

Response to Berwick Partnership Consultation

Tweedmouth Prior Park Governors

This is a consensus response from the Governing Body of Tweedmouth Prior Park First School. Our Chair, Councillor Isabel Hunter, has excused herself from our discussions to leave her free to participate in Northumberland County Council meetings on this topic.

We are of the opinion that the Partnership should change to 2-tier education because:

- It is better for the children to have fewer changes of school during their education, the move is better placed at the end of a key stage and the children need the time available from 2-tier to settle into secondary school before having to choose GCSE options.
- The economics of being a Primary School are more realistic than those of a First School enabling them the resources to provide the better breadth and depth of learning.

We do not have any alternative option for school organisation in the Berwick Partnership.

We do not believe that it is for us to comment on the possible moves of Glendale Middle School, Wooler First School or Belford Primary School from the Berwick to the Alnwick Partnership. This is a decision for these schools and their governing bodies to make after full consultations with all their stakeholders, including the local communities, the secondary schools and the LA.

We do 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 SMEH and ASD within the Berwick region. The children should all be able to receive their education close to their home community.

We are aware of the effect of the falling birth-rate on the growing number of surplus places in early years provision within the Berwick Partnership area and that changes will have to be made to leave a good supply of financially viable places spread across the region. We know the challenge that this will present to the existing nurseries, both school and private providers. We believe that the LA 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.

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

In terms of additional comments to the Council's Cabinet, 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.

Richard Bourne Vice Chair

In consultation with the Governing Body