

**Diocesan Board of Education
Consultation Response for the Berwick Partnership**

1. As an underlying principle, the Newcastle Diocesan Education Board (NDEB) will seek to ensure the continuance of a thriving Church of England school presence in the Berwick area, with parents/carers having the right and opportunity to choose a Church of England school as a viable option for their children.
2. There are six C of E schools directly affected and in the initial pre-consultation all of them have indicated a preference for becoming primary. The Diocesan Director of Education (DDE) has attended a number of workshops with headteachers and stakeholders and members of the Diocesan Team have attended open consultation meetings in the partnership to listen to the views of parents and carers.
3. The NDEB recognises there has been a robust debate about the correct model for Berwick and fully 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.
4. 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 several years ago; although for the avoidance of doubt this was a decision that was supported at the time to sustain a rural village's access to education.
5. Should the outcome of this consultation be to move to two tier this would also mean the schools on the border of the partnership would be in line with those of the neighbouring partnership of Alnwick – this would be seen positively by the NDEB to ensure consistency and choice for parents and children living in the area
6. In light of these discussions the NDEB is of the opinion that a two-tier system would be the most beneficial way forwards for the children of the partnership. (Section 6) The NDEB does not wish to suggest an 'alternative option'.
7. Having considered the paper 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, the NDEB has a concern that losing a number of children from the partnership may jeopardise the viability of KS3 and KS4 in Berwick depending on the number of children this would affect.

8. Considering the geographical location of Belford the NDEB would suggest that Belford Primary should remain within the partnership.
9. The NDEB are already aware of and support the offer put forwards from Berwick St Mary's C of E First School to support children with Special Needs and Disabilities within the partnership. As inclusive schools we welcome this potential opportunity provided the correct investment is made to the building and surrounding grounds to support this possibility.
10. With regards to EYFS Provision the NDEB is minded to note the capacity already available in the area – but would support any enhancements to this provision.
11. With regards to provision for 6th Form / post sixteen the NDEB would support a partnership approach of all stakeholders to ensure the needs of all children and students are met.



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