

**From:** Carly Richards  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 8, 2022 9:47:03 PM  
**To:** Sue Aviston  
**Subject:** The Future of Berwick-upon-Tweed

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Dear Sue,

We met as the Tweedmouth West First School governing body on 08/09/2022 to discuss the future for Berwick schools. Please find below a summary of the points from that discussion and use this as the feedback on behalf of the full governing body. The bullet points of which are, as follows:

1. We are unanimous in our **opposition to moving to a two tier system.**
2. As a priority, **the Grove School and the Academy require new suitable buildings** to increase Grove School capacity and improve Academy outcomes.
3. The true **issues/problems and causal nature of these should be identified (via scientific assessment)**, in order to create evidence based solutions.
4. Appropriate consideration and **support should be given to the wellbeing of the employees** throughout any changes which may occur.

We elaborated on the above points:

1. We are unanimous in our **opposition to moving to a two tier system.** 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.
2. In addition and as a priority, we want the Grove School facilities to significantly increase in capacity to meet the needs of the community as we recognise that the specialist support provided by the Grove school is an asset to be proud of. We also want to see the issues within the Academy tackled appropriately, once we know specifically what these are. **We believe both the Grove School and the Academy require new suitable buildings** in order to achieve this.
3. Importantly, we raised concerns of the lack of robust scientific, independent assessment and evidence (other than academic grades and Ofsted results). 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. E.g. 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? We cannot assume we know.

Broad consultations and questionnaires, mixing problems and solutions, are not specific enough.

4. Finally, we discussed concerns over staff wellbeing 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. Moving to a 2 tier system would involve huge disruption to members of staff, which we feel is unnecessary.

We hope this provides a valid contribution.

Kind Regards,  
Carly Richards - Vice Chair  
Tweedmouth West First School Governing Body