Alnwick Partnership as result of Alnwick's greater catchment area being expanded should either of the models proposed be approved. Therefore, Phase 2 consultation would include this implication of the models, and all schools and parents of pupils on roll in schools in the Alnwick Partnership would also be consulted.

However, should either of the proposed models be approved, it would not be necessary to expand the capacity of the building of The Duchess's High School in Alnwick to incorporate students living in the current Belford and Wooler/Glendale catchment areas and therefore no capital costs would be necessary. Pupil numbers

have also been falling in the Alnwick Partnership in recent years and The Duchess's High School already has significant numbers of Berwick Partnership and Coquet Partnership pupils on its roll. Therefore, the school's buildings would be able to accommodate students living in the Belford and Wooler areas should either of the models at paras. 56 and 57 be approved for implementation.

59. Proposed models for additional SEND Provision in the Berwick Partnership area

*Overview and context*

In Northumberland, the number of children and young people who have been diagnosed as having Autism (ASD) or Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) as a primary need has been increasing, with significant additional capacity in the county's 9 special schools being required year on year for the past 10 years. Overall, this steady upward trend in demand for special school places equates to an average increase over this period to date of 7% each year (actual variation from year to year has been between 2% and 12%). There continues to be an increasing demand from parents for their children to be educated within special school provision both in and out of the county. It is also widely acknowledged nationally that there are significant financial pressures on mainstream schools in supporting SEND provision, not least due to school budget pressures and expectations on schools to fund the first £6k of support for each SEND learner with an EHCP.

As at January 2022, there were 58 students residing in the Berwick Partnership area who were on roll in special schools in Northumberland or an out of county specialist provision. Of these, 36 were on roll at The Grove Special School. This means 22 students were attending special schools outside of the Berwick area, mainly in the South East of the county, and of these students half had either ASD, SEMH or and Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) as a primary need – note that SLCN often leads to a later diagnosis of ASD.

Tables 3 shows the projected number of students expected to have an EHCP primary need in ASD living in the Berwick area, with data based on current Berwick-resident students with an EHCP in schools and special schools.

*Table 3 – Projected number of students living in Berwick area with ASD as a primary need*

Final Forecasts	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	NOR Totals
2022	1	1	4	1	6	6	8	4	16	5	9	3	6	2	72
2023	3	2	1	6	2	7	8	7	8	15	7	8	2	6	82
2024	3	4	2	2	7	2	9	7	15	8	22	6	6	2	95
2025	3	4	4	2	2	8	2	8	15	15	11	20	5	6	105
2026	2	4	4	5	3	2	10	2	18	15	22	10	15	5	117

Table 4 shows the projected number of students expected to have an EHCP primary need in SEMH living in the Berwick area, with data based on current Berwick-resident students with an EHCP in schools and special schools.

*Table 4 - Projected number of students living in Berwick area with ASD as a primary need*

Final Forecasts															NOR
Year Group	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Totals
2022	0	3	2	9	16	18	8	13	8	9	13	7	4	2	112
2023	0	0	5	3	11	20	15	10	12	9	9	10	3	3	110
2024	0	0	0	8	4	14	16	17	9	13	9	6	4	2	102
2025	0	0	0	1	9	4	11	19	16	10	13	7	3	3	96
2026	1	0	0	0	1	11	4	13	18	17	10	10	3	2	90

As for all forecasts and predictions, the numbers set out in Tables 3 and 4 are subject to a number of variables, not least that these are the first SEN predictions for the Berwick Area (forecasting SEN for the county as a whole is a new process). For example, the impact of larger or smaller year groups year to year or student movement in and out of the school system at certain points can have a noticeable impact on predictions. Furthermore, while not all of the projected students with a primary need in SEMH and ASD in Tables 3 and 4 will necessarily need to attend a special school, nonetheless it is clear that the overall trend is for increasing numbers of students with these primary needs. Therefore, additional specialist provision for these students is required in the Berwick Partnership area in order to reduce the need for so many of this vulnerable group of students to travel a considerable distance to school and to be educated closer to their home communities.

#### *Proposals for additional specialist provision*

During Phase 1 consultation, consultees were asked for their views on how additional specialist provision could be provided in the Berwick area and their responses are summarised at para. 51. In addition, an informal meeting was held with all of the headteachers in the Berwick Partnership, including The Grove Special School to consider the data set out in Tables 3 and 4 and to discuss how and where additional specialist provision could be provided in the Berwick area. Officers also met informally with representatives from the North Northumberland Branch of the National Autistic Society who are also members of the Northumberland Parent Carer Forum and were joined by the headteachers/representatives of The Grove Special School, St Mary's CE First and Berwick Middle School on 13 September.

Taking into account the responses from consultation and the outcome of the informal meetings with headteachers and parent/carers representatives in the light of the potential for either a 3-tier or 2-tier structure of education in the Berwick Partnership, Cabinet is asked to approve consultation on the following models for growing specialist provision in the Berwick area as follows.

#### **Proposed additional Specialist provision model under revised 3-tier structure**

- The Grove Special School continues with its existing provision on its current site with specialism particularly in Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and Profound Learning Difficulties (PMLD);
- First School phase - Specialist provision for primary-age students with ASD or SEMH primary needs to be established at St Mary's CE First School with between 10 and 12 planned places. This provision would be separate to the school's mainstream provision but with opportunities for students to access mainstream education where appropriate;
- Middle School phase - Specialist provision for middle school-age students with ASD or SEMH primary needs to be established at Berwick Middle School with between 10 and 15 planned places. This provision would be separate to the

school's mainstream provision but with opportunities for students to access mainstream education where appropriate;

- High School phase - Specialist provision for high school-age students with ASD or SEMH primary needs to be established at Berwick Academy with 15 to 20 planned places. This provision would be separate to the school's mainstream provision but with opportunities for students to access mainstream education and study for qualifications where appropriate ;
- Options to be identified for ways in which all schools across the Berwick Partnership, particularly small, rural schools, could pool funding in order to support specialist SEND provision on site through a peripatetic approach, with the aim of enabling those students for whom it is appropriate within their mainstream school.

### **Proposed additional Specialist provision model under 2-tier (primary/secondary) reorganisation**

- The Grove Special School relocates to the site of Tweedmouth Middle School and increases its planned student numbers to 70 across all year groups and amends its SEND designation to include SEMH. Shared site with Berwick Academy would enable opportunities for students to access mainstream education and study for qualifications where appropriate;
- Primary phase – it is envisaged that St Mary's CE First School would continue to operate as a Primary Support Base (nurturing unit) for pupils in line with the Council's Inclusion Strategy.
- Options to be identified for ways in which all schools across the Berwick Partnership, particularly small, rural schools, could pool funding in order to support specialist SEND provision on site through a peripatetic approach, with the aim of enabling those students for whom it is appropriate within their mainstream school.

If approved by Cabinet, the above proposals for additional SEND provision would be included in the Phase 2 consultation in conjunction with the proposals for school organisation set out at paras. 56 and 57.

#### **60. Implications for staff**

Both models of reorganisation set out at paras. 56 and 57 would have implications for staff in all schools. Staff in schools proposed for closure under either model would be at risk of redundancy if the proposals were approved at a later stage, while other schools would need to revise staffing structures where a reduction in Planned Admission Number and/or the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure was approved.

It would be expected that under the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure, first schools becoming primaries and the extension of the age range of Berwick Academy would result in those schools requiring additional staff - this would assist with redundancies being kept to a minimum.

In any event, the federated Governing Body would adhere to the relevant requirements regarding consultation on staffing structures, including consultation with relevant staff representatives (Trades Unions) along prescribed timelines. Furthermore, should Cabinet approve Phase 2 consultation on a reorganised 3-tier structure or a reorganisation to a 2-tier structure, Council Officers would work to broker a draft Staffing Protocol agreement during the consultation period to include all

schools that would ensure a fair and equitable appointment process under any new structure, should either model be approved for implementation at a later stage.

#### 61. Catchment areas and Transport Priority Areas

The Council sets catchment areas for community and voluntary controlled schools, while voluntary aided, trust and foundation schools and academies are responsible for setting their own catchment areas, should their Governing Bodies or Trustees choose to have one. For example, historically RC schools within Northumberland do not have catchment areas, and therefore qualification for transport to those schools is usually made either on the basis of faith preference or nearest school.

The Council is responsible for Home to School Transport and has set transport priority areas across the whole of Northumberland. In relation to community and voluntary controlled schools, these transport priority areas mirror those schools' catchment areas. Currently in the Berwick Partnership, the catchment areas of all types of schools and academies also mirror the Council's transport priority areas.

In relation to the proposed changes to the 3-tier system or reorganisation to the 2-tier system in the Berwick Partnership set out at paras. 56 and 57, there would be changes to the Belford Primary catchment area if it was approved that the school should move into the Alnwick Partnership. Therefore, the transport priority area set by the Council would mirror any changes to its catchment and eligible students of statutory school age living in the new catchment area would be likely to qualify for transport to Belford Primary up to the end of Year 6 and would then be likely to qualify for transport to The Duchess's High School in Alnwick from Year 7 onwards.

In relation to the proposed change to the 3-tier system at para. 56 where it is proposed that Glendale should close and Wooler First should become a primary and join the Alnwick Partnership, eligible students of statutory school age living in the Wooler First School catchment would be likely to qualify for transport to Wooler Primary (as it would become) up to the end of Year 6 and would then be likely to qualify for transport to The Duchess's High School in Alnwick from Year 7 onwards. However, students living in the Wooler Primary catchment area could also be eligible for transport to Berwick Middle School in Years 5 and 6 or to Berwick Academy for Year 9 onwards if these were selected by parental preference and were also the nearest schools, as measured in line with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.

In relation to approval of reorganisation to the 2-tier system, eligible students of statutory school age living in the Wooler First School catchment would be likely to qualify for transport to Wooler Primary (as it would become) up to the end of Year 6 and would continue to qualify for transport to Berwick Academy from Year 7 onwards. Under this proposal, if by parental preference an eligible student was to attend The Duchess's High School, they would only qualify for transport to the school if it was the nearest school, as measured in line with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.

In relation to the impact on changes to catchment areas of other schools within the proposals for changes to the 3-tier structure and reorganisation to a 2-tier structure, those catchment areas of schools that were extended as a result of the closure of another school would then also become the transport priority areas for eligible students living within those new catchment areas.

62. Special Educational Needs Provision in mainstream schools

Outwith the proposal for additional SEND provision in the Berwick Partnership area set out at para. 59, there would be no change to the current provision of SEND in mainstream schools.

63. Post-16 Provision

It is proposed to include Post-16 provision in Phase 2 consultation in the light of the proposed models for mainstream education set out at paras. 56 and 57.

64. Early Years Provision

Feedback received from consultation and from Early Years Officers in the Council indicates that there is sufficient quantity of Early Years provision in the Berwick area, but that there may be some viability issues among some providers. This may be addressed through the implementation of either the revised 3-tier structure or a reorganisation to 2-tier (primary/secondary) and the impact of these two models on Early years provision would be explored during Phase 2 consultation.

65. Rural Schools and the presumption against closure

A number of schools in the Berwick Partnership are deemed to be rural under the DfE's Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order. These schools are:

- Belford Primary
- Holy Island CE First School
- Hugh Joicey CE First School
- Lowick CE First School
- Norham St Coelwulf's CE First School
- Scremerston First School

Glendale Middle School is classified as being located in a rural town on the DfE's Get Information About Schools website.

DfE guidance recommends that decision-makers should adopt a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This does not mean that rural schools will never close, but that the rationale for closure should be strong and in the best interests of educational provision in the area. Following Phase 2 consultation if approved, should Cabinet be recommended to approve statutory consultation on the closure of any of the above rural schools, then Cabinet would need to consider the following factors before approving such statutory consultation:

- The likely effect on the local community;
- The proportion of pupils attending from within the local community;
- Educational standards and the effect on standards in neighbouring schools;
- The availability and cost to the local authority of transport to other schools;
- Whether the school is now surplus to requirements (e.g. surplus places elsewhere in the local area which can accommodate displaced pupils and no predicted demand for the school medium or long-term);
- Likely increase in motor vehicle usage and effects



- Alternatives to closure.

## 66. Buildings Implications

As stated earlier in the report, the Council has already allocated £39,896,203 towards investment in school buildings in the Berwick Partnership. A budget for carrying out capital works under both Model A and Model B would be developed during the informal consultation, should it be approved. The costs of any linked proposals for provision for SEND students that may be set out as part of the recommendations arising would also be developed. These costs would then be presented to Cabinet for consideration along with the outcomes of the informal consultation in order to assist with decision making in relation to the proposed recommendations. In order to provide technical support in developing costs, Cabinet is also asked to approve the expenditure of up to £250k already identified for this purpose in the current year's medium term financial plan.

## 67. Sport and Recreation

There would be no negative impact on the current sport and recreation facilities at the first schools proposed to remain open under either the 3-tier or 2-tier models. Should Cabinet approve the closure of any schools under either of the proposals set out at paras. 56 and 57, the Council would need to have regard to the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 and Section 77 of the School Standard and Framework Act 1998 in relation to any potential loss of playing fields. It is proposed that the possible future use of school buildings and/or the playing fields of schools proposed to close (where not proposed to continue to be used to provide statutory education) should form part of the Phase 2 consultation process with stakeholders and the local community.

It is expected that the sport and recreation facilities at Berwick Academy under either model will be enhanced through the provision of the new buildings, including enhanced provision for the local community.

## **IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT**

<b>Policy:</b>	This report directly links to the Council's Corporate aim 'Living, Learning - We will ensure the best education standards for our children and young people.
<b>Finance and value for money:</b>	Capital investment of £ £39.896 has been allocated by the Council in the Medium-Term Plan. Part of the rationale for pre-consultation is to provide assurance to Cabinet that investment would be made within a sustainable and viable school structure for the medium to long-term. A detailed Business Case for investment would be brought forward to Cabinet once the structure of schools has been decided.
<b>Legal:</b>	Consultation carried out on proposals has complied with School Organisation guidance and regulations. The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 confirm that the matters within this report are not functions reserved to Full Council.
<b>Procurement:</b>	Should statutory consultation be approved at some later date, an outline business case (OBC) would be developed and submitted to cabinet with the outcomes of the statutory consultation which would also set out the procurement options and recommendations to deliver best value for the Council's investment.
<b>Human Resources:</b>	There would be implications for staff in schools in the Berwick Partnership in relation to changes proposed within the 3-tier system or in relation to implementation of a 2-tier system (primary/secondary) should either be approved for implementation by Cabinet at a later date.
<b>Property:</b>	Refer to 'Finance and value for money' above
<b>Equalities:</b> (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> X No <input type="checkbox"/>	An EIA would be completed concurrently with the Phase 2 pre-consultation, should it be approved, and submitted with the report on outcomes to Cabinet.
<b>Risk Assessment:</b>	Should statutory consultation be approved at a later date, a full project risk assessment would be presented as part of the OBC, following such consultation.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder:</b>	This report has considered Section 17 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it.
<b>Customer Considerations:</b>	The proposal set out in this report is based upon a desire to improve outcomes for children and young people and their families in Northumberland
<b>Carbon Reduction:</b>	It is not envisaged that these proposals would have a significant positive or negative impact on carbon reduction
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	It is envisaged that a sustainable and resilient school system in the Berwick area will have a positive impact on pupils, their families and the wider community.
<b>Wards:</b>	Berwick East, Berwick North, Berwick West with Ord, Norham and Islandshires

## Background Papers

Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services, 12 April 2022  
– Berwick Partnership Organisation

## Report Sign Off

	Full name
Service Director Finance & Deputy S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Interim Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Joint Interim Executive Director of Children's Services	Audrey Kingham
Interim Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Lead member for Children Services	Guy Renner-Thompson

## Appendices

Appendix 1 – Berwick Partnership, Your Views on Organisation (consultation document)  
Appendix 2 - Consultation Register

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Northumberland  
County Council

# BERWICK PARTNERSHIP YOUR VIEWS ON SCHOOL ORGANISATION



**23 MAY – 12 AUGUST 2022**

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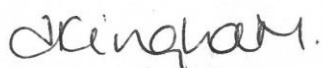
# INTRODUCTION

Northumberland County Council has committed £39.9m towards the replacement and refurbishment of school buildings in the Berwick Partnership. However, before carrying out the works to school buildings, the Council needs to know that it is investing in a school structure that will deliver consistently good outcomes for all children and young people and that it is sustainable now and for the future generations to come.

Schools in the Berwick Partnership are facing some specific issues. In early 2021, Council officers began talking to Headteachers and school Chairs of Governors about how schools could be organised in order to overcome these issues and a number of 'models' of organisation were reviewed and assessed - a summary of these discussions and their outcomes is set out in this document. The key conclusion of these discussions was that before any detailed proposals for individual schools linked to the buildings funding could be brought forward, the views of parents, staff, governors, pupils, the wider public and anyone with an interest in education in the Berwick Partnership area needed to be gathered on the general principle of whether schools should be organised within the current 3-tier (first/middle/high) structure or within the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure. Once this principle is established, more detailed proposals for individual schools can be brought forward.

This consultation document sets out those key issues faced by schools in the partnership, an overview of the current structure and the 2-tier structure at a Northumberland and national level, and data and information about pupil numbers and performance of schools. As a result, I'm afraid this is a long document. However, we believe it's really important that you are provided with the information that you need to be able to form your views before you respond to this consultation. You should also bear in mind that this consultation is not a referendum and any decision about the structure of schools will be based on the quality of the educational rationale, not on the number of responses for one structure or another. So, as well as asking for your thoughts about the 3-tier and 2-tier school structures, we are also asking if you have any alternative suggestions that you think could address the issues raised in this document that would secure a viable school system in the Berwick Partnership for the children and young people living in this area.

We are also running two public events in the coming Summer Term (details later in this document) where you will be able to ask further questions from schools and Council officers – hopefully you will be able to attend one of them. I really hope that you will take the time and opportunity to submit your views and I look forward to hopefully meeting you in July.



Audrey Kingham  
Interim Executive Director of Children's Services  
Northumberland County Council

# CURRENT STRUCTURE OF SCHOOLS IN THE BERWICK PARTNERSHIP



The Berwick Partnership is currently organised mainly within the 3-tier (first/middle/high) school structure. There are 11 first schools, 1 first academy, 1 primary school, 3 middle schools, 1 age 13-18 academy and 1 special school:

The 18 schools within the partnership are:

- **Belford Primary School – age 2-11**
- **Berwick St Mary’s CE First School – age 3-9**
- **Berwick Holy Trinity CE First School – age 3-9**
- **Holy Island CE First School - age 4-9**
- **Hugh Joicey CE First School – age 4-9**
- **Lowick CE First School – age 2-9**
- **Norham St Coelwulf’s CE First School – age 3-9**
- **Scremerston First School – age 4-9**
- **Spittal First School – age 4-9**
- **St Cuthbert’s Catholic First School – age 3-9**
- **Tweedmouth Prior Park First School – age 3-9**
- **Tweedmouth West First School – age 4-9**
- **Wooler First School – age 2-9**
- **Berwick Middle School – age 9-13**
- **Glendale Community Middle School – age 9-13**
- **Tweedmouth Community Middle School – age 9-13**
- **Berwick Academy –age 13-18**
- **The Grove Special School – age 2-19**

Some first schools also have provision for children from age 2 or 3 which are run separately from the school, but based on the school site e.g. Tweedmouth Prior Park First and Spittal First School.

In the 3-tier structure educational pathway, pupils in first schools leave at the end of Year 4 and transfer into Year 5 at middle school, where they remain until the end of Year 8. From middle school, pupils then transfer into Year 9 until the end of Year 11 or the end of Year 13 depending on their choices.

In 2017 the Governing Bodies of St Mary's CE Middle School in Belford and Belford First School requested consultation on the closure of the middle school and the reorganisation of the first school to a primary school. This proposal was approved and the first school became Belford Primary School in September 2018.



# ISSUES FACING THE BERWICK PARTNERSHIP



## OFSTED GRADES

Twelve of the 13 first and primary schools are graded Outstanding or Good, while Tweedmouth Prior Park First School is graded 'Requires Improvement', although it continues to be taking effective action. All 3 middle schools are currently graded 'Good' by Ofsted. Berwick Academy was inspected by Ofsted in November 2021 and was graded as 'Requires Improvement', having previously been judged to be Inadequate. The Grove Special School is rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.

## EDUCATION OUTCOMES

Academic achievement is only one way of measuring the quality of a pupil's educational experience. Parents and carers of pupils on roll in schools in the Berwick Partnership will know the many other ways in which their children are benefitting from their school. However, educational outcomes are important and therefore the following data is presented for information.

### **Key Stage 1:**

Children in first schools and primary schools are assessed at the end of Key Stage 1 (KS1) assessments, which are taken by children at the end of Year 2 when they are aged 7 or almost 7. These assessments are not published as their purpose is mainly to assist schools with developing the next learning steps for individual children, although they are shared with parents.

### **Key Stage 2:**

Children in primary schools and middle schools are assessed at the end of Year 6 when they are aged 11 or almost 11. Key Stage 2 (KS2) assessments did not take place in 2020 and 2021, therefore the last available data for Berwick Partnership is from 2019. Children are assessed against a number of measures, but one of the key measures is the percentage of children who meet the expected standard for Reading, Writing and Maths. The results for 2019 for children in Year 6 in schools in the Berwick Partnership are set out in Table 1, together with the Northumberland and England averages that year.

**Table 1 - Percentage of students achieving KS2 expected standard in Berwick Partnership 2019**

	<b>% Children who met expected standard</b>
<b>Belford Primary School</b>	<b>88%</b>
<b>Berwick Middle School</b>	<b>72%</b>
<b>Glendale Middle School</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>Tweedmouth Middle School</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Northumberland average</b>	<b>66%</b>
<b>England average</b>	<b>65%</b>

From Table 1, you can see that the highest percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths was at Belford Primary School, with the two Berwick town middles also achieving above average scores, while Glendale Middle achieved just below the county and national average.

### **Key Stage 4 – GCSE Results**

The last verified outcomes at GCSE (Key Stage 4) for Berwick Academy were in summer 2019, as set out in Table 2. The DfE has stated that due to the way in which GCSE results were assessed and awarded in the summer terms of 2020 and 2021, they cannot be meaningfully compared to previous years' results as a way of measuring pupil performance. However, the key measures of pupil performance at GCSE in 2019, 2020 and 2021 for Berwick Academy are included in Table 2 for information purposes. For the reasons explained it is not possible to produce a Northumberland or England average.

**Table 2 – GCSE results, Berwick Academy**

		GCSE 2019	GCSE 2020	GCSE 2021
<b>Progress 8</b> (measures how much value a school has added to pupil progress compared to other schools. 0 = Expected Progress)	<b>Berwick Academy</b>	<b>-0.55</b>	<b>-0.26</b>	<b>Not available, but expected to make progress on 2020 results</b>
	Northumberland average	-0.12	N/A	N/A
	England average	-0.03	N/A	N/A
<b>% Students Achieving Grade 4 or more in English and Maths (equivalent to low C pass in previous grading system)</b>	<b>Berwick Academy</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>63%</b>
	Northumberland Average	<b>65%</b>	N/A	N/A
	England Average	<b>65%</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>% Students Achieving Grade 5 or more in English and Maths (equivalent to high C pass in previous grading system)</b>	<b>Berwick Academy</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>36%</b>
	Northumberland average	43%	N/A	N/A
	England average	43%	N/A	N/A
<b>Attainment 8</b> (measures how well pupils perform against 8 qualifications - higher figure is best)	<b>Berwick Academy</b>	<b>38.9</b>	<b>43.8</b>	<b>41.8</b>
	Northumberland average	46.5	N/A	N/A
	England average	46.7	N/A	N/A

However, GCSE examinations are planned to go ahead as normal for 2022 and Berwick Academy expects to see the recent improvement in 2020 and 2021 outcomes being sustained into this year's results.

### **Key Stage 5 - 'A' Levels Results**

As for GCSE results, 'A' level grades achieved by students in 2020 and 2021 cannot be directly compared to the last verified results in 2019, again as a result of the alternative grade awarding methods but results for Berwick Academy in the last 3 years are included in Table 3 for information.

**Table 3 – ‘A’ level results, Berwick Academy**

	2019	2020	2021
<b>Average result - Berwick Academy</b>	<b>D+, 22.5 points</b>	<b>C-, 27 points</b>	<b>B-, 35 points</b>
<b>Average result - Northumberland</b>	C+, 32.5 points	N/A	N/A
<b>Average result - England</b>	C+, 34.01	N/A	N/A
<b>Progress Score (0 = expected standard)</b>	-0.18 (Average for England)	N/A	N/A

Berwick Academy has reported that all university applicants in the 2020/21 year group gained a place at one of their chosen **universities, with 95% being placed at their first choice.** **Students seeking routes into employment and training were supported by staff throughout the lockdown period and most secured their next step.**

### **Pupil Data and Information**

It is a fact that for a number of years, fewer children have been born in the Berwick Partnership area every year. Table 4 shows the average number of children per year group within each school phase (first/middle/high) living in the Berwick Partnership area at the moment (note this is not the average number of pupils actually on roll in Berwick schools). This demonstrates how pupil numbers have been falling over time and you can see that the average size year group is becoming smaller and smaller.

**Table 4 - Average number of children per year group within each school phase (first/middle/high) living in the Berwick Partnership**

<b>Current Phase</b>	<b>Average year group size within each school phase</b>
High School (Year 9 to 11)	221
Middle School (Year 5 to 8)	222
First School (Reception to Year 4)	200
Reception 2022 to Reception 2025	165

The result of these falling numbers is that schools will have many more unfilled (surplus) school places. Table 5 shows the steadily reducing number of children being born and registered with a GP in the Berwick Partnership over the last 9 years – there is a difference of 60 children between the size of the current Year 4 pupils born in Berwick and the group of children who will join a Reception class in September 2025 - this equates to 2 classes of 30 children.

**Table 5 – Number of children registered with GPs in Berwick Partnership in the last 9 years**

Reception Sept 2025	Reception Sept 2024	Reception Sept 2023	Reception Sept 2022	Current Reception	Current Year 1	Current Year 2	Current Year 3	Current Year 4
150	168	170	172	188	217	190	197	210

While there are around 500 houses planned to be built in the Berwick Partnership between 2021 and 2026, these would generate around an additional 148 children, which when spread across Reception to Year 11 equates to 12 children per year group. In short, these additional children will have little impact on the continuing fall in pupil numbers in the partnership in the coming years.

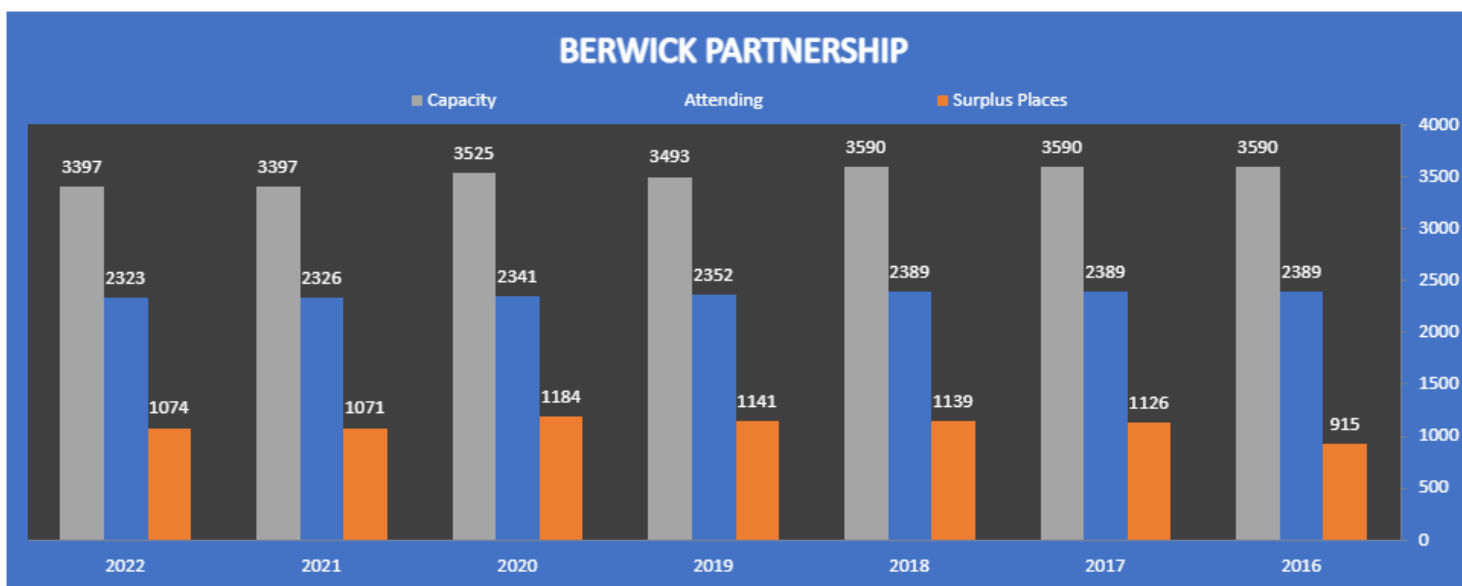
Added to the issue of falling pupil numbers is the number of pupils who live in the Berwick Partnership area, but who attend schools outside of the area. Table 6, Row 1 shows the number of pupils living in the Berwick Partnership of statutory school age (Column 1 - Reception to Year 11 **but not including children attending specialist provision**) against the number of children who actually attend a school in the partnership (Column 2). Rows 2, 3 and 4 break this data down by school phase.

**Table 6 – Number of pupils living in Berwick Partnership area (excluding pupils attending special schools) and number who attend Berwick Partnership schools**

	Column 1	Column 2 – Autumn 2021 data
Row 1	Total no. All Pupils living in Berwick Partnership catchment areas (Reception to Year 11)	Actual No. All Pupils living in Berwick area who attend Berwick Partnership schools (Reception to Year 11)
	2537	2094 (82% of Total)
Row 2	Total no. pupils who live in catchment areas of all first schools and Belford Primary	Actual No. pupils who live in catchment areas of all first schools and Belford Primary who also attend those schools
	1022	900 (88% Total)
Row 3	Total no. pupils who live in catchment areas of all middle schools (Year 5 to Year 8)	Actual No. Pupils who live in catchment areas of all middle schools and who also attend those schools (Year 5 to Year 8)
	884	774 (88% of Total)
Row 4	Total no. pupils who live in greater Berwick Catchment area (Year 9 to Year 11)	Actual No. pupils who live Berwick area and who also attend Berwick Academy (Year 9-Year 11)
	631	420 (67% Total)

As can be seen from Table 6, the first and middle schools appear to attract the majority of the children living in the catchment area of Berwick Partnership but this decreases at the high school phase. With falling pupil numbers, its therefore important for the viability of the whole partnership that it retains as many local pupils as possible throughout their educational pathway. The impact of children leaving the partnership is that it increases surplus places in schools even further – Table 7 below shows how surplus places (orange bars) have increased between January 2016 and January 2022.

**Table 7 – Surplus Places in Berwick Partnership as at January 2022**



Surplus places in themselves are not necessarily always a bad thing – some schools can still have a healthy budget and carry a certain number of surplus places if they attract the right number of students that still allows them to provide the broad and balanced curriculum that the Department for Education requires. However, when schools need to cut back on their teaching and learning resources as a result of a reducing budget then the educational experience of pupils may be impacted. Extensive surplus places across many schools also means that schools often compete for pupils.

**Which schools do the pupils who don’t attend Berwick Partnership schools go to?**

Table 8 shows that the majority of pupils resident in the Berwick Partnership area who attend out of catchment schools go into the Alnwick Partnership, Scotland and the private sector (pupils attending special schools or elective home education are not included in Table 8).

**Table 8 – Number of Berwick Partnership resident pupils attending out of catchment/private schools**

Phase	*Attending Alnwick Schools	*Attending Scottish Schools	*Attending Private Schools	Total	As percentage of total students in phase
High (Yr9-11)	103	49	32	184	29%
Middle	30	33	35	98	11%
First	25	3	8	36	4%
Total	158	83	76	317	13%

*\*These are the 3 most common alternatives of pupils who are educated outside of Berwick Partnership*

The data in Table 8 shows that 29% of high school age students (Year 9 to Year 11) living in the Berwick area choose to attend other schools; 11% of middle school age students (Years 5 to 8) attend these schools; and 4% of first school age pupils attend these schools. If the 183 high school age students who go out of the Berwick Partnership attended Berwick Academy, it would have an additional £915,000 in its budget each year. If the 94 middle school age students who leave the area attended, those schools would have an additional £470,000 in their budgets.

There are always a variety of reasons why parents/carers choose to send their children to certain schools, for example distance from home, proximity to relatives, while there will always be a percentage of parents who will send their children to private schools. However, some feedback received during the informal meetings with schools and via the community survey undertaken last Autumn (see later in this document) indicates there is a level of dissatisfaction with the educational pathway in the Berwick Partnership. While reversing the falling birth rate in the area would be difficult, it is possible that changes could be made within the Berwick Partnership that could persuade more parents and carers to send their children to their local schools – we are interested to hear your views on this issue as part of this consultation.



## Special Educational Needs

While many pupils with a special educational need (SEN) are able to remain in mainstream education, a significant number need more specialist help. The Grove School in Berwick provides specialist education to around 36 pupils who live in the Berwick Partnership area (although pupils also attend from outside the area as there are 48 on roll). However, there are a further 58 children living in the Berwick Partnership area with special educational needs on roll at 6 specialist provisions outside of the area, some of them travelling a considerable distance to and from school daily.

In particular, the Council's data indicates there is a growing need for additional specialist provision for children and young people with Autism (ASD) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) as a primary SEN need right across the county. This growing trend also applies to the Berwick Partnership, as can be seen from the forecasts for number of children in special schools with ASD and SEMH in Table 9 and Table 10.

**Table 9- Forecast for number of pupils with ASD as a primary need living in Berwick Partnership**

Forecasts by year Group	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Sep-22	1	1	4	1	6	6	8	4	16	5	9	3
Sep-23	3	2	1	6	2	7	8	7	8	15	7	8
Sep-24	3	4	2	2	7	2	9	7	15	8	22	6
Sep-25	3	4	4	2	2	8	2	8	15	15	11	20
Sep-26	2	4	4	5	3	2	10	2	18	15	22	10
Sep-27	3	3	4	5	6	3	3	9	5	17	22	20
Sep-28	3	3	3	5	6	7	4	3	20	5	26	20
Sep-29	3	3	3	4	6	7	9	4	6	20	7	23

*Note: Shaded figures show year on year increase within a particular year group*

**Table 10 - Forecast for number of pupils with SEMH as a primary need living in Berwick Partnership**

Forecasts by year Group	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Sep-22	0	3	2	9	16	18	8	13	8	9	13	7
Sep-23	0	0	5	3	11	20	15	10	12	9	9	10
Sep-24	0	0	0	8	4	14	16	17	9	13	9	6
Sep-25	0	0	0	1	9	4	11	19	16	10	13	7
Sep-26	1	0	0	0	1	11	4	13	18	17	10	10
Sep-27	0	1	0	0	1	1	9	4	12	19	17	7
Sep-28	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	11	4	13	19	13
Sep-29	0	0	1	2	1	1	1	1	10	4	13	14

*Note: Shaded figures show year on year increase within a particular year group*

A small but significant number of children in the Berwick Partnership are also diagnosed with Speech, Learning and Communication needs particularly in the primary years, which often leads to a diagnosis of ASD in the secondary years.

Discussions on the structure of schools in the Berwick Partnership have also presented the opportunity to have a 'joined-up' approach with mainstream education in the area. While discussions with schools and relevant Council officers **will be taking place in the coming weeks on how the needs of this group of pupils could be addressed within the Berwick Partnership area that may lead to firm proposals being brought forward for SEND provision in the future, we welcome your views or ideas how this could be achieved as part of this consultation.**

### **Early Years Provision**

There are currently 20 Early Years provisions across the Berwick Partnership (including 9 schools). All provision is judged Good or above by Ofsted with the majority offering the free funded entitlement for eligible 2, 3 and 4 yr olds. Any specific proposals for Early Years provision linked to schools would be included in the next phase of consultation, but if you have any views or ideas relating to Early Years provision in the partnership at this stage, then we welcome them.

## **Post-16 Educational Offer**

As part of this consultation, we are also keen to hear about your views in relation to post-16 provision for young people living in the Berwick Partnership area. We are seeking your ideas about how post-16 provision could be improved and where, and these will help to shape a more detailed proposal to be put forward in the next phase of consultation.

# VIEWS OF SCHOOLS IN THE BERWICK PARTNERSHIP



Between April 2021 to March 2022, Council officers worked with headteachers and Chairs of Governors (and occasionally attended by other organisations) to look at the issues facing the Berwick Partnership set out earlier in this document.

A detailed summary of this work and its outcomes can be found in the document “Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children’s Services” which is available on the Northumberland County Council website at

<https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=140&MId=1404>

A key piece of work achieved by this process was agreement on a Vision for Change for the Berwick Partnership as follows:

- **Improving Education Outcomes** at each phase to ensure every child meets their potential.
- **Sustainability of Education** across the whole of the Berwick Partnership for the long term.
- **Improving and extending SEND offer** for children and young people in Berwick Partnership so that their needs are met locally and travel times are reduced significantly.

- **Engaging the Berwick Community** in the review process to build an understanding of all the issues and to grow support for any proposed changes within schools in order that the community engages, supports and thrives.
- Ensure **schools work together** to further develop the partnership and create a sustainable model for the future.
- Underpinning the **best value for NCC capital Investment** as well as any wider investment opportunities which may arise.

In conjunction with the work undertaken by the Berwick Partnership, the Council initiated a high-level Community Survey between September and October 2021 to raise awareness of the main issues facing the Berwick Partnership and to gain an insight from the wider public in the area about their priorities for education. 436 responses were received to this survey, with almost half of respondents being parents. Table 11 sets the order in which key educational statements were prioritised by this group of stakeholders.

**Table 11 - Education priorities ranked by survey respondents**

Statement	Ranking
Improved outcomes for all children whatever their abilities	1
A system that attracts and retains the best teachers	2
School buildings that are appropriate for teaching and learning in the 21st Century	3
Improved and extended provision to meet the needs of children with SEND in the area covered by Berwick Partnership schools	4
Schools that have excellent facilities that are shared with the local community	5
All schools large enough to withstand fluctuations in pupil numbers	6

The outcome of the work carried out with the Headteachers and Governing Bodies and the results of the Community Survey suggested that there are just two remaining options for school organisation in the Berwick Partnership at this point, which are the continuation of the current 3-tier system or reorganisation to the 2-tier (primary/secondary) system. However, there was an understanding that under either system, there would need to be agreed changes to address falling pupil numbers and improve educational standards in order to establish a viable and sustainable school system before the programme of capital investment in buildings could be undertaken.

### **Wooler First, Glendale Middle and Belford Primary Schools**

Another issue arose as a result of the work undertaken with schools in the partnership linked to school organisation was the question of whether Belford Primary, Wooler First and Glendale Middle Schools should remain within the Berwick Partnership or whether it would be more appropriate for the schools to become part of the Alnwick Partnership. This idea came forward as a result of the historically significant numbers of pupils who leave these schools at the end of Year 6 to join The Duchess High School in Year 7.

The key focus of this consultation is to seek your views on the organisation of schools, including which schools should remain within the Berwick Partnership.

## THREE-TIER AND TWO-TIER SCHOOL STRUCTURES - BENEFITS AND DISADVANTAGES



The purpose of this section of the document is not to persuade you to support either the 3-tier system or the 2-tier system of school organisation, but to present to you some of the information and rationale linked to both systems for you to consider before responding to the consultation. It is a fact that there has been very little academic discussion comparing these two systems of education in recent times, as nationally the majority of schools are organised within the primary/secondary structure and it simply is no longer an issue of wider debate. Likewise, we do not present educational outcomes of middle schools versus primary schools or high schools versus secondary schools as we could produce both good and bad examples of all types of school across Northumberland and beyond. Instead, we encourage you to consider the following information, but also consider your own or your children's experience of the school system in your area in the context of the issues facing the Berwick Partnership that we have highlighted earlier in this document. If you can, talk to the educational professionals in your local schools in the Berwick Partnership as these are the people who know what is working and what is not in the current system. You will also have the opportunity to do this at the planned public events.

### **Background to School Systems in Northumberland**

Prior to the publication of the Plowden Report in 1967, all schools in Northumberland were organised under the 2-tier (primary/secondary) or variations of it, with transfer from a primary or junior school to a secondary-type school at the age of 11. Northumberland introduced the 3-tier system of first, middle and high schools into the county in the 1970's

and it has therefore been in existence here for 50 years. Many other local authorities also introduced this system of school organisation at this time.

The rationale behind the 3-tier system was then somewhat undermined by the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1989, which was based on the primary/secondary system.

Table 12 shows the age of children within a particular Year Group and Key stage of the National Curriculum when organised within a primary/secondary system of schools.

**Table 12 – Key Stages and Phase changes based on the National Curriculum**

Age	Year Group	Key Stage	Phase
3-4	Nursery/pre-school	Early Years	PRIMARY
4-5	Reception class	Early Years	
5-6	Year 1	KS1	
6-7	Year 2	KS1 (Assessment)	
7-8	Year 3	KS2	
8-9	Year 4	KS2	
9-10	Year 5	KS2	
10-11	Year 6	KS2 (Assessment)	
<b>Phase Change to Secondary</b>			
11-12	Year 7	KS3	SECONDARY
12-13	Year 8	KS3	
13-14	Year 9	KS3	
14-15	Year 10	KS4	
15-16	Year 11	KS4 (GCSE's taken)	
16-17	Year 12	KS5	SIXTH FORM
17-18	Year 13	KS5 ('A' levels taken)	

In the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure, primary schools have responsibility for Early Years, KS1 and KS2, while secondary schools have responsibility for KS3, KS4 and KS5 (although in some areas local authorities have age 11-16 secondary schools and sixth form colleges).

Table 13 shows the age of children within a particular Year Group and Key stage of the National Curriculum as organised within the current 3-tier school structure in the Berwick Partnership



**Table 13 – 3-tier structure within the National Curriculum**

Age	Year Group	Key Stage	Phase
3-4	Nursery/pre-school	Early Years	PRIMARY
4-5	Reception class	Early Years	
5-6	Year 1	KS1	
6-7	Year 2	KS1 (Assessment)	
7-8	Year 3	KS2	
8-9	Year 4	KS2	
<b>Phase Change to Middle School</b>			
9-10	Year 5	KS2	PRIMARY
10-11	Year 6	KS2 (Assessment)	
11-12	Year 7	KS3	SECONDARY
12-13	Year 8	KS3	
<b>Phase Change to High School</b>			
13-14	Year 9	KS3	SECONDARY
14-15	Year 10	KS4	
15-16	Year 11	KS4 (GCSE's taken)	
16-17	Year 12	KS5	SIXTH FORM
17-18	Year 13	KS5 ('A' levels taken)	

As can be seen from Table 13, there is a phase change from first to middle schools halfway through Key Stage 2, therefore the first schools have responsibility for KS2 in Years 3 and 4, while middle schools have responsibility for teaching KS2 in Years 5 and 6, including assessment at the end of Year 6. Middle schools then have the responsibility for the first two years of KS3, when there is another phase change to high school which picks up responsibility for the last year of KS3 and then the whole of KS4 to KS5.

As a result of the introduction of the National Curriculum Key Stages, discussions around what is the best system for the organisation of schools in Northumberland have been taking place since the early 1990's. In 2005, a programme of reorganisation of all schools in the county to the 2-tier system was launched by the Council Administration at that time under the title 'Putting the Learner First'. Cramlington and then Blyth Partnerships were the first to change to the 2-tier system in 2007/2008 and these were followed by Hirst Partnership in 2009. A change of administration in 2009 and the economic crash at that time halted the Putting the Learner First programme. Since that time, reorganisation of school partnerships to the 2-tier system has occurred wholly or in part as a result of the need to react to a failing middle school (e.g. Bedlington and Haydon Bridge), or as a result of requests to the Council from school partnerships themselves to consult on change (e.g. Alnwick, Ponteland).

Of the 13 school partnerships in Northumberland, 7 are now organised within the 2-tier system; St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy and its feeder primary schools in the South East of the county are also organised within the 2-tier system (although there are a

number of RC first school academies in parts of the county). Therefore, 6 partnerships are organised within the 3-tier system (although consultation is currently under way on whether the Coquet Partnership should change to the 2-tier system). While the partnerships are split almost evenly in terms of organisation, in fact 26,013 of the 39,911 pupils on roll in schools in Reception to Year 13 (excluding special schools) are educated in within the 2-tier system of school structure i.e. 65%.

### **Advantages and disadvantages of the Three Tier System**

In January 2018, the National Middle Schools' Forum reported that in 1982 there were 1,816 middle schools. They also reported that in 2019, there were 107 middle schools in England operating within 14 local authority areas, including Northumberland. Most remaining middle schools in the country are organised as 'middle deemed secondary', having year groups within both primary and secondary phases, while there are around 6 remaining 'middle deemed primary' middle schools in the south of the country.

Other authorities in the North East with middle schools are Newcastle and North Tyneside, which like Northumberland, have a mixture of both 3-tier and 2-tier systems across their authority areas.

The National Middle Schools Forum cites the following as advantages of the 3-tier system:

- 3-tier system is suited to rural areas or catchment areas of smaller market towns;
- Middle Schools are uniquely placed for creative flexibility of organisation to meet the needs of pupils going through wide-ranging intellectual, physical and emotional development;
- By spanning parts of both KS2 and KS3, middle schools can use the outcomes of KS2 assessments to benefit the learning of pupils;
- The gradual introduction of specialist teaching maintains enthusiasm and widens interests;
- Joint curriculum planning across the phases of the 3-tier system is essential in order to deliver good outcomes in the shared Key Stages.
- Middle schools offer a wide variety of extra-curricular activities in sport, music, art etc.;
- School climate nurtures support by being child-centred and small enough for children to be known personally.

- Curriculum is balanced between subject-centred and pupil-centred needs of the pupils and promotes self-esteem, self-knowledge and a foundation for lifelong learning.

As stated, there is little or no academic literature comparing the 3-tier and 2-tier systems in this country as it is a non-topic outside of the areas where middle schools exist.

Therefore, many of the disadvantages cited in relation to the 3-tier system are to be found in the reports of local authorities who have or are proposing changes to the school structure in their area. For example, Central Bedfordshire Council, which has a mixed organisation of schools like Northumberland, published on its website the following statements:

- Teacher training is now focused on the primary/secondary model;
- Only one transfer in the 2-tier model so less disruptive in the pupils' educational pathway and simpler.

Feedback in 2016 from statutory consultation on the proposals to reorganise Alnwick Partnership included these comments from educational professionals:

- The 3-tier system is a dysfunctional model for the most effective delivery of the National Curriculum;
- The split of KS2 between first and middle schools and KS3 between middle and high schools provides threats to the effective educational progress of children as it causes problems with the continuity of learning and teaching, support for pupils, the delivery of the curriculum and the ability of schools to recruit Middle school specialist teachers.

### **Advantages and disadvantages of the 2-tier system**

Responses from education professionals arising from consultation on proposals for reorganisation of the Ponteland Partnership in favour of the 2-tier system included:

- Attainment will improve faster through changing to 2-tier rather than through introducing initiatives within the 3-tier system;
- Pupils will have an additional 2 years of work in their secondary schools
- Single transition points in 2-tier work effectively for pupils

Advantages of the 2-tier system cited by Northumberland County Council under the Putting the Learner First programme in 2005 remain worthy of consideration in relation to the organisation of schools today:

- One transition point for students, and one transfer of information between 2 schools;
- School age ranges would match the National Curriculum Key Stages;
- Recruitment and retention of teachers should improve;
- KS3 pupils would be taught in 11-18 secondary schools with a wider range of facilities, equipment and specialist teaching.
- First schools and high schools would increase in size and offer wider curriculum opportunities; small first schools in particular would improve their financial situation.

Likewise, the Council at that time cited some perceived disadvantages of reorganisation:

- Changes creates uncertainty and insecurity amongst children and staff
- Schools are always under pressure re standards and organisation change will add to it;
- Small primary schools wouldn't have the specialist facilities of middle schools.
- Transfer of pupils from very small primary schools to large secondary schools could be daunting.

### **Forming Your Views**

Before you complete the questionnaire, it is important that you understand that in the light of the falling pupil population in the Berwick Partnership, there will need to be some changes made to schools and how they are organised whether the 3-tier system remains in place or whether schools are reorganised to a 2-tier or other model; these changes could include some school closures. Details of proposed changes would be brought forward in the next phase of consultation.

So, we would like you to consider what system will be better placed to ensure that as many as possible of the pupils who do live in the Berwick Partnership area choose to remain in their local schools throughout their educational journey in order to support a viable and sustainable school system and improve outcomes for all pupils, whatever their abilities.

## Alternative Proposals

While this consultation has presented information relating to the 3-tier and 2-tier systems of school organisation, you may have an alternative suggestion for addressing the issues facing the Berwick Partnership set out in this document. If you have any alternative suggestion, please set this out in the questionnaire and response form that accompanies this document.

### How can I find out more about this proposal?

Public drop-in events have been arranged during this consultation period for you to find out further information about any aspect of this proposal.

#### Public Drop-in events

**Date: Wednesday 13 July, 5.30 p.m. to 7.00 p.m.**

**Venue: Bell View Resource Centre, 33 West Street, Belford, NE70 7QB**

**Date: Saturday 16 July, 10.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m.**

**Venue: Berwick Community Trust, The William Elder Building, 56-58 Castlegate, Berwick upon Tweed, TD15 1JT**

**All interested parties are welcome to drop-in at any time within the above hours.**

There will also be a separate event for staff working in schools in the Berwick Partnership during the consultation period. Staff will be contacted directly with the date and time of this drop-in session.

An online Padlet dedicated to the consultation on school structure is also available by following this link <https://padlet.com/Northumberland/Berwick>.

Additional information is posted on the padlet, including Frequently Asked questions that may assist you in your response to the consultation.

### How can I submit my views about this proposal?

A 12 week consultation on the proposals set out in this consultation document began on **Monday 23 May and will end at midnight on 12 August 2022.**

The Council is very keen to hear your views on the proposal set out in this consultation document and also to learn if you have any alternative proposals.

A link to a questionnaire is here: <https://haveyoursay.northumberland.gov.uk/education-skills/berwick-partnership-your-views-on-school-organisat> **(copy and paste link into browser)** please complete the electronic questionnaire if you can. However, if you or someone you know would prefer to send a hard copy, please request a printed form by contacting [educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk) stating that you require a printed survey form for the Consultation on School Organisation in Berwick Partnership.

To return your completed hard copy form, please send to:

**School Organisation and Resources Team**

**Children's Services,**

**County Hall**

**Morpeth**

**Northumberland**

**NE61 2EF**

At the end of this consultation, all feedback received will be considered by the Council's Cabinet before deciding on whether or not to move to the next steps in the process.

**Thank you for participating in this consultation**

# BERWICK PARTNERSHIP - YOUR VIEWS ON SCHOOL ORGANISATION

## Overview

Northumberland County Council has committed £39.9m towards the replacement and refurbishment of school buildings in the Berwick Partnership. However, before carrying out the works to school buildings, the Council needs to know that it is investing in a school structure that will deliver consistently good outcomes for all children and young people and that it is sustainable now and for the future generations to come.

Schools in the Berwick Partnership are facing some specific issues. In early 2021, Council officers began talking to Headteachers and school Chairs of Governors about how schools could be organised in order to overcome these issues and a number of 'models' of organisation were reviewed and assessed - a summary of these discussions and their outcomes is set out in this document. The key conclusion of these discussions was that before any detailed proposals for individual schools linked to the buildings funding could be brought forward, the views of parents, staff, governors, pupils, the wider public and anyone with an interest in education in the Berwick Partnership area needed to be gathered on the general principle of whether schools should be organised within the current 3-tier (first/middle/high) structure or within the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure. Once this principle is established, more detailed proposals for individual schools can be brought forward.

This consultation document sets out those key issues faced by schools in the partnership, an overview of the current structure and the 2-tier structure at a Northumberland and national level, and data and information about pupil numbers and performance of schools. As a result, I'm afraid this is a long document. However, we believe it's really important that you are provided with the information that you need to be able to form your views before you respond to this consultation. You should also bear in mind that this consultation is not a referendum and any decision about the structure of schools will be based on the quality of the educational rationale, not on the number of responses for one structure or another. So, as well as asking for your thoughts about the 3-tier and 2-tier school structures, we are also asking if you have any alternative suggestions that you think could address the issues raised in this document that would secure a viable school system in the Berwick Partnership for the children and young people living in this area.

We are also running two public events in the coming Summer Term (details later in this document) where you will be able to ask further questions from schools and Council officers – hopefully you will be able to attend one of them. I really hope that you will take the time and opportunity to submit your views and I look forward to hopefully meeting you in July.

Audrey Kingham

Interim Executive Director of Children's Services

Northumberland County Council

## Introduction

1 What is your name?

2 What is your email address?

3 What is your postcode (eg.TD15 2JF)?

*(Required)*





## 4 In what capacity are you responding to the consultation

*(Required)*

*Please select only one item*

- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Berwick Academy
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Berwick Middle
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Tweedmouth Middle
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Belford Primary
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Holy Trinity CE First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Hugh Joicey CE First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Lowick First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Holy Island First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Norham St Ceolwulfs CE First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Scremerston First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Spittal First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending St Cuthbert's RC First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending St Mary's CE First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Tweedmouth Prior Park First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Tweedmouth West First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Wooler First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Glendale Middle
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending The Grove
- Staff Member of Berwick Academy
- Staff Member of Berwick Middle
- Staff Member of Tweedmouth Middle
- Staff Member of Belford Primary
- Staff Member of Holy Trinity CE First
- Staff Member of Hugh Joicey CE First
- Staff Member of Lowick First
- Staff Member of Holy Island CE First
- Staff Member of Norham St Ceolwulfs CE First
- Staff Member of Scremerston First
- Staff Member of Spittal First
- Staff Member of St Cuthbert's RC First
- Staff Member of St Mary's CE First
- Staff Member of Tweedmouth Prior Park First
- Staff Member of Tweedmouth West First
- Staff Member of Wooler First
- Staff Member of Glendale Middle
- Staff Member of The Grove
- Governor of Berwick Academy
- Governor of Berwick Middle
- Governor of Tweedmouth Middle
- Governor of Belford Primary
- Governor of Holy Trinity CE First
- Governor of Hugh Joicey CE First
- Governor of Lowick First
- Governor of Holy Island First
- Governor of Norham St Ceolwulfs CE First
- Governor of Scremerston First
- Governor of Spittal First
- Governor of St Cuthbert's RC First
- Governor of St Mary's CE First
- Governor of Tweedmouth Prior Park First
- Governor of Tweedmouth West First
- Governor of Wooler First

- Governor of Glendale Middle
- Governor of The Grove
- Student/Pupil of Berwick Academy
- Student/Pupil of Berwick Middle
- Student/Pupil of Tweedmouth Middle
- Student/Pupil of Belford Primary
- Student/Pupil of Holy Trinity CE First
- Student/Pupil of Hugh Joicey CE First
- Student/Pupil of Lowick
- Student/Pupil of Holy Island First
- Student/Pupil of Norham St Ceolwulfs CE First
- Student/Pupil of Scremerston First
- Student/Pupil of Spittal First
- Student/Pupil of St Cuthbert's RC First
- Student/Pupil of St Mary's CE First
- Student/Pupil of Tweedmouth Prior Park First
- Student/Pupil of Tweedmouth West First
- Student/Pupil of Wooler First
- Student/Pupil of Glendale Middle
- Student/Pupil of The Grove
- Parent/Carer of pupil/student in another school in Northumberland
- Staff Member in another School in Northumberland
- Governor in another School in Northumberland
- Pupil/Student in another School in Northumberland
- Councillor on Berwick Town Council
- Councillor of Adderstone with Lucker Parish Council
- Councillor of Ancroft Parish Council
- Councillor of Beadnell Parish Council
- Councillor of Belford with Middleton Parish Council
- Councillor of Berwick Parish Council
- Councillor of Bowsden Parish Council
- Councillor of Branxton Parish Council
- Councillor of Chatton Parish Council
- Councillor of Carham Parish Council
- Councillor of Chillingham Parish Council
- Councillor of Cornhill on Tweed Parish Council
- Councillor of Doddington Parish Council
- Councillor of Duddo Parish Council
- Councillor of Ford Parish Council
- Councillor of Holy Island Parish Council
- Councillor of Horncliffe Parish Council
- Councillor of Ingram Parish Council
- Councillor of Kirknewton Parish Council
- Councillor of Kyloe Parish Council
- Councillor of Lowick Parish Council
- Councillor of Milfield Parish Council
- Councillor of Norham Parish Council
- Councillor of Ord Parish Council
- Councillor of Shoreswood Parish Council
- Councillor of Wooler Parish Council
- Resident/member of the community living in the Berwick Partnership
- Resident/member of the community living outside of the Berwick Partnership
- Other – please state



5 If you stated other above, please state below

Consultation document



6 Having read the consultation document, do you think schools in the Berwick Partnership will be better able to deliver improved outcomes and safeguard their viability for future generations if they are organised within the current 3-tier (first/middle/high) structure or if they are reorganised to the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure?

*(Required)*

*Please select only one item*

- Three-tier (current structure, phase change at end of Year 4)
- Two-tier (primary/secondary structure, phase change at end of Year 6)
- DON'T KNOW

7 Please give the reasons for your answer below or state 'None'

*(Required)*

**8** Do you have an alternative option for school organisation in the Berwick Partnership that would address the issues outlined in this document that you would like us to consider? Please give your alternative option here or state 'None'

*(Required)*

**9** Having read the consultation document, do you think Glendale Middle school and Wooler First should remain in the Berwick Partnership or move to the Alnwick Partnership?

*(Required)*

*Please select only one item*

- Remain in the Berwick Partnership
- Move to the Alnwick Partnership
- Don't Know

**10** Please give the reasons for your answer here or state 'None'

*(Required)*

**11** Having read the consultation document, do you think Belford Primary School should remain in the Berwick Partnership or move to the Alnwick Partnership?

*(Required)*

*Please select only one item*

- Remain in the Berwick Partnership
- Move to the Alnwick Partnership
- Don't Know

**12** Please give the reasons for your answer here or state 'None'

*(Required)*

**13** Having read the consultation document, do you have any suggestions on how additional specialist provision could be delivered within the Berwick Partnership in order to meet the growing numbers of children and young people being assessed as having SEMH and ASD in this area and to enable them to receive their education within or as close to their home communities as possible? Please set out your comments here or state 'None':

*(Required)*

**14** Having read the consultation document, do you have any comments about the current level or availability of early years provision in the Berwick Partnership area? Please set out your comments here or state 'None'

*(Required)*

**15** Having read the consultation document, do you have any suggestions on what Post-16 provision would be useful to assist young people in the Berwick Partnership area to support their academic or technical development?. Please set out your comments here or state 'None'

*(Required)*

**16** Do you have any general or additional comments that you would like the Council's Cabinet to consider in relation to any of the issues raised in this consultation document?(If not, please state none). Please set out your comments here or state 'None'

*(Required)*

THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS CONSULTATION

**Please note:** If you contact officers of the Council directly then your response will be re-directed to the consultation inbox to ensure your views are taken into account. Unfortunately, due to the potential number of responses to this consultation it will be impossible for officers to individually acknowledge receipt of replies or comments.

**Phase 1 Pre-Consultation Register – NCC**

**Consultation Register – NCC**

**Proposals for the Berwick Partnership**

**Consultation – 23<sup>rd</sup> May to 12<sup>th</sup> August 2022**

**Consultees**

Schools in Berwick Partnership directly affected by proposals – Staff, Governors and Parents/Carers:

- Berwick Academy
- Berwick Middle
- Tweedmouth Middle
- Belford Primary
- St Mary's CE First
- Holy Trinity CE First
- Hugh Joicey CE First
- Lowick & Holy Isalnd First
- Norham St Ceolwulfs CE First
- Scremerston First
- Spittal First
- St Cuthbert's RC First
- Tweedmouth Prior Park
- Tweedmouth West
- Wooler FS/Glendale MS
- The Grove

Other Northumberland Schools in local area possibly affected – Staff, Governors and Parents/Carers:

- Branton Community Primary
- Ellingham C of E Aided Primary
- Embleton Vincent Edwards C of E Primary
- Felton C of E Primary
- Hipsburn Primary
- Longhoughton C of E Primary
- Seahouses Primary
- Shilbottle Primary
- St Michaels C of E Primary
- St. Paul's RC Voluntary Aided Primary
- Swansfield Park Primary



- Swarland Primary
- The Duchess's Community High
- Whittingham C of E Primary

**Public**

- NCC Website
- Libraries – Berwick and Wooler

**Diocesan representatives**

- CE, Paul Rickeard
- RC, Deborah Fox

**Town & Parish Councils**

- Berwick Town Council
- Adderstone with Lucker
- Ancroft
- Beadnell
- Belford with Middleton
- Berwick
- Bowsden
- Branxton
- Carham
- Cornhill on Tweed
- Doddington
- Duddo
- Ford
- Holy Island
- Horncliffe
- Ingram
- Kirknewton
- Kyloe
- Lowick
- Milfield
- Norham
- Ord
- Shoreswood
- Wooler

**Local MP (for information/response)**

- Annemarie Trevelyn MP

**Local Members (for information/response)**

- Wooler ED (split) Alnwick (*Cllr. Mark Mather*)
- Norham and Islandshires ED (*Cllr. Colin Hardy*)

- Berwick North ED (*Cllr. Catherine Seymour*)
- Berwick West with Ord ED (*Cllr. Isabel Hunter*)
- Berwick East ED (*Cllr. Georgina Hill*)
- Bamburgh ED (split) Alnwick (*Cllr. Guy Renner-Thompson*)

**Neighbouring Local Authorities**

- Scottish Borders Council

**Parent Carer Forum****Unions**

- NEU
- NASUWT
- Unison
- ASCL
- NAHT
- GMB