



# Northumberland County Council

## **CABINET**

**Date: 9 May 2023**

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### **Outcomes of the Consultation on Proposals for the Berwick Partnership**

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

Lead Officer: Audrey Kingham, Executive Director of Children, Young People and Education

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### **Purpose of Report**

This report presents the outcomes and analysis of feedback received from stakeholders arising from Phase 2 pre-statutory consultation with stakeholders in the Berwick Partnership area approved by Cabinet on 22 October 2022. The Phase 2 consultation set out possible models of school organisation within both the current 3-tier system and within a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system. Consultation was also undertaken with stakeholders on proposals for increased specialist provision within the Berwick Partnership area and feedback and analysis arising from this aspect of the consultation is also set out in the report.

Feedback received during consultation has been used to assist with the determination of the final conclusions and recommendations. Cabinet is now asked to approve the recommendation to publish statutory proposals for the implementation of a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure in the Berwick Partnership, which includes the proposed closure of some schools.

### **Recommendations**

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

- a) Note the feedback from the informal and pre-statutory consultations set out at paras. 30 to 77.
- b) Decide in the light of the feedback from consultation set out in this report and any recommendations from the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny

Committee whether to approve the publication of the statutory proposals setting out the intention of the County Council to implement the following proposals:

- i. Extend the age range of Spittal Community First School from an age 4-9 first school to an age 4-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025; although not a prescribed alteration, approve the reduction of the planned admission number of the school from 40 to 30 from the same date;
  - ii. Extend the age range of Tweedmouth Prior Park First School from an age 3-9 first school to an age 3-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025;
  - iii. Extend the age range of Tweedmouth West First School from an age 4-9 first school to an age 4-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025;
  - iv. Extend the age range of Wooler First School from an age 2-9 first school to an age 2-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025;
  - v. Extend the age range of Scremerston First School from an age 4-9 first school to an age 4-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025; although not a prescribed alteration, approve the reduction of the planned admission number of the school from 18 to 10 from the same date;
  - vi. Close Berwick Middle School with effect from 31 August 2026;
  - vii. Close Glendale Middle School with effect from 31 August 2026;
  - viii. Close Tweedmouth Community Middle School with effect from 31 August 2026;
  - ix. Establish a SEN unit at the site of Berwick St Mary's Church of England First to be managed by the school with specialist provision for up to 30 places reserved for pupils aged 4 to 11 with primary needs in SEMH, ASD, MLD and SLCN with effect from 1 September 2025.
- c) Cabinet would be asked to approve the following non-statutory proposals included in Phase 2 pre-consultation in conjunction with its final decision on the statutory proposals set out in para. b) and these proposals would be included in the published statutory proposal for information;
- i. Extend the age range of Berwick St Mary's Church of England First School from an age 3-9 first school to an age 3-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025 and reduce the planned admission number of the school from 30 to 15;
  - ii. Extend the age range of Holy Trinity Church of England First School from an age 3-9 first school to an age 3-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025;
  - iii. Extend the age range of Holy Island Church of England First School from an age 3-9 first school to an age 3-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025;
  - iv. Extend the age range of Hugh Joicey Church of England First School from an age 4-9 first school to an age 4-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025;
  - v. Extend the age range of Lowick Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School from an age 2-9 first school to an age 2-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025;
  - vi. Extend the age range of Norham St Coelwulf's C of E Controlled First School from an age 3-9 first school to an age 3-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025.

- d) Approve the allocation of the catchment area of Belford Primary School (including a slight reduction in its size) from the Berwick Partnership to the greater Alnwick Partnership as part of an amendment to the Council's admissions arrangements taking effect from 1 September 2024, and thereby permit that a request is submitted to the Schools Adjudicator to amend the relevant admissions arrangements approved in February 2023.
- e) Note that local authorities do not have powers to propose or change the organisation of academies. Therefore, the proposed changes to the age ranges of St Cuthbert's Catholic First School to become an age 3-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025 and for Berwick Academy to become an age 11 to 18 secondary academy, consulted on as part of the Phase 2 wider Berwick partnership reorganisation would need to be approved by the Bishop Bewick Academy Trust and Trustees of Berwick Academy respectively. In addition, the Trustees of Berwick Academy would need to approve the establishment of an SEN unit on the site of Berwick Academy to be managed by the academy with specialist provision for up to 40 places reserved for pupils aged 11 to 16 with primary needs in SEMH, ASD, MLD and SLCN with effect from 1 September 2026.

If approved, the academy trusts would need to take a request for final approval forward to the Regional Department for Education (DfE) Director North East. The decision of the Bishop Bewick Academy Trust and Trustees of Berwick Academy Regional DfE Director to approve the changes in ranges of St Cuthbert's and Berwick Academy and to approve the establishment of an SEN unit on the site of Berwick Academy would be contingent on the Council's final approval of the statutory proposal, if approved for publication.

- f) Note that the outcomes of the publication of the Statutory Proposals would be brought back to Cabinet in July and in any event within two months of the date of their publication for a final decision in relation to the proposals set out in paras. b) to d).
- g) Note the indicative capital costs outlined in this report and the implications for the Medium-Term Capital Programme.
- h) Note the implications for Home to School Transport set out in this report.

### **Link to Corporate Plan**

This report is relevant to the corporate objectives, and specifically the "Living, Learning" and "Thriving" priorities of the Corporate Plan 2021-24. The key priorities of tackling inequalities, growth and value for money also focus on different aspects of the annual report and contribute to the work of Northumberland County Councils Inequalities Action Plan.

### **Key Issues**

1. Cabinet has approved just under £40m of capital funding in the Medium-Term Financial Plan to be invested in buildings within the Berwick partnership of schools.

2. It was agreed Cabinet would require assurance that this investment would be made in an organisational structure that would be viable and sustainable in the medium to long-term. Such a viable structure would need to retain the majority of students across all phases within Berwick schools and would be the most likely to deliver improved educational outcomes for all children and young people in the Berwick area.
3. Discussions on what would be the best school structure in the Berwick Partnership have been ongoing for many years, and pre-date many of the incumbent headteachers of the schools. However, the informal discussions that began with headteachers and Chairs of Governors in the partnership in April 2021, the community survey in October 2021 and the two phases of pre-statutory consultation on proposed structures of school organisation have now led to the clear recommendations set out in this report.
4. Following a period of informal discussions with leaders of schools in Berwick and a community survey in 2021, Cabinet approved two phases of pre-statutory consultation on proposals for the organisation of schools in Berwick Partnership; Phase 1 consultation took place between 23 May and 22 August 2022, while Phase 2 consultation has taken place between 31 October 2022 and 3 March 2023. The background detail, rationale and implementation of these consultations is set out in paras. 17 to 29 of this report, while feedback from the Phase 2 consultation is summarised in paras. 30 to 77.
5. Phase 1 pre-statutory consultation asked schools, parents and the wider community whether the current 3-tier system or a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system of school organisation would be better placed to address the issues facing the Berwick Partnership and meet the objectives of the shared vision signed up to by all Governing Bodies, particularly in relation to improving educational outcomes at Key Stage 4, financial viability and sustainability of schools in the light of falling pupil numbers.
6. Feedback from Phase 1 consultation indicated that most Governing Bodies were clear on their preference for schools to be organised within either the 3-tier or 2-tier model, with a clear majority of first schools and Berwick Academy favouring the 2-tier system. However, feedback from parents and the wider community indicated that the level of support for the 3-tier and the 2-tier systems was broadly similar. It was therefore recommended that Cabinet 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) structure, to provide clarity on how both systems could operate in future. Pupil and school data and information was used in conjunction with feedback from Phase 1 pre-statutory consultation to develop the 3-tier and 2-tier models consulted upon in Phase 2.
7. It is clear that those stakeholders who submitted their views during Phase 1 and Phase 2 consultations responded with the best educational interests of pupils and families at heart. However, while there has been a shift in the views of some stakeholders, there remains a clear disagreement among some schools and the wider community as to which model of school organisation would be better placed to address the issues facing the partnership now and in the future. Therefore, consensus agreement across all stakeholders who responded was not gained during the two phases of informal consultation.

8. The Council has a duty to support schools to improve standards, support continuity of education, support schools to be financially viable and sustainable and support smooth transition of pupils between schools. The Council also has a duty to provide best value to the residents of Northumberland in relation to Capital investment of public monies in school buildings. Following the two phases of consultation, the local authority now has a responsibility to provide system leadership regarding school organisation and therefore a clear recommendation to propose a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure for Berwick Partnership is set out in this report.
9. Officers have concluded that the establishment of a 2-tier structure across the whole of the Berwick Partnership, necessitating the closure of the middle schools, the extension of the age ranges of the first schools and the extension of the age range of Berwick Academy would be in the best educational interests of the current and future pupils in that area.
10. Phase 1 consultation also established the need to create additional provision for children and young people with SEND within the Berwick area, specifically for those with primary needs in SEMH and ASD. While two models of provision were proposed for consultation, feedback has clarified that only the model proposing specialist provision within units on the site of St Mary's Church of England Primary School (as it would be) and on the site of Berwick Academy would be an achievable option at this stage.
11. While the Council has powers to extend the age ranges of maintained community schools and to close maintained and voluntary schools, it does not have powers to make changes to the structure of academies. Therefore, any proposals by the Council to establish a 2-tier structure in the Berwick Partnership would require the approval of the Bishop Bewick Catholic Trust, the Trustees of Berwick Academy and the final approval of Regional Department for Education Director North East with respect to the proposed changes to the age ranges of St Cuthbert's Catholic First School and Berwick Academy.

## Background

12. As stated, although discussions about the structure of schools in the Berwick partnership have been ongoing for many years, the allocation of capital funding crystallised the beginning of a clear process towards determination of an agreed school structure that would be viable, sustainable and deliver improved outcomes for the children and young people and their families living in the area served by the schools now and in the future.
13. Throughout the work undertaken with the Berwick Partnership, headteachers and school governors understood that whatever structure was ultimately agreed, this would have to be within the context of some other fundamental changes, such as a possible reduction in the current number of schools in the partnership and the reallocation of some schools to other partnerships.
14. A key achievement arising from the discussions on structure with school leaders in Berwick Partnership has been the development of the Vision for Change for Berwick Partnership which all schools have signed up to:
  - **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 the SEND offer** for children and young people in the Berwick Partnership area 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 best value for NCC capital investment** as well as any wider investment opportunities that may arise.
15. The preferred model of organisation for Berwick Partnership would need to demonstrate that it had the greatest potential to fulfil the ambitions set out in this vision.
16. The key issues facing the partnership that necessitate the need for change to the current organisation of schools in Berwick that were discussed and continue to be relevant:

- i. Education Outcomes

While schools' performance data is presented below for information, it should be noted that the DfE have stated that due to the uneven impact of the Covid pandemic on results in 2021/22 for schools and academies, direct comparisons with performance from previous years or between schools is not reliable and therefore not recommended.

### *Key Stage 1 performance and Ofsted*

- KS1 assessments are not published. 11 first schools are graded Outstanding or Good by Ofsted. While two first schools are currently graded Requires Improvement, one is making good progress towards Good or better while the other is a relatively new judgement.

### *Key Stage 2 performance and Ofsted*

- The DfE has stated that Year 6 pupils in Summer 2022 who undertook KS2 assessments experienced disruption to their learning during the pandemic, particularly at the end of Year 4 and in Year 5.
- With that caveat in mind, the DfE has reported that attainment in England at KS2 in 2022 fell below that in 2019 (the last year that 2022 results are able to be compared against) in all assessed areas except reading. There was a performance drop for all pupils in 2022, but disadvantaged pupil's performance fell more sharply.

**Table 1 - %Pupils who met the standard in Reading, Writing and Maths at KS2**

<b>School</b>	<b>KS2 2019</b>	<b>Eng. Avge 2019</b>	<b>KS2 2022</b>	<b>Eng. Avge 2022</b>
Berwick Middle	72%	65%	48.5%	59%
Belford Primary*	88%*	65%	25%*	59%
Glendale Middle	63%	65%	48.3%	59%
Tweedmouth Middle	75%	65%	62%	59%

*\*Note: Belford Primary Year 6 cohorts can be very small - very small cohorts under 10 pupils means individual pupil results have greater impact on overall average.*

- The three middle schools in Berwick Partnership are graded 'Good' by Ofsted.

### *GCSE (KS4) performance*

- The DfE has stated that, given the unprecedented change in the way GCSE results were awarded in the summers of 2020 and 2021, as well as the changes to grade boundaries and methods of assessment for 2021/22, caution should be taken when considering comparisons over time, as they may not reflect changes in pupil performance alone.
- 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 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 GCSE results in 2022
  - Grade 5 in English and Maths (strong pass) - 28% compared to Northumberland average 46% and England average of 50%
  - Progress 8 and Attainment 8 scores were below the Northumberland and England average

*'A'-level (KS5) performance*

- DfE have stated that, given the unprecedented change in the way 'A' level and vocational and VTQ grades were awarded in 2020 and 2021, as well as changes to the grade boundaries and methods of assessment for 2021/22, caution should be exercised when considering comparisons over time, as they may not reflect changes in student performance alone.
  - 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+
  - Berwick Academy's 'A' level results in 2022
    - Progress score was below the national average for England
    - The average grade was a D+, compared to the Northumberland average grade of B- and England average grade of B
  - Berwick Academy was inspected by Ofsted in November 2021 and judged to be an improving school, moving from Inadequate to Requires Improvement.
- ii. Falling Pupil Numbers and Viability and Sustainability of Schools

- The number of children being born within the Berwick Partnership area has been falling consistently for a number of years and is predicted to continue (see Table 2):

**Table 2**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Current average cohort size based on number living in Berwick area</b>
High School (Year 9 to 11)	218
Middle School (Year 5 to 8)	226
First School (Reception to Year 4)	193
Reception 2023 to Reception 2025	163

- In Reception 2025, the cohort size will be 150 noting that not all parents may select to educate their children within the partnership.
- There are already significant surplus places in first schools in the partnership, with 166 pupils on roll in Reception in March 2023 with capacity



for 293 pupils in schools (note in January 2022 there were 182 pupils on roll in Reception). Without taking into account any potential additional late applications, at this stage the reception cohort across the partnership in September 2023 is predicted to be 141. 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 three schools forecast to be in deficit budget by 2024/25, with four forecasted to be in deficit by 2025/26 - eight schools currently have an in-year deficit.

- o Compounding the fall in pupil numbers is the continuing drift of pupils into neighbouring partnerships, into Scotland and into private education (see Table 3 data from 2021/22):

**Table 3 (2021/22 data)**

<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

- o 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 the schools noted in Table 2; 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 equate to around £915k while at middle school phase this equates to £470k.
  - o 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 various consultations carried out in the Berwick Partnership at high school phase indicated that some parents are choosing an alternative pathway even earlier in their children’s educational journey.
- iii. The Need for additional specialist provision in the Berwick area

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 nine 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 Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) as a primary need – note that SLCN often leads to a later diagnosis of ASD.

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

Final Forecasts Year Group	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 5 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 5 - Projected number of students living in Berwick area with ASD as a primary need**

Final Forecasts Year Group	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	NOR 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

While not all projected students with a primary need in SEMH and ASD in the tables above would 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 in the Berwick area. 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.

## The Consultation Process

### Informal Discussions and Meetings with school leaders and community survey April 2021 to March 2022

17. In order to identify the most likely structures to provide such assurance, officers have been working with the headteachers in their capacity as educational professionals and school governors since April 2021. This work began with meetings with these

groups at partnership and individual school levels; themed workshops with headteachers on a number of possible models of organisation including the current 3-tier model structure have also taken place. In addition, the question of whether Belford Primary, Wooler First and Glendale Middle Schools should remain within the Berwick Partnership was also discussed.

18. 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.
19. Following the full partnership meeting in April 2021, six potential models of organisation were discussed with the headteacher and Chair of Governors of each school/academy; these models were based on previous discussions with the partnership, including a model put forward to NCC by a group of schools. Following workshops and further meetings, three models were discounted as they had little to no support and three were taken forward for further analysis.
20. 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.
21. Overall, the work undertaken with school leaders and feedback from the high-level survey suggested the two preferred models of organisation most likely to achieve long-term viability and sustainability for education in the partnership were the current 3-tier structure or the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure. This conclusion was reached as a result of the views of schools on the potential positives and challenges of a 2-tier system in the partnership where there was a mixed response, with nine Governing Bodies in support of 2-tier, four against and three unsure or undecided.
22. Officers therefore recommended that in order to inform detailed models of school organisation for consultation, a high level informal consultation (Phase 1) with the parents, staff, pupils and the wider community of the Berwick Partnership area should be carried out on the benefits and rationale for both the 3-tier structure and the 2-tier structure in order to establish whether there was a general preference for either, and whether they had any views on the potential for some schools to become part of other partnerships.
23. Further information and detailed feedback from this initial work with schools and the high-level survey is set out in the Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services, Berwick Partnership Organisation, 12 April 2022.

#### High level summary of feedback received from Phase 1 consultation May to August 2022

24. On 22 April 2022, Cabinet approved the commencement of Phase 1 pre-consultation on the high-level question of whether the current 3-tier system of school organisation or a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system would be better placed to address the issues facing the Berwick Partnership, recommended by officers for the reasons set out in para. 22.

25. Phase 1 began on 23 May for 11 weeks, concluding on 12 August 2022. 365 responses were received via the online consultation response form and via email.
26. As there are currently two federations of school Governing Bodies in the Berwick Partnership (Lowick with Holy Island and Glendale with Wooler), there are only 16 Governing Bodies for 18 schools. During Phase 1 consultation, the Governing Bodies of 10 schools (eight Governing Bodies) responded that they were in favour of a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure of education during this consultation. This group of Governing Bodies/Trustees (including the two federated Governing Bodies) have responsibility for eight first schools, one middle and Berwick Academy. Five Governing Bodies were strongly in favour of retaining the 3-tier structure, made of two of the town's first schools, the two town middle schools and one of the rural schools. One first school Governing Body was non-committal about which structure it favoured as the proposal was vague (but stated it could work in either system), while Belford Primary and the Governing Body of The Grove Special School felt unable to comment on the organisation of the mainstream school system as it was up to the impacted schools and their communities. Therefore, at this stage, the Governing Bodies of a small majority of schools favoured a move to a 2-tier structure.
27. Not including Governing Bodies, 349 responses were received from parents, staff and the wider community received during the Phase 1 consultation; for context it should be noted that 2,323 pupils were on roll in mainstream Berwick schools in January 2022. Overall, of those consultees who responded, the split in preference between the 3-tier system and the 2-tier (primary/secondary) system was almost equal. In relation to how specific groups of consultees responded, first school parents and staff were split in relation to preference, high school staff were entirely in favour of 2-tier, while middle school staff and parents were mostly in favour of 3-tier.
28. Given the split in preference for either system, it was recommended to Cabinet that Phase 2 consultation should set out proposed models of school organisation within both the 3-tier system and the 2-tier system. However, the proposed 3-tier model consulted on at Phase 2 did not set out the status-quo as it had been made clear during the early discussions with school leaders and during Phase 1 consultation that changes would need to be made to the organisation of schools in the Berwick Partnership, including some school closures, in order to address the issues of viability and sustainability as a result of consistently falling pupil numbers.
29. Further information and detailed feedback from Phase 1 consultation is set out in the Report of the Joint Interim Director of Children's Service, The Outcomes of Consultation on Berwick Partnership Organisation, 11 October 2022.

#### Summary of Feedback received from Phase 2 Consultation October 2022 to March 2023

30. At the outset of Phase 2 consultation, over 6,400 stakeholders were sent a link to the informal consultation document and questionnaire published on 31 October 2022. Other interested parties were able to access the online consultation document and questionnaire from the Council's website. In total, 724 responses were received to the consultation including from Governing Bodies representing the 18 schools in the Berwick Partnership. A Consultation Register is provided at Appendix 2.

## ***Governing Bodies of schools impacted by the proposals***

### 31. Governing Body of Belford Primary School

The Governing Body is of the view that organisation of schools, in and around Berwick, is a matter for the schools and their communities and do not feel that they should comment collectively as a Governing Body on the proposals for reorganisation in the Berwick area.

Regarding the proposal for Belford Primary School to formally become part of the Alnwick Partnership the governors fully and strongly support this proposal. Very few of Belford Primary's students progressed to Berwick Academy and since Belford became a primary school, in line with the organisation in the Alnwick Partnership, that trickle has ceased.

Governors accept, as a consequence of joining the Alnwick Partnership, the minor adjustment to Belford's catchment area.

Extract from their response:

*"Becoming part of the Alnwick Partnership makes sense educational for our children and staff and would mean that our parents will qualify for free home-to-school transport."*

*"There has been a demand for this from parents and the wider community for a large number of years, and there is strong support for it from our parents and the wider community."*

### 32. Governing Body of Berwick St Mary's CE First School

The Governing Body firmly believe in moving to a 2-tier structure as soon as possible.

Governors appreciate the challenges currently faced by the Berwick partnership and accept that we must act quickly to reduce the loss of children, and revenue, from our schools.

The Governing Body would like to highlight the following key factors:

- The 2-tier model is designed to fully support the implementation of the National Curriculum and the teaching of key stages.
- Transition within the current 3-tier model is not a strength of the partnership.
- 2-tier reduces transitions from two to one and is at the end of a key stage rather than part-way through.
- Within the 3-tier model the high school, which is arguably the most important phase, has the shortest time with students. Within the first term students need to make life choices on educational/vocational pathways and a 2-tier system will provide the time required for trusted relationships to develop more effectively than at present.
- Staff are trained as primary or secondary teachers. The current 3-tier model limits opportunities for career progression and doesn't utilise staffs' full

training as primary practitioners. This may be why Berwick struggles to attract a wide pool of high-quality candidates for vacancies.

- The 2-tier model provides the partnership with a more robust approach to the financial sustainability of the locality.

Although not proposed in the consultation, the importance of long-term financial sustainability needs to be addressed and the model proposed for Norham and St Mary's (hub model) is a means to ensure long-term success and survival. As governors we feel the benefits of bringing small schools together ensures a brighter future for the children and staff.

The Governing Body has considered the issues around SEND and recognise the need to support an increasing number of children/families dealing with SEMH. The proposal from St Mary's and Berwick Academy to create a new collaborative offer to meet the needs of SEMH and other complex needs within the locality is fully supported by the Governing Body and recommended for consideration under this consultation.

The Governing Body have also expressed the need to develop/relocate early years provision north of the river as current provision is based on the south side of river making it difficult for some families to access flexible preschool provision.

As a Governing Body we would like both Wooler and Belford schools to stay within the Berwick Partnership as they add strength to the partnership in terms of the current and future potential of our joint education offer.

Extract from their response:

*"In considering how best to support the children of Berwick achieve the outcomes we want for them all, the Governing Body have considered all viewpoints and consider the only viable educational structure moving forward is the 2-tier option."*

### 33. Governing Body of Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First School

The Governors strongly support the proposed move to a 2-tier structure of education for the Berwick partnership. A 2-tier structure will produce the necessary improvements in outcomes for all our young people from 0-25, enable the locality to be educationally sustainable and support the future of the wider Berwick area.

Governors highlighted several key factors in their response, which are the same as those highlighted by Governors at St Mary's C of E First School and are outlined in Para 32.

In relation to the future of Norham School governors noted:

- The important role the school plays in supporting the community. Without a school many children/families could move to schools in the Scottish Borders.
- The vast nature of Norham's catchment area.
- Federation with Berwick St Mary's CE First School will enable the school to continue to deliver high standards of education whilst being financially sustainable. Governors also supported the proposal to federate with

Tweedmouth Prior Park First believing joint working will enhance the educational offer, the viability and reflects the policy of the DfE who are promoting good practice through co-operative working via a 'family of schools' approach.

The Governing Body also considered the issues around SEND, Early Years and whether schools in Wooler/Glendale and Belford should remain in the Berwick partnership or move to the Alnwick partnership. Their comments and reasons match with those provided by the Governors at St Mary's and are summarised in para. 32.

Extract from their response:

*"The Governing Body is supportive of the proposed change to a 2-tier system, for all of the above-mentioned reasons. We appreciate change is often a difficult process to go through, however, change is what is needed in Berwick to offer the children of our area, for future generations, the best possible start to their lives. We believe we have the people in place to make the change happen and the knowledge/expertise to help manage that change."*

#### 34. Governing Body of Holy Trinity CE First School

More Governors at Holy Trinity expressed support for 2-tier reorganisation. Only significant change to the current system would have the desired impact on outcomes at Key Stage 4 and above and deliver the required improvements in the SEND offer. Reasons for this decision included:

- Syncing of key stages.
- Better staff recruitment and retention.
- The changing socio-economic background which some believed was having a negative impact on teacher/pupil relationships.

Despite cautious approval for 2-tier a number of reservations were expressed that if this model was chosen that careful management of the process was vital in order to minimise disruption to the education of cohorts most affected.

The revised campus model put forward by leaders of Berwick and Tweedmouth Middle Schools represented a compromise for 3-tier supporters but was not the preferred model for our 3-tier advocates. Reservations about the previous incarnation of the campus model still apply (eg. congestion at the site, removal of provision from north of river and potential impact on school rolls at Holy Trinity and St Mary's). Governors were unsure whether there would be public support for a five-form entry middle school sited alongside a high school which would mean nine-year-olds making a significantly more challenging transition and negates the attraction of the current system.

Governors welcome a high-quality peripatetic service, but questions remain about how this will operate within the 3-tier system and think it is better for SEND learners to be supported in their home school rather than making multiple transitions to a specialist unit. Governors believe a custom build for The Grove and a Berwick based SEMH Hub providing a specialist run peripatetic service to local schools is non-negotiable. The PAN at The Grove needs to be increased so that more children

can attend but the siting of the SEMH hub is a matter for experts and if The Grove are reluctant to extend its provision an alternative should be explored.

Governors felt the current offer for Post-16/Post-18 was unsuitable and there was a need for better provision in the Berwick area. Governors suggested investment in community-based education, close collaboration with Northumberland College, subsidised youth provision and re-instatement of a community centre or venue for groups to hold events and classes.

Early years provision is good although more mainstream SEND support is required and governors did have concerns that the closure of Scremerston and Norham schools may limit access to nurseries for those catchments.

Extract from their response:

*“... regardless of our individual opinions, this Governing Body is committed to collaborating with NCC and the wider Partnership to ensure the smooth implementation of whichever model is chosen by the community and this is key to minimising disruption and improving prospects for children and young people.”*

35. Governing Body of Hugh Joicey C of E Aided First School

The Governing Body felt 2-tier would be the most appropriate model.

It would need careful planning and consideration to maximise outcomes and provision for young people both in rural and urban localities. An appeal of the 2-tier option is that it provides for closer relationship with pupils and teachers as they progress through the key milestones of their education but will inevitably diminish something of the precious value that exists in the first school model of early year's provision.

Governors did have concerns regarding the ongoing issues around capacity within the SEND school. Whilst acknowledging there has been some consideration of supporting further development of peripatetic services felt there is much more detailed planning required to ensure the needs of the SEND community are planned for and well met through appropriate resourcing.

Extract from their response:

*“Governors recognise that Model B would support the rationalisation of school places within the partnership whilst future proofing the partnership.”*

36. Governing Body of Lowick and Holy Island CE First Schools

The Governing Body of Lowick and Holy Island C of E First Schools would prefer to see a 2-tier model of education for the following reasons:

- Beneficial to undertake transition at a slightly older age (eg. 11 rather than nine) and to only have one transition between schools (eg. primary to secondary).
- The 2-tier model provides opportunities for nurturing children from early years to the end of key stage 2, capitalising on community links and school values.



- An advantage for the Holy Island children in that they would not be required to board and travel to Longridge Towers at nine years old.
- Would provide scope for increased capacity for staff leadership and professional development.

The governors strongly agree that The Grove school deserves a purpose-built new building, with sufficient places for local demand into the future, and that it needs to retain its current SEND provision rather than splitting into two different types of SEND under one roof.

In relation to Post-16 and Post-18, governors would like to see more aspirational choices for children and to see both vocational and academic options with sufficient choice, so pupils don't have to travel long distances to find the course they desire.

For early years governors would like to see the current provision continuing and thriving.

Extract from their response:

*“As a governing body, we acknowledge, appreciate and value the expertise of the middle schools and their role in the community. However overall, we would prefer to see a 2-tier model.”*

### 37. Governing Body of Scremerston First School

The Governors believe that a 2-tier model will provide the best learning outcomes for the children of Berwick. It would:

- Provide a consistent approach in the delivery of the curriculum with less upheaval for children transitioning to middle school.
- Provide more accountability for teaching leading up to SATs.

Governors envisage Scremerston First as an integral part of this future structure. All teachers are primary curriculum trained and by providing teaching up to age 11 will hold accountability for SATS results. Scremerston First plans to extend the SEND provision they have on offer to be a 'hub' for the rural schools in the partnership.

Scremerston has an outstanding reputation with almost 60% of pupils coming from out of catchment through choice and a reputation for being a school that will accommodate those children who need specialist teaching but at the lower end of the spectrum that does not attract the additional funding. Scremerston is the only rural, non-church affiliated school and the 2021 census reveal that only 46% of the population identify as Christian and the choice of a non-church affiliated school is important based on feedback received from parents.

Extract from their response:

*“We appreciate that change is necessary and indeed vital to ensure an ever-improved environment, but we fundamentally believe that here at Scremerston we*

*can be a positive part of and enhance that change to support the provision of quality education for the children of our community.”*

*“We hope that you can recognise the potential of our school in your future plans and include the strengths it can offer as part of your future proposals.”*

38. Governing Body of Spittal First School

The Governing Body supports 3-tier believing the needs of the children are best met under the current system. While governors understand the need for closure or amalgamation, they do not feel it is their position to comment on individual schools.

In relation to Wooler and Belford Schools the governors felt it was a decision for those individual schools to decide whether they remain in the Berwick partnership or move to the Alnwick partnership.

Governors agree that the needs for SEND learners can be met under the 3-tier system with additional specialist provision at St Mary’s, Berwick Middle and Berwick Academy. The Grove Special School should have a new site as it is currently oversubscribed and there is an increasing demand for spaces. The possibility for a separate site for SEMH learners should be explored further.

To secure better outcomes for young people Post-16/18 provision should work in collaboration with local employers to engage with apprenticeship programmes which will provide real work experiences and develop skills to enhance the local workforce.

Extract from their response:

*“Unless there is a considerable evidence base for cost saving or educational improvement by converting to a 2-tier system, we don’t see any benefit.”*

*“We continue to believe Spittal School can continue to meet the needs of children in either a 2-tier or 3-tier system.”*

39. Governing Body of St Cuthbert’s Catholic First School

The Governing Body unanimously and firmly support the 2-tier model of education and wish to become a primary school.

The education system in England is organised around key stages and it follows logically that school organisation should be too. Pupils can complete each entire key stage in one school, with only one point of transition. The 2-tier system ensures that pupils are taught by subject specialists from Year 7 onwards providing them with a challenging curriculum and expertise in preparation for GCSE which governors believe is conducive to the raising of standards.

Extract from their response:

*“Becoming a Primary School would allow us to continue to cherish and nurture our pupils right up to the age of 11 and to prepare them for secondary education ourselves. Having only one point of transition would lessen the danger of lost learning, especially as there would not be breaks in the middle of key stages.”*

#### 40. Governing Body of Tweedmouth Prior Park First School

The Governing Body support the move to establish a 2-tier structure as it will create a more sustainable education system for children as well as addressing the growing number of surplus places. Governors' reasoning for 2-tier includes:

- Retain more sustainable primary schools across the partnership.
- Single change of school which comes at a natural point in the education cycle (eg. end of key stage 2).
- Fewer transitions benefit all children, especially children with SEND.
- Secondary school has longer to develop the growing child and to prepare them for important exams (eg. GCSE/A Levels).
- 2-tier is the backbone to the National Curriculum Framework and teachers are trained to teach either primary or secondary.
- Ensures greater accountability for educational outcomes with schools becoming accountable for whole key stages.
- 2-tier is in line with the majority of schools nationally.
- First Schools are well placed to deliver the primary curriculum and Tweedmouth Prior Park First has primary teachers who are trained to teach the full primary age range and have the expertise.
- Berwick is no different to other areas of the country that have their own unique challenges. The only difference is that Berwick has too many schools for the falling pupil numbers. Berwick children deserve equality of opportunity with the rest of the country which is predominantly 2-tier.

Governors felt that if Berwick retained 3-tier education more first schools would have to close and pupils continue to have two school changes, occurring part-way through important stages of their education. The falling birth rates is already affecting first schools' sustainability and would make middle schools, in any form, unviable within the next few years and could result in another reorganisation of education. Maintaining the 3-tier system is not a viable solution for the long-term future of the partnership.

The Governing Body believes there needs to be an expansion in the provision of special school places to minimise the need for pupils to travel long distances to find suitable education but do not think that this can be provided unless The Grove moves to a larger site.

Extract from their response:

*"We appreciate the challenges that the necessary reorganisation will present to the schools that have to close, but changes must be made to help to improve the education offered to pupils across the partnership and to respond to the significant fall in pupil numbers. We believe that the 2-tier structure of primary/secondary schools is the most effective way of doing this."*

*"We understand that some parents, staff in other schools and decision makers, including councillors, may favour 3-tier because it is what they know best from their days at school, but it is important that this decision is based on knowledge of the wider national educational landscape."*

41. Governing Body of Tweedmouth West First School

The Governing Body was in opposition to moving to 2-tier. Governors are not convinced that a move to 2-tier is the correct decision but were interested in the plan put together by Tweedmouth and Berwick Middle Schools and would like to investigate this possibility further.

As a priority, governors want The Grove School's facilities to significantly increase in capacity to meet the needs of the community as they recognise the specialist support provided by The Grove to be an asset to be proud of. Governors completely support the plan put together by The Grove.

Extract from their response:

*"We believe a 2-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."*

42. Governing Body of Wooler First and Glendale Middle Schools

The Federated Governing Body's preference is that the schools become a one form entry primary school, with a new build school, and are re-aligned to the Alnwick Partnership.

Governors are deeply passionate about and also very proud of the pupils, staff and provision here in Wooler First and Glendale Middle Schools and outlined the rationale for these decisions:

- Most parents opt to send their children to Alnwick High and currently a third of pupils leave Glendale Middle at the end of Year 6 to ensure a place at Alnwick High.
- Year 8 pupils are unable to select Duchess High as their next school through the local authority transition processes, adding further confusion, difficulty and anxiety to the process.
- A survey of current parents/cares indicate over 50% would make Alnwick their first choice, 27% Berwick as their preferred option with 18% expressing no preference.
- Pupil numbers at Glendale continue to fall and future numbers indicate further reduction over-time. This impacts class sizes, staff deployment, capacity to sustain effective high-quality curriculum coverage and leads to difficulties in recruiting/retaining staff.
- Wooler First School's numbers continue to fall and Wooler First is the only feeder school into Glendale. Previously there had been six feeder schools but two are now primary schools and feed into Duchess' High and three schools have closed.

The governors gave full support to the need to review and expand the SEN education offer in the north of the county.

Extract from their response:

*“As governors we understand the challenges facing our local schools in the Berwick partnership. We are committed to working with all stakeholders to ensure the best outcome for our children and young people in our community and would love to be able to maintain the provision for children in the Wooler and Glendale area from two years old to 13 years of age that we have built. However, factors out of our control have led our Governing Body to the following conclusions:*

- *Transition to a primary model would safeguard our future viability and the viability of education provision for our rural community.*
- *The need to support all staff as we go through the process with clear guidance and timescales for change and clear staff protocol that identifies how at-risk staff will be supported through the process.*
- *A designated new school build or comprehensive redesign and refurbishment of current facilities.*
- *Early Years provision – maintaining existing provision with possibility to extend provision for the under two-year-olds. Pre-school provision is very limited in this part of the authority.*
- *A possible development of SEND provision to meet needs within the wider area.*
- *Possibility of maintaining current swimming provision on site including sharing this facility with local partners.”*

#### 43. Governing Body of Berwick Middle School

The Governing Body of Berwick Middle School is in complete agreement with Model A (Revised 3-tier system of schools in Berwick).

As governors they understand that middle schools have a very important role to play in driving continual improvement with the partnership, and parents have told them that from the start of the consultation and asked middle school leaders to find an alternative option.

The partnership is in a unique situation and while other parts of the County/Country have changed to a 2-tier system, with questionable results, the Berwick partnership continues to provide the pastoral and educational support which inevitable will lead to excellent outcomes for all pupils within a system that supports high quality learning across all phases. A 2-tier system of education is not, and never will be a “fits all” solution.

In supporting Model A, the governors also support ‘*Option C – An Inclusive Model*’ which has been proposed by Berwick and Tweedmouth Middle Schools and which has significant backing from school leaders within the partnership. Option C is the only proposal which fully addresses all the important statements set out in the ‘*Vision for Change*’. It is a supportive model which will benefit all schools in the partnership and promote successful collaboration across all phases.

Extract from their response:

*“As the Governors of Berwick Middle School, we remain passionate about the existing 3-tier system of education in the Berwick Partnership.”*

*“We are also in agreement that the revision which is necessary can be effectively and efficiently brought about through Option C – An Inclusive Model and therefore give this our full backing.”*

44. Governing Body of Tweedmouth Middle School

The Governing Body of Tweedmouth Middle School is in complete and unanimous agreement with Model A (Revised 3-tier system of schools in Berwick).

Their rationale for supporting 3-tier is the same as Berwick Middle and is summarised in para. 43.

Extract from their response:

*“As Governing Body of Tweedmouth Community Middle School, we are passionate about the existing 3-tier system of education in the Berwick Partnership. It is the very best system to deliver high-quality outcomes to the pupils of the Berwick catchment, support young people through education and into a successful adult life where they can thrive.”*

*“We are also in agreement that the revision which is necessary can be effectively and efficiently brought about through Option C – An Inclusive Model and therefore give this our full backing.”*

45. The Trustees of Berwick Academy

The Trustees strongly support the proposed move to a 2-tier structure of education for the Berwick Partnership.

Trustees considered the effects for the whole partnership and reviewed the proposal and believe a 2-tier structure will provide the necessary improvements in outcomes for all our young people, which will enable the locality to be educationally sustainable and prosperous.

Specifically:

- Children should be taught the National Curriculum in complete key stages.
- Children should move between schools less often, so that children, families and school can build positive relationships.
- Children and families benefit from developing longer-term relationship with the school, including familiarity with subjects (from Year 7) before choosing GCSE options in Year 9.
- National picture is heavily in favour of 2-tier education, with only 102 3-tier middle schools out of 32,163 schools.
- Teachers are trained to teach either primary or secondary education.
- Schools take responsibility and accountability for whole key stages enabling the delivery of a cohesive and progressive curriculum, the aim currently seen as the main driver in excellence within education (*DfE/OfSTED vision*).

- Reduces the need for testing/assessments within key stage as teachers/schools have a more robust knowledge of the child, their achievements and their areas for development (eg. no need for unnecessary baseline assessments within Year 5).

Trustees considered the issues around SEND and fully support the development of additional provision for the existing and emerging SEND needs. They are aware and supportive of the excellent work of The Grove but recognise the need to support an increasing number of children/families with issues related to SEMH. Berwick Academy has worked with St Mary's to deliver a proposal which relates to providing a new provision to meet the needs of SEMH and other complex needs and hope it can be considered within the context of any decisions.

In respect of Wooler and Belford, the Trustees would like both schools to stay within the Berwick Partnership. They add strength in terms of the current and future potential of our joint education offer and Trustees would like those students to benefit from the partnership work with local employers.

Extract from their response:

*"The Trustee Board is unanimously behind the proposed change to 2-tier and passed a resolution to pursue this in January 2021."*

*"We believe that with falling birth rates in the area, this is the only way to sustain a commercially viable, effective and scalable educational offering within the Berwick Partnership area."*

*"We acknowledge that many people are wary of change, which can make it a difficult process to go through. However, fear of change should not stop us from executing a strategy in Berwick which will offer the children of our area now, and in future generations, the best possible start to their lives"*

#### 46. Governing Body of The Grove School

During Phase 2 Consultation, the Governing Body submitted a proposal explaining the need for a new build for The Grove School on a new site for the PMLD and SLD learners it supports. A commentary on the proposal is set out at para. 78, e. and a full copy of the proposal can be found in the Background Papers to this report.

#### 47. Governing Body of Duchess High School

It is the Governing Body's belief that it is not for them to comment on the relative strengths and weaknesses of reorganisation in other schools' catchment area.

They do feel able to comment on the effect this reorganisation would have on the students/families currently attending the Duchess's High School. Assimilating Belford and Glendale into our catchment would be a positive move for these families (eg. free county provided transport).

The governors felt strongly that Option A is the best option for the families who currently attend Duchess High School, as this will allow for the free provision of transport for our students. What frustrated the governors with the consultation is

having to choose between Option A/B as it may appear that they approve/disapprove of a particular structure.

Extract from their response

*“We do not have a view either way on how Berwick should be organised, this is an opinion based on what is best for our current students here. We would like to see all schools thrive in North Northumberland, and we hope that the voices of all stakeholders are heard through this NCC consultation in order to build a better, fairer and more certain future for all involved.”*

### ***Staff Groups (collective responses) of schools impacted by the proposals***

#### 48. Belford Primary School Staff

The staff at Belford Primary School fully and strongly support the proposal for Belford Primary School to become part of the Alnwick partnership. Since becoming a primary school in 2018 children from Belford have chosen to progress to Duchess Community High School. Parents currently fund transport to Duchess Community High School and many struggle with these costs but if Belford became part of the Alnwick partnership parents would qualify for free home-to-school transport. Staff agreed with the proposed plan to slightly reduce Belford’s catchment area.

The proposal for additional special educational needs provision in the Berwick area is supported by staff as there is clearly a need to reduce the distances that some children travel to access appropriate provision. The Grove School provides outstanding provision in a very small building and whilst staff see the benefits of moving the provision to the larger Tweedmouth Middle School site they are uncertain about extending The Grove’s specialist provision to include SEMH.

Extract from their response:

*“There is strong support for Belford Primary to become part of the Alnwick partnership from our parents and the wider community.”*

#### 49. Berwick St Mary’s CE and Norham St Ceolwulf’s C of E First Schools Staff

The staff of Berwick St Mary’s and Norham First Schools submitted a joint response to the consultation. Staff are resolute in their belief the option that will produce the best outcomes now and in the future is the proposed move to a 2-tier. Staff are aware of the challenges and barriers children face but believe that a move to an educational system that is fully in line with the National Curriculum and which:

- utilises the training and potential of the teaching community;
- allows schools to be fully accountable for children’s progress through key stages;
- lowers children’s anxiety by reducing the number of transitions;
- builds on purposeful and effective staff/pupil relationships; and
- supports the needs of most vulnerable students, including those with SEND



will give the children the best chance to succeed. Staff reiterated the key factors outlined by governors and these are summarised in para. 32.

Within a 2-tier structure St Mary's would like to expand its offer for SEND which is sadly lacking in relation to SEMH, ASD and ADHD within Berwick. Under a 2-tier structure St Mary's would like to offer children with SEMH, ASD and ADHD a more long-term solution through the development of a Specialist Support Base. The provision will be part of a wider Berwick SEND offer working collaboratively with The Grove School and Berwick Academy, enabling a flexible approach to meeting the needs of individual SEND learners now and in the future.

The staff have experience of supporting other settings in terms of providing targeted support and sharing good practice. In the restructure we propose to formalise that offer with a hard federation between Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First School and Tweedmouth Prior Park First School. This federation will improve long-term financial sustainability working in a model supported by the DfE's current promotion of 'family of schools' initiative.

Extract from their response:

*"As a staff we have put the future of our children at the forefront of our decision, not our jobs, and as such see the urgency required to restructure the Berwick Partnership into something that meets the needs of the modern world and National Curriculum.*

*Although we recognise the difficulty of change, we do not recognise the argument that is currently being put forward that we have always had a 3-tier structure in Berwick, and it works. As evidence suggests otherwise and this is not just about key stage 4 results but:*

- *our lack of continuity between the 3-tiers for curriculum offer,*
- *increasing numbers leaving our partnership post first school,*
- *lack of inclusive provision for SEND learners,*
- *major issues with recruitment and retention,*
- *our children are ill prepared for the next stages of education, especially at high school.*

50. Holy Trinity CE First School Staff

The staff from Holy Trinity First School were unable to come to a consensus view and therefore declined to submit a response.

51. Hugh Joicey C of E Aided First School Staff

Staff from Hugh Joicey C of E First School responded independently via the online survey.

52. Lowick and Holy Island CE First Schools Staff

The staff at Lowick and Holy Island C of E First Schools have mixed views with regards to Model A and Model B.

Staff strongly support a new building for The Grove School and felt we should defer to the expertise of The Grove staff that the suggested mix of SEND in The Grove would not work. The Grove should keep their current area of expertise but be relocated into a larger purpose-built school which should be future proofed by ensuring there are enough spaces to enable children in the Berwick partnership to attend special school in their local area.

Children in the partnership have limited options post-16 and have to travel long distances to access courses therefore staff felt there should be more choice for children post-16 onwards.

To the best of staffs' knowledge early years provision is sufficient.

Extract from their response:

*“On one hand we appreciate that middle schools are a valuable stepping-stone between small first schools and a large high school. We recognise their pastoral care for Year 5s and helping children develop ahead of mixing into the high school. We appreciate and respect the good work done by our middle schools.*

*On the other hand, we also recognise that, as small schools, we know our children extremely well and can tailor our curriculum to their educational needs. We feel that we could develop this well into upper key stage 2 in our context.”*

#### 53. Scremerston First School Staff

Staff at Scremerston First support the 2-tier model and would like the following points considered:

- Catchment - 60% of families choose the Scremerston offer over their catchment school. This choice should not be taken away as no other rural school is close and families send children here because of the smaller class sizes, nurturing ethos and reputation for supporting children with SEND (50% of children received additional support come from out of catchment).
- Church – Scremerston is the only rural school offering non-church school provision in the partnership, a choice several of our parents have made. Under the 2-tier proposal the partnership would have twice as many church primary schools as non-church, an imbalance which does not reflect the demographic of the town/nation. Under 3-tier option the ratio is seven church schools to four non-church, again a predominance of church schools.
- Community – Scremerston is a distinct rural community and would be very much diminished if deprived of its school, which is the hub of the community. School grounds are kept open out of hours to enable the local community to access a safe play area and school has numerous ways it has got involved with the community.
- Early Years Provision – Lucky Ducks Nursery operates in a building administered by the school and would have to close if the school closed resulting in reduced early years places.

- Spare Places – Closure of Scremerston First would not solve the issues of spare places; a more realistic PAN for each school would immediately reduce the number of space places.
- Transport – Additional cost with more children requiring transport to schools potentially further away. Children living in Scremerston could not be expected to walk to the next school as the road is very fast (60mph).

Extract from their response:

*“We believe that a 2-tier model will provide the best learning outcomes for the children of Berwick but envisage Scremerston First as an integral part of this future structure.”*

#### 54. Spittal First School Staff

Staff at Spittal First School share the views of their Governing Body that 3-tier is the best option and it is a choice for Wooler and Belford whether they remain in the Berwick partnership or move to the Alnwick partnership.

Regarding SEND provision the staff agreed that the needs for SEND learners could be met under the 3-tier system and that the Grove Special School should have a new site as it was currently over-subscribed with an increasing demand for spaces. Options for separate purpose-built site(s) for SEMH learners should be explored further.

The staff felt that opportunities for Post-16/Post-18 needed to be considerable extended to provide relevant training and education.

Extract from their response:

*“As a staff we feel the best option to meet the needs of the children in the Berwick Partnership is through a 3-tier system. We don’t feel it is appropriate for us to comment on which schools close or remain open. We feel it would be appropriate to explore further the alternative model for a single middle school and wider opportunities for closer working between all schools across the phases”*

#### 55. St Cuthbert’s Catholic First School Staff

Staff at St Cuthbert’s Catholic First School support the 2-tier model of education and their response clearly sets out why they wished to become a primary school:

- Able to provide Catholic education to their children for longer. This is cherished by families and currently there is no provision for this after Year 4.
- Children should complete full key stages in the same school, with minimum points of transition during their school life.
- Minimise disruption to progress during a key stage and gives teachers a greater opportunity to develop and nurture children. Particularly important when it comes to preparing for key assessments (eg. SATS).
- GCSE preparation from Year 7 upwards in secondary education with specialist teachers in each subject – giving the children two extra years of GCSE preparation in the same school they will sit their exams in.

- Teachers are trained to teach in either the *‘primary’* or *‘secondary’* phase of education. By becoming 2-tier it would give teaching staff the opportunities to teach across the age range they have trained to teach in.

The staff support a real investment into an expansion of The Grove School which is over-subscribed. This needs to be part of the plan for the local authority moving forward to continue to enhance the outstanding provision The Grove provides for families across Berwick.

Extracts from their response:

*“As a school we are ready for 2-tier and have the space and capacity to accommodate a Year 5/6 class.”*

*“Transition to a secondary school at Year 7 would have to be well planned, as it is across most of the rest of the UK, but we are a dedicated team of staff who would ensure that this move would be carried out very carefully and work closely with Berwick Academy.”*

*“We feel for the reasons set out above, the 2-tier model will secure better outcomes for the children of Berwick for years to come.”*

#### 56. Tweedmouth Prior Park First School Staff

Teaching staff at Tweedmouth Prior Park First School submitted their response online and supported reorganisation to a 2-tier structure. Their reasons are summarised as follows:

- Reorganisation to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure represents the best option for securing sustainable and viable education.
- Falling birth rate is impacting on first schools at present but will eventually impact upon middle and high schools making the 3-tier model no longer sustainable.
- Key Stage 2 should not be divided between two education settings. Allowing full Key Stages to remain in one school will ensure continuity and greater accountability.
- Reducing the number of transitions will be less disruptive to children's education therefore achieving better outcomes and reducing anxiety.
- By becoming a primary school, we would be able to build upon the immense progress made over the previous six years they have spent in first school.
- Students should not be expected to select GCSE subjects after one term in High School.

Every child with SEND has the right to education as close to home as possible. The current Grove site is no longer big enough for the number of children who need to access it and there are increasing numbers with SEMH. As a partnership we need to address the growing numbers and provision. However, staff believe the current Tweedmouth Middle building is not fit for purpose as a SEND specialist provision and would need significant adaptations or a rebuild to make it suitable. In the current 3-tier structure there isn't the capacity to support and educate our high number of SEND children in the Berwick Partnership.

In relation to Post-16/Post-18, Berwick children deserve more options that can be accessed locally. There are not enough options currently to suit all learners and children often have to travel huge distances in order to access the courses they want, often at great personal expense. Could there be partnerships with universities and employers?

Staff believe all early year's provision from age 3+ should be teacher led as this does help to improve educational outcomes. With the current falling birth rate in Berwick there are too many early years providers in the town. School nurseries need to be allowed more flexibility to support working parents and therefore putting them on a level playing field with private and voluntary providers.

Extract from their response:

*"We believe Tweedmouth Prior Park First School should become a 2-tier primary school to ensure the best education is continued to be provided to the children in the Prior Park catchment area.*

#### 57. Tweedmouth West First School Staff

Staff at Tweedmouth West First School have expressed a difference of opinion to that of their Governing Body and are in favour of a reorganisation to 2-tier system.

As a priority, The Grove School require a new suitable building to increase the school's capacity and improve outcomes for SEND children in Berwick by:

- Reducing the number of children travelling to alternative provision.
- All children in Berwick to have their needs met in a suitable environment.
- Relieve pressure on mainstream schools who are accepting increasing numbers of high needs children.

Extracts from their response:

*"Our majority opinion is in favour of moving to a 2-tier system."*

*"Tweedmouth West School should remain open on its existing site."*

#### 58. Wooler First School Staff

Wooler First School Staff didn't give their support to either model but provided their views and question as follows:

If we become a primary school and remain in the same building, there are lots of concerns regarding the financial implications and the suitability/condition of the building. How long would it be able to serve as a primary school? What is the long-term plan given the intention of the consultation to create a sustainable education system?

What happens if we become a primary school, remain in the current building and become financially unviable because of it? The building is too big for a primary school with facilities (eg. swimming pool) which we will be unable to fund. Has there

been consideration to sharing the building (eg. alternative provision)? If adaptations are made to the building, to make it suitable, what would these be, would they impact the quality of education and what would the timeframe be?

Our Early Years provision need better facilities, the outdoor play equipment is end of life, the outdoor area needs to be redesigned, facilities for breakfast/after school clubs are limited and would need to be improved to accommodate the older primary aged children. Looking to the future of our Early Years Provision staff think it is important to investigate the possibility of providing under-twos childcare which could greatly strengthen numbers coming into Reception.

Extract from their response:

*“There is a feeling that by assigning the school to one secondary school and requiring parents to pay for transport to the other at the end of Year 6 would lead to some of our pupils being disadvantaged due to their geographical location. It also may mean parents would not choose to send their children to our primary school. If Berwick also goes 2-tier would it be possible for our parents to have a choice at the end of Year 6 whether they went to Alnwick or Berwick for secondary school? This did used to be the case at the end of Year 8.”*

59. Berwick Middle School Staff

The staff of Berwick Middle School is in complete agreement with Model A (revised 3-tier system of schools in Berwick).

Staffs’ reasons for supporting 3-tier are the same as those expressed by the Governing Body and summarised in para. 43.

Extract from their response:

*“As staff of Berwick Middle School, we remain passionate about the existing 3-tier system of education in the Berwick Partnership.”*

*“We are also in agreement that the revision which is necessary can be effectively and efficiently brought about through Option C – An Inclusive Model and therefore give this our full backing.”*

60. Glendale Middle School Staff

The staff at Glendale are aware that under the current proposals in this consultation that Glendale Middle School is under serious threat of closure and would like to express our unhappiness at this proposal and the decision by our Governing Body seeking to have a primary school located on this site.

Outlined below are staffs’ collective thoughts and possible solutions to the issue:

- Glendale is a good school (*OFSTED* rating). The proposal is to send over 40% of the children to educational establishments which are not rated good (both options require improvement). If education is the priority this is not a good move.

- The increased travel distance (by more than 16 miles in most instances) is not a benefit to the child or the carbon footprint which is supposed to be a key factor in the consultation. This hampers pupils' ability to attend after school clubs/sports events and will have an adverse effect on our pupils.
- One option is to be part of the Alnwick partnership. Our Key Stage 3 children will be educated at Duchess High School, a school which requires improvement and according to its latest OFSTED report does so due to poor provision for Key Stage 3 children. This will not improve their outcomes.
- Clearly there is a falling demographic in the locality, but the position of the school has been further jeopardised by changing our catchment area following the changes to school organisation in the Alnwick Partnership, something we were strongly opposed to at the time.
- The destabilising effect of changing catchment and falling numbers has had a knock-on effect of making staff recruitment and retention very difficult.
- We have excellent SEND provision and pupils attend this school specifically to access this provision. We are a very nurturing school and currently have 27% SEND allocation, which is above the national average and our outcomes are excellent. We would like to suggest that this provision be expanded as there is nowhere near enough SEND provision in the North Northumberland area. Staff feel with their experience they are ideally positioned to offer provision for all SEND pupils but especially in some specialist areas, which go beyond the physical disability and difficult behaviours provision at the Grove and St Mary's (eg. ASD provision and SEMH provision for girls and pupils who find it difficult to attend school due to their Autism and anxiety, but who do not present with challenging behaviour). Being able to expand the range of this provision in our nurturing school would be a cost-effective asset to our area. This would also allow Wooler First School to stay on this current site as the building would be fully utilised and become affordable.

Extract from their response:

*"We feel Glendale offers a nurturing environment for a rural location. Our location is fairly unique, and we feel should have an education system to fit the locality and in our opinion, this is at a middle school.*

*We have excellent staff, amazing facilities and the desire to make things better for all the pupils in our locality. This could be by remaining as a middle school or enhancing the excellent SEND provision we currently offer. Either way, education up to until the age of 13 on this site is what is needed not only for our pupils but to secure the education and facilities for all pupils in this locality."*

#### 61. Tweedmouth Middle School Staff

The staff of Tweedmouth Middle School is in complete agreement with Model A (revised 3-tier system of schools in Berwick).

Staffs' reasons for supporting 3-tier are the same as those expressed by Governors from Berwick Middle Schools and summarised in para. 43.

Extract from their response:

*“As staff of Tweedmouth Middle School, we remain passionate about the existing 3-tier system of education in the Berwick Partnership.”*

*“We are also in agreement that the revision which is necessary can be effectively and efficiently brought about through Option C – An Inclusive Model and therefore give this our full backing.”*

## 62. Berwick Academy Staff

Berwick Academy staff strongly supports the proposed move to a 2-tier structure of education for the Berwick partnership.

The move to a primary/secondary structure is based on the strong educational case that has been made by the headteacher, senior leadership team and wider staff body, supported by evidence, advice and experience from schools in the region and nationally. The key reasons are summarised as follows:

### Educational outcomes

- Children should be taught the National Curriculum in complete key stages – as they are in the majority of schools across the country.
- National picture is heavily in favour of 2-tier education, with only 102 3-tier middle schools out of 32,163 schools.
- Teachers are trained to teach either primary or secondary education. 2-tier allows for specialist secondary teachers with recent GCSE/A Level teaching experience to teach these subjects from Year 7 – leading to improved outcomes for students.
- Schools take responsibility and accountability for whole key stages enabling the delivery of a cohesive and progressive curriculum, the aim currently seen as the main driver in excellence within education (*DfE/OfSTED vision*).
- Reduces the need for testing/assessments within key stage as teachers/schools have a more robust knowledge of the child, their achievements and their areas for development and means that baseline assessments within Year 5 would be unnecessary which are currently needed as an element of 3-tier transition).

### Relationships

- Children and families benefit from developing longer-term relationship (from Year 7) with the school and familiarity with subjects, before choosing GCSE options during Year 9.
- Children should move between schools less often rather than changing three times and in the middle of a key stage. Children, families and the school can build positive relationships with a clear understanding of expectations.

### Sustainability

- Fewer schools within the partnership will lead to a more sustainable model for the future. Fluctuations in birth rates, and therefore funding a school receives, can be more easily weathered by schools which have a stronger funding base to begin with.
- Schools within the partnership are keen to maintain our sense of rural identity and we feel that the best way to secure this for the future is to move to a stronger 2-tier model.



Berwick Academy believes that the 'Vision for Change' can be best achieved through implementing a 2-tier structure across the partnership.

Berwick Academy is committed to developing a post-16 provision which ensures young people in the area have access to a range of options. The Academy is committed to working in a complimentary, non-competitive partnership to ensure the Northumberland Strategic Skills Plan can be fully implemented.

The Academy has worked in partnership with St Mary's to provide new provision to meet the needs of SEMH and complex needs. The impact of Covid on children's mental health, is just emerging and staff believe any proposed changes should provide the correct provision and resources both now and in the long-term. The proposal suggested is fully aligned to the National Strategic Inclusion Strategy.

Extract from their response:

*"Berwick Academy fully supports the structural change to a 2-tier primary/secondary future for the partnership. This is based on sound educational, relational and financial considerations, which we believe can only be delivered sustainably within a 2-tier structure within the Berwick partnership area."*

*Berwick Academy remains committed to our clearly stated aims of ensuring that our school community is framed within a context of "friendship, learning and respect". We will ensure that transition arrangements are handled sensitively and efficiently to secure a positive experience for all students."*

### 63. The Grove School Staff

The Staff at The Grove School are in complete agreement that more localised provision for children with SEMH as their primary need is needed in Berwick but believe that pupils, whose learning needs fall within the mainstream range, should have the opportunity to learn within a mainstream school, with access to the appropriately trained staff to further their education but with appropriate accommodations made to support their SEMH needs. It would be inappropriate for those pupils to be expected to join The Grove school, both under our current name or under a new name. Concerns are around school refusals and pupils not being given an outstanding opportunity to learn at their cognitive level.

In addition to appropriate provision made for SEMH under either a 3-tier or 2-tier system we feel strongly that a new school for the current pupils at The Grove School needs to be a priority. I understand that the data does not seem to show that there is a need for additional PMLD or SLD places for our school, however we know that there are currently more than enough pupils in the Berwick Partnership to fill at least another class and that is before our current large class sizes are split.

Extract from their response:

*"Appropriately staffed, equipped and run 'hubs' within a first/middle/high or primary/secondary model would be a far more inclusive way to support these pupils. As a staff we see our role in an advisory and supportive role to the other schools within the partnership, should they desire this, whilst still educating the PMLD and SLD pupils we are currently designated to support."*

64. Overall responses from Parents with children on roll at schools in the Berwick Partnership

Question 7 of the consultation questionnaire asked whether the revised 3-tier structure (Model A) represented the best option for securing sustainable and viable education in the Berwick partnership and parents/carers responded as follows:

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
First School	57	64	12
Middle Schools	66	50	8
High Schools	15	16	0

The main reasons given for selecting 'Yes' are summarised below:

- 3-tier works best in Berwick.
- The middle schools are excellent schools which produce excellent results, give children better learning opportunities with specialist teachers and access to specialist facilities.
- Pupils in Berwick benefit from attending the Middle Schools, particularly given the long-standing poor performance of the Academy.
- 3-tier proves a safe stepping-stone into high school.

The main reasons given for selecting 'No' are summarised below:

- The 3-tier system is not sustainable.
- Believe that a 2-tier system would better support the learning needs of the children in the area as it follows the key stages thus making the schools responsible for the learning outcomes of the children.
- Don't agree with the proposed closure or amalgamation of first schools.

The main reasons given for selecting 'don't know' are summarised below:

- Don't agree that Scremerston First should close.
- Don't agree with the proposals to close as many schools.
- 2-tier is okay but don't agree with the proposal to close Scremerston.
- 3-tier is okay but not the closure of Scremerston.

Question 14 of the consultation questionnaire asked whether reorganisation to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure represents the best option for securing sustainable and viable education across Berwick and parent/carers responded as follows:

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
First School	46	74	13
Middle Schools	24	96	4
High Schools	10	21	0

The main reasons for selecting 'Yes' are summarised below:

- One less transition so provides much needed consistency and is much less disruptive, so children cope better.
- 2-tier structure is nationally recognised as the best model as it moves children to coincide with key stages of the curriculum and aligns Berwick with the majority of the UK.
- Education in middle schools for Years 7 and 8 is minimalistic with pupils working hard in Years 5 and 6 to achieve good results in their SATS but the following two years aren't challenged.
- Moving schools at the end of Year 8 does not give children long to settle at High School before they have to choose GSCE options.

The main reasons given for selecting the 'No' option are:

- Middle Schools provide excellent education and provide specialist teaching from age 9+ that a 2-tier system cannot provide.
- Berwick Academy is in no position to provide adequate education to our children currently without sending them there sooner.
- There is no guarantee that outcomes will improve.
- At age 11, the children are far too young to be in a school with other children up to ages 16, 17, 18. The middle school environment provides an ideal environment to nurture the children and help them mature and build the confidence to deal with the transition to the academy.

The main reasons given for selecting 'don't know' are summarised below:

- Don't want Scremerston First to close.
- Both models have pros and cons.

### ***Pupils***

65. Responses from pupils in the following schools were received during the consultation

- Norham St Ceolwulf's C of E First School
- St Mary's C of E First School
- Lowick C of E First School
- Holy Island C of E First School
- Holy Trinity C of E First School
- Scremerston First School
- St Cuthbert's Catholic First School
- Tweedmouth Prior Park First School
- Tweedmouth West First School
- Tweedmouth Middle School
- Berwick Middle School
- Berwick Academy

Responses from pupils included the following themes:

- I love my school.

- I don't want to leave at the end of Year 4, I as I know the teachers and my friends.
- Meet new people and make new friends.
- I want to go to middle school as I have friends/family there.
- Really like this school.
- I don't want to leave first school, there is no detention.
- I don't want to walk all the way to middle school, I would like to stay here with my friends and it is near my home.
- We have 'outgrown' the school. It will be cool to see older children, we are the oldest here.

Full responses from pupils and students are available in the Background Papers to this report.

### **Responses from other groups and organisations**

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

The NDEB is of the opinion that a 2-tier system would be the most beneficial way forward for the children of the partnership.

It recognises there has been 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 rolls and the detrimental impact of this on school budgets. The Board would welcome at the earliest opportunity consideration to hard federate Norham C of E First School with St Mary's C of E First School to support longer term viability of Norham and support options for shared CPD between the smaller schools.

There are six C of E schools directly affected and in pre-consultation all indicated a preference for becoming primary. The NDEB would wish to avoid the continuation of a "mixed economy" of both first and primary schools in nearby geographical areas which was partly exacerbated by the closure of Belford Middle School. Should the outcome be to move to 2-tier it would mean that schools on the partnership's border would be in line with those of the neighbouring partnership.

With regards to Glendale Middle and Wooler First Schools the NDEB would wish to support the views of the Governing Body of those schools. However, the NDEB has a concern that losing several children from the partnership may jeopardise the viability of KS3 and KS4 in Berwick. In considering the geographical location of Belford the NDEB would suggest that Belford Primary should remain within the partnership.

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 and sustained investment is made to the building and surrounding grounds to support this possibility.

With regards to EYFS Provision it notes the capacity already available in the area – but would support any enhancements to this provision. In relation to 6th Form/post

sixteen provision, NDEB would support a partnership approach of all stakeholders to ensure the needs of all children and students are met.

Extract from their response:

*“There is an ongoing wider debate about the value of 2-tier versus 3-tier and we remain neutral on this wider debate whilst recognising that local context and area is very important to this. After consultation with Officers in the Joint Education Team the NDEB are of the opinion that, in the Berwick context, increased continuity of the curriculum; reduced transitions for children; increased level of accountability at given key stages and the wider opportunities for CPD in a 2-tier system would all benefit the school system in Berwick. We also note that in a number of our 2-tier systems secondary schools are moving to a model of working on syllabus earlier in a child’s pathway through schools to support with long term outcomes.”*

67. Response from the Diocese of Hexham of Newcastle

The view of the Diocese is that we are supportive of a move to a 2-tier system.

Educationally this would be better for the children of Berwick. We would like to offer families a Catholic education up to the end of Key Stage 2 at St Cuthbert’s School. The Diocese, as responsible body, has invested LCVAP and SCA funding in St Cuthbert’s School in anticipation of a potential for an expansion of the age group to Year 6. Our preference, if the proposal goes ahead, that the children in Year 4 in the academic year of 2023-24 stay at St Cuthbert’s as Year 5 pupils in the academic year of 2024-25 so as to minimise the disruption to the children’s education.

Extract from their response:

*“I know that there will need to be co-ordination across the partnership but I would encourage the Council to consider bringing the date forward. I am aware that the Diocese has only one school in the partnership. However, we are fully committed to working closely together with other schools and Trusts to support an improved system for all families.”*

68. Summary of feedback from Trustees of Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust

The Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust believes that 2-tier provides better educational opportunities for children.

There are three main reasons:

- Within 2-tier there is expert curriculum delivery from Year 7 and only one point of transition. Subject specialist teachers are able to ensure that all children have access to a challenging and exciting curriculum, where the expert subject knowledge of teachers will enthuse and stretch the learning of students, preparing them more readily for GCSE and Post-16 qualifications. In a 3-tier system, there is more chance of lost learning where there is less access to subject expertise or experience of delivering GCSE qualifications. There may not be secure knowledge of curriculum sequencing between KS3 and KS4 and so opportunities to make these vital links may be impacted.

- Moving to a 2-tier system will provide students with a more seamless social transition to high school. It is clear from the Trust's experience across five high schools that Year 7 students benefit from the role models provided by Years 11-13.
- For children with SEND transition points can also be high risk for children with additional vulnerabilities. Therefore, reducing these moves will lessen the issues faced by these children. There will be more time to forge relationships with key adults in the primary school along with their peers. The process of transition to secondary will be more effective because of the deeper knowledge acquired of specific needs, the child's progress through KS1 and KS2 and what has worked best to support them.

Extract from their response:

*"Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust is committed to supporting St Cuthbert's Catholic First School in its desire to offer full primary provision to the families of Berwick."*

*"As a faith Trust, we are clear that extra years within a Catholic school will help our children to develop their own sense of spirituality and a sense of their uniqueness and importance to the world around them. We will work with the high school in Berwick to ensure there are opportunities for further development in this area."*

69. North Northumberland Branch of the National Autistic Society

The view of the NAS North Northumberland Branch is that 2-tier is the better model.

The 3-tier system has too many transitions and for students dealing with SEND and puberty it can be difficult. Within 2-tier there is only one transition and better transfer of knowledge with access to more specialisms earlier and it is easier to mix emotionally at Year 7.

Agree with Wooler becoming a primary school, but parents should be able to choose either Berwick or Alnwick mainly because of geographical reasons.

Having the old Belford Middle School as a specialist provision would undoubtedly improve the outcomes for children with SEND, especially those that are not reaching their potential or are home schooled as no suitable provision. It would also be a peripatetic service where expertise could be accessed. The potential addition of multi-agency working there with health and social care services would enhance such an offer.

Would not like to change the current criteria for Grove admission but SEMH may be part of that, and the numbers will continue to increase. Happy for Tweedmouth Middle but awareness of stairs for some students being a problem.

70. Summary of feedback from County Councillors with wards in Berwick Partnership area

Online responses to the consultation were received from two County Councillors (Cllr Mark Mather and Cllr Isabel Hunter) with wards in the Berwick partnership. Both supported the 2-tier system of education as they believe it is a better model of education and would be financially sustainable for the future.

Cllr. Mather support the proposal of Wooler moving to the Alnwick partnership if Berwick remained 3-tier as the school had suffered due to being on the border of 2-tier and 3-tier education systems. Cllr Mather also proposed that if Wooler went 2-tier it could provide opportunities for the community to have community provisions, eg. family hub, gym, 0 to 2 years provision, office space, sure start and new location of Wooler football pitch which could free up an area that could be used for affordable rented housing.

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

Responses to the consultation were received on behalf of four Parish Councils (Ancroft, Duddo, Lowick and Norham). All four Parish Councils did not support the belief that the revised 3-tier structure represented the best option for securing sustainable and viable education across the Berwick partnership whilst three (Duddo, Lowick and Norham) believed that reorganisation to a 2-tier structure was the best option.

In response to the question about Belford Primary School, three Parish Councils (Adderstone with Lucker, Belford and Duddo) were in support of Belford Primary becoming part of the Alnwick partnership.

### **Other responses received during consultation**

72. This summary feedback is drawn from the responses of individuals who used the online consultation document including individual governor, staff and community member feedback, but does not include parent feedback which has been extracted and summarised at para. 64.

Question 7 (*Having read the consultation document thoroughly, I believe that the revised 3-tier structure (Model A) represents the best option for securing sustainable and viable education across the Berwick Partnership of schools and for achieving the objectives of the 'Vision for Berwick' (refer to page 5 of Consultation Document). This model includes the following proposals:*

- *Closure of Scremerston First School*
- *Closure of Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First School*
- *Amalgamation of Tweedmouth West and Tweedmouth Prior Park First Schools*
- *Closure of Glendale Middle School*

The main reasons given in support are:

- Middle schools and the 3-tier system needs to be retained as it provides an excellent education for pupils, supports the Berwick area and gives:
  - children time to grow and develop
  - safe and nurturing environment

- benefits of specialist teaching
- excellent pastoral care
- natural stepping-stone to high school
- provide high quality teacher and consistency perform well
- No guarantees, and very little evidence to suggest that a move to 2-tier would bring about an improvement.
- Collaboration between schools is required and Option C – An Inclusive Model proposed by the middle schools would support that.

Main reasons given against:

- 2-tier is the best way forward and would be more beneficial to children's educational needs.
- 3-tier doesn't work and is outdated and in the long term not financially sustainable due to falling birth rates.
- Having two transition is disadvantageous.

Question 10 (*Extension of the age range of Wooler First School to become a primary and for the Wooler and Belford Primaries to join the Alnwick Partnership, with pupils feeding to Alnwick The Duchess High School.*)

The main reasons given in support are:

- It makes sense as Belford is already a primary school and almost all its pupils attend Alnwick High School and the families would receive support with funding transport.
- There are already a number of Wooler students who attend the Alnwick partnership and geographically the distance to travel to the schools is about the same.
- We believe Key Stage 2 should not be divided between two education settings. Students should not be expected to select GCSE subjects after one term in High School.

Main Reasons give against:

- Parents in Wooler and Belford should not have their choice of school limited.
- In order to retain pupil numbers in the Berwick partnership it is important that both Wooler and Belford remain in the partnership.
- Do not support 3-tier and believe 2-tier should be implemented.

Question 12 (*Proposed changes to school catchment areas arising from the closure of Scremerston and Norham St Ceolwulf's First Schools, the amalgamation of Tweedmouth West and Tweedmouth Prior Park First Schools, and the move of Belford Primary to the Alnwick Partnership.*)

The main reasons given in support are:

- Currently there are too many first schools.



- Due to the falling school roll numbers, closures and amalgamation of schools would seem sensible.

Main reasons given against:

- If Option C – An Inclusive Model was supported it could mean that Scremerston First School would be viable and could remain open. Norham children would be offered places at Scremerston. Tweedmouth West could stand alone and St Mary’s would join with Prior Park.
- Do not support the closure of Scremerston First School as it is a much needed, non-church rural school.
- Do not agree with the amalgamation of Tweedmouth West and Tweedmouth Prior Park.
- 3-tier is outdated and 2-tier should be implemented.

Question 14 *(Having read the consultation document thoroughly, I believe that the reorganisation of the Berwick Partnership to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure represents the best option for securing sustainable and viable education across the Berwick Partnership of schools and for achieving the objectives of the ‘Vision for Berwick’ (refer to page 5 of Consultation Document). This model includes the following proposals:*

- *Closure of Scremerston First School*
- *Closure of Glendale Middle School*
- *Closure of Berwick Middle School*
- *Closure of Tweedmouth Middle School*

Main reasons given in support:

- 2-tier gives children the best opportunity for educational achievement:
  - specialist teaching
  - transition at end of key stage 2, rather than in the middle
  - access to pastoral support earlier will help build trust and relationships and help navigate students through hormonal/emotional changes
  - greater accountability
- National Curriculum, teacher training and key stages all align with the 2-tier system and would be in step with the majority of schools in the UK and those boarding Berwick.
- Only one transition, resulting in less disruption to children’s education that multiple changes can have.

Main reasons given against:

- 3-tier works effectively. Berwick and Tweedmouth Middle Schools deliver good education and play a vital role in developing and nurturing young people.
- The Academy is the problem and is unable to cope with its current pupils.
- Doesn’t achieve the “Vision for Berwick” and there is no guarantee that it will improve outcomes, especially as good schools would be closed.

Question 19 (*Proposed changes to school catchment areas arising from the closure of Scremerston First School and the move of Belford Primary to the Alnwick Partnership.*)

The main reasons given in support are:

- Appears to be the most sensible option as majority of students already attend Duchess High School and would streamline the process.
- Tweedmouth Prior Park has the capacity to welcome all pupils from Scremerston First School.
- Schools need to be sustainable financially in the future which means catchment areas may need to change.

Main reasons given against:

- Scremerston First is an excellent school and should not close:
  - it supports children's learning and is a big part of the community
  - children would have to travel further, along a busy road.
  - it is a commuter schools which provides a non-church option for parents
  - its closure would impact on the pre-school which is run from the site
- Scremerston Primary does not need to close, however there is a need for Belford Primary to move to Alnwick Partnership
- Scremerston First School could be financially viable under the proposed Option C – An Inclusive Model.

### **Feedback on proposals to create additional specialist (SEND) provision in Berwick**

73. This summary feedback is drawn from all the responses of individuals who used the online consultation document.

Question 22 of the consultation questionnaire asked, "*whether responders supported the proposed model for additional Special Educational Needs provision within the revised 3-tier structure of schools in the Berwick Partnership through the addition of specialist provision within St Mary's CE First, Berwick Middle School and Berwick Academy, with The Grove Special School continuing with its current provision at its current site. This model included a proposal for all schools in the partnership to have additional SEND support through a peripatetic service to be explored.*"

Via the on-line questionnaire, 334 of the responses received were in support of this proposal with the main reasons summarised as follows:

- Additional specialist SEND support is desperately needed in the Berwick area as vulnerable children should not be made to travel.
- Provision for SEMH is essential for pupils in the Berwick Partnership and would be best facilitated by staff working at each phase.
- Agree with the proposals and would also want expanded provision to cater for differing needs for all ages.
- The Grove School needs to have a new, purpose-built site to allow it to extend its offer as it does not have enough capacity to meet the needs of learners eligible within the partnership

There were 215 responses opposed to the proposal with the main reasons summarised as follows:

- Don't support the 3-tier system and would prefer the 2-tier model.
- The Grove needs to be bigger, preferably in a new purpose-built facility.
- In the current 3-tier structure there isn't the capacity to support and educate our high number of SEND children in the Berwick Partnership.
- SEND provision would also benefit from students having fewer transitions, a single transition at age 11 is preferable.

Question 24 of the questionnaire asked, *“whether responders supported the proposed model for additional Special Educational Needs provision within the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure of schools in the Berwick Partnership through the extension of The Grove’s specialist provision to include SEMH and its relocation to the current Tweedmouth Middle School site, and for a proposal for all schools in the partnership to have additional SEND support through a peripatetic service to be explored”*.

Via the on-line questionnaire, 261 of the responses received were in support of this proposal with the main reasons summarised as follows:

- Every child with SEND has the right to education as close to home as possible.
- This will bring much needed additional capacity to The Grove School and allow for expansion.
- Possible opportunities for integration for some SEND secondary age children to attend mainstream school.

There were 302 responses opposed to this proposal and the main reasons are summarised as follows:

- Do not believe Tweedmouth Middle School site is suitable for the needs of The Grove. The Grove needs a new purpose-built building not a school site where the building is not fit for special educational needs (eg. wheelchair users).
- Doesn't make sense to include SEMH within a school that provides for SEND students with very complex needs. SEMH has different needs and should remain separate so that students receive the best outcome.
- Centralised hubs would provide SEMH provision across all phases as outline in the Option C Model proposed by the middle schools.

## **Early Years Feedback**

74. This summary feedback is drawn from all the responses of individuals who used the online consultation document.

Consultees were asked whether *“the current Early Years provision, in schools or other providers, was sufficient in the Berwick area”* and 80 responded to say that they *“agreed”* with the statement. Other comments received in response to the question are summarised as follows:

- Lack of early years provision for children with SEHM needs or ASD.

- Early years provision from age 3+ should be teacher led as this does help to improve educational outcomes.
- If Scremerston First School closes Lucky Ducks would have to close leading to a reduced number of rural early years provision.
- In Wooler, there is minimal childcare options particularly for 0-2.
- Limited childcare options for children under 3.

### **Post 16/18 Feedback**

75. This summary feedback is drawn from all the responses of individuals who used the online consultation document.

The questionnaire asked for thoughts or ideas on how to improve the Post-16 and Post-18 provision in the Berwick area and the main comments are summarised below:

- Improve the academy and post-16 offer including collaboration with Northumberland College.
- College Campus for north Northumberland.
- Extend Northumberland College to give more choice.
- Greater links with local businesses to offer apprenticeships for those pupils who are skilled in manual tasks but are not academic.
- More vocational courses.
- More accessible courses for leavers of The Grove.
- Under a revised 3 tier system “Option C An inclusive Model” post 16/18 provision is included and this option could be a viable option to see closer working relationships with local businesses and career initiatives.

### **Petition and Facebook Responses**

76. Two petitions, requesting support to prevent the closure of various schools, were carried out during the Phase 2 consultation as follows:

- Save our Middle Schools (SOMS) - Had over 500 members of the public attend the SOMS event at the local Town Hall, 813 signatures on the online petition to save the middle schools and 3-tier.
- Scremerston First School (Save Our School Online Petition) – 837 signatures

A selection of the responses is included in the Background Papers.

SOMS have 2000 members on their SOMS Facebook page.

### **Summary of Feedback received via meetings at schools**

77. Council Officers had meetings with the Governing Body and staff body of all 18 schools in the Berwick Partnership on the proposals put forward for Phase 2 informal consultation. Union representatives were invited to attend the meetings held with staff groups. Officers also met with the Governing Body of The Duchess’s High School to discuss the proposal regarding the inclusion of the Wooler/Glendale and Belford Schools catchments within the Alnwick Partnership. Summaries of these meetings are set out below:

### Scremerston First School (7<sup>th</sup> November 2022)

- a. Staff Meeting
  - 11 staff members attended the meeting.
  - Discussed educational outcomes, planned admission numbers, catchments, why Scremerston was the only school proposed for closure under both models and false information/rumours circulating in the partnership.
- b. Governing Body Meeting
  - Seven governors were present.
  - Questions received in respect to the 2019 data, funding and the reasons why parents leave the partnership.

### Tweedmouth Prior Park First School (8<sup>th</sup> November 2022)

- a. Staff Meeting
  - 17 staff members attended the meeting.
  - Discussed the use of data, School's URNs, mixed education models and why pupils aren't attending the academy.
  - Issues in respect to staffing was raised and the proposed staffing protocol was discussed briefly.
- b. Governing Body Meeting
  - Seven governors were present.
  - Questions were raised in relation to why Tweedmouth West's DfE number, whether other models were considered, when building costs would be available and false information/rumours circulating in the partnership.
  - Queried whether it would be a fair process for staff and the proposed staffing protocol was discussed.

### Berwick Middle School (14<sup>th</sup> November 2022)

- a. Staff Meeting
  - 31 staff members attended the meeting.
  - Discussed whether the Academy could offer places for Years 7 and 8 even if Berwick remained 3-tier, questioned the use of 2019 data and number of pupils educated outside Berwick.
  - Staffing issues were raised, and the proposed staffing protocol was discussed.
- b. Governing Body Meeting
  - Six governors were present.
  - Discussed the funding available, the local authority's control over academy, why pupils leave the catchment and could there be changes to the models.

### Tweedmouth Middle School (15<sup>th</sup> November 2022)

- a. Staff Meeting
  - 28 staff members attended the meeting.

- Discussed data, reasons why pupils leave the partnership and how responses would be processed.
  - Staffing issues were raised, and the proposed staffing protocol was discussed.
- b. Governing Body Meeting
- Six governors were present.
  - Discussed the relationships between NCC and the academy, financial viability and a request for holding meeting of all governors.

#### Tweedmouth West First School (5<sup>th</sup> December 2022)

- a. Staff Meeting
- 13 staff members attended the meeting.
  - Discussed whether the options proposed were the only options available, how had the proposal to amalgamate two schools come about, the DfE number and is the funding guaranteed.
  - Staff issues were raised, and the staffing protocol was briefly discussed.
- b. Governing Body Meeting
- Seven members were present.
  - Discussed building issues and funding, how the schools had been selected for merger and whether other models had been considered.
  - Staffing issues were raised, and the proposed staffing protocol was discussed.

#### Berwick Academy (12<sup>th</sup> December 2022)

- a. Staff Meeting
- 36 staff members attended the meeting.
  - Discussed the process of the consultation, is the investment guaranteed and the number of students leaving the partnership.
- b. Trustees Meeting
- Five trustees were present.
  - Discussed funding and was it at risk due to spending cuts, opportunities for staff and who make decision in relation to academy status.
  - Staffing issues were raised, and the proposed staffing protocol was discussed.

#### Norham St Ceolwulf's C of E First School (15<sup>th</sup> December 2022)

- a. Staff Meeting
- Five staff members attended the meeting.
  - Following the presentation staff didn't have any questions for NCC officers.
- b. Governing Body Meeting
- Seven governors were present.
  - Discussed figures and whether the numbers included Belford and Wooler pupils, the numbers leaving the partnership and could the decision be subject to a judicial review.

### Holy Trinity C of E First School (10<sup>th</sup> January 2023)

- a. Staff Meeting
  - 14 staff members attended the meeting.
  - Staffing issues were raised, and the proposed staffing protocol was discussed.
- b. Governing Body Meeting
  - 10 governors were present.
  - Discussed the academy, lack of centralised services and educational outcomes.

### Wooler First/Glendale Middle Schools (12<sup>th</sup> January 2023)

- a. Wooler Staff Meeting
  - 18 staff members attended the meeting.
  - Discussed issues with the building – condition, viability and other options, if the academy gets a new building does the school become the responsibility of the local authority and what happens to pupils who currently attend Berwick?
- b. Glendale Staff Meeting
  - 18 staff members attended the meeting.
  - Discussed the objectives of the meeting, SEND provision and whether pupils north of Wooler would have to attend Duchess.
  - Staff issues were raised, and the proposed staffing protocol was discussed.
- c. Governing Body Meeting
  - T10 governors were present.
  - Discussed whether the school could consult independently about going 2-tier, their financial viability and timeline.
  - Staffing issues raised and discussed the proposed staffing protocol including when the protocol would be agreed.

### The Grove School (16<sup>th</sup> January 2023)

- a. Staff Meeting
  - 24 staff members attended the meeting.
  - Discussed forecasted numbers in respect of SEMH, PLD and SLD pupils, the proposed site and how SEMH pupils would feel about attending “The Grove”.
- b. Governing Body Meeting
  - Six governors were present.
  - Discussed pupils leaving the partnership and whether the data/reasons were available as to why, the school’s local knowledge about pupils and their issues compared to forecasted numbers, whether costs are known for either model and what the timeframe is for any change.
  - Debated the proposal to extend The Grove’s specialist provision to include SEMH students but governors rejected the proposal.

#### Belford First School (18<sup>th</sup> January 2023)

- a. Staff Meeting
  - Five staff members attended the meeting.
  - Discussed the proposal to join the Alnwick partnership made more sense for the school and when would transport apply.
- b. Governing Body Meeting
  - No Governors attended therefore the meeting didn't take place.

#### Hugh Joicey C of E First School (24<sup>th</sup> January 2023)

- a. Staff Meeting
  - Six staff members attended the meeting.
  - Discussed the Academy, what would happen if the birth rate increased and funding available.
  - Staffing issues were raised, and the proposed staffing protocol was discussed.
- b. Governing Body Meeting
  - Five governors were present.
  - Discussed the Academy, funding and building implications and what the timescale was for any change.
  - Staffing issues were raised, and the proposed staffing protocol was discussed.

#### St Cuthbert's Catholic School (2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023)

- a. Staff Meeting
  - 11 staff members attended the meeting.
  - Following the presentation staff didn't have any questions for NCC officers.
- b. Governing Body Meeting
  - Six governors were present.
  - Governors had questions in relating to SEND and AP support and when any implementation would be.
  - The employment of 'at risk staff' was raised and the proposed staffing protocol was discussed.

#### Berwick St Mary's C of E First School (6<sup>th</sup> February 2023)

- a. Staff Meeting
  - 14 staff members attended the meeting.
  - Following the presentation staff didn't have any questions for NCC officers.
- b. Governing Body Meeting
  - Seven governors were present.
  - Discussed the number and reason why children are educated outside the partnership, the SEN model, pre-school provision and funding available.



### Spittal First School (9<sup>th</sup> February 2023)

- a. Staff Meeting
  - Eight staff members were in attendance.
  - Discussed the catchment area and the provision offered at St Mary's.
- b. Governing Body Meeting
  - Six governors were present.
  - Discussed number of pupils attending Duchess and Scottish schools and the SEN model.

### Duchess High School (13<sup>th</sup> February 2023)

- a. Governing Body Meeting
  - Nine governors were present.
  - Discussed Wooler pupils currently attending and whether Wooler Governors have expressed a preference, what the benefits would be for students and what the timeline is.

### Lowick and Holy Island C of E First Schools (16<sup>th</sup> February 2023)

- a. Staff Meeting
  - Seven staff members were in attendance.
  - Staff had questions in relating to the reasons why parents move to other schools and how they could encourage children to attend the school.
- b. Governing Body Meeting
  - Seven governors were present.
  - Discussed numbers attending schools in Berwick and what the percentage drift is and how this compares to other areas, building work required on the site of Tweedmouth Middle and when changes would take place.

## 78. Alternative Proposals received during consultation

- a. *Alternative Proposal submitted by Berwick Middle School and Tweedmouth Community Middle School – Option C (as part of Model A, revised 3-tier system)*

The main alternative proposal submitted during Phase 2 consultation came from The Governing Bodies of Berwick Middle and Tweedmouth Community Middle Schools. The full proposal is included as Appendix 4 of this report, and the key structure set out in the proposal is as follows:

- Berwick Middle and Tweedmouth Community Middle School would merge on the current Tweedmouth middle site to become one 5-form entry (150 pupils per year group) middle school;
- The amalgamated middle school would form part of a 'Campus' site with Berwick Academy, which would reduce its intake to 6-forms of entry (180 per year group) and The Grove Special School;
- The amalgamated middle, Berwick Academy and The Grove would be accommodated in separate new buildings;
- The Grove School would have an increased capacity and also in a new building;

- Glendale Middle School would become a 1-form entry (30 pupils per year group) on its current site;
- Belford Primary School would leave Berwick Partnership and its catchment would become part of Alnwick Partnership;
- Berwick St Mary's First School reduces to 0.5 form entry (15 pupils per year group) and implements specialist provision for pupils with SEMH to support first schools in partnership;
- Holy Island CE, Holy Trinity CE, Hugh Joicey CE and Lowick CE First Schools would remain unchanged;
- Norham CE First School would close and its catchment area goes to Scremerston First School;
- Scremerston First School would remain unchanged
- Spittal First School would remain unchanged;
- Tweedmouth Prior Park First School would reduce to 0.5 Form entry (15 pupils per year group);
- Tweedmouth West First School would remain unchanged
- St Cuthbert's Catholic First School would remain unchanged.
- In total, there would be
  - 6 forms of entry into high school phase
  - 6 forms of entry into middle school phase
  - 7.4 forms of entry into first school phase

The benefits and objectives of this structure as perceived by the two middle schools would be:

- The two Berwick town middles are moving towards 'Outstanding' Ofsted;
- The middles would seek teaching-school status and potentially support all Northumberland schools;
- There would be significant cost savings from restructuring all middle school departments;
- The middle school would offer specialist teaching to first schools in art, computing, languages, technology, science, music and P.E.;
- The middle school would have the financial capacity to support first schools with budgeting and cost-saving;
- The middle school would have leadership capacity to support first schools with absence, illness or job moves;
- Local specialised services could be provided at the Campus for the whole community e.g. parent support hub, citizens advice, Adult Learning;

The proposal has been linked to the ambitions set out in the Vision for Berwick (see para. 14) with its perceived strengths to meet the vision as follows:

- *Engaging the community* – using the reputation of the middle schools to drive change; more specialist buildings in Berwick 'Jewel in the Crown' for Northumberland; interest from employers re increased vocational offer;
- *Long-term sustainability* – it is a strong model that will retain pupil numbers across all phases; potential around academisation with other 3-tier partnerships or creation of Berwick MAT;
- *Ensure schools work together* – build long-lasting relationships at close quarters; vast array of expertise and knowledge; campus environment can be utilised in individual settings;

- *Underpin best value for NCC capital investment* – three new school buildings instead of one on the campus and specialist SEMH provision.

### Commentary

The Option C Alternative Model proposed by the Governing Bodies of Berwick Middle and Tweedmouth Community Middle Schools in fact revisits (with some minor modifications) a previous model assessed during the early part of consultation with school leaders. Had this model had more support or been suggested in its current format at the earlier stages of discussion and consultation, there may have been merit in bringing it forward as an alternative model for wider consultation, as there has been interest expressed by some consultees who responded to Phase 2. 126 responses of the 724 received expressed an interest in this model, including one first school Governing Body, although 40% of the responses were from consultees with an association with one of the town middle schools as a parent, member of staff or governor.

However, at this stage in the process there are a number of key issues in the proposal, which are;

- The Governing Bodies/Trustees of 12 of the schools/academies in Berwick Partnership have responded at Phase 2 consultation that they support the move to a 2-tier(primary/secondary) structure; this has increased from 10 at Phase 1 consultation and indicates a clear majority of school leaders in favour of a 2-tier structure. Two schools have decided not to comment on what they believe would be the best organisational structure for mainstream schools, as neither would be impacted directly by such change.
- Other than the two town middles, there is only one school in the Berwick Partnership where both the Governing Body and staff indicated potential interest in this model and at one school only the Governing Body has shown support. Neither school is The Grove Special School nor Berwick Academy; without their support or interest in the model, there is no remit or rationale in pursuing it.
- The Governing Body of Wooler First and Glendale Middle School has clearly set out their desire for Wooler to become a primary school and for Glendale to close due to the consistent loss of pupils at the end of Year 6. Governors do not believe pupil numbers at Glendale will enable it to have the capacity to sustain an effective and high-quality curriculum at Key Stage 3 in Wooler in the medium to long-term;
- The Option C proposal sets out the middle school's intention to support first schools with specialist teaching, management of budgets and leadership capacity. However, there is no specific plan or strategy included as to how the middle school would work more effectively with Berwick Academy to provide support to achieve the significant improvement in outcomes at Key Stage 4 and beyond.
- The merged middle school would mean that there would no longer be educational provision for pupils at Years 5 and 6 in the north of Berwick, necessitating their travel at age 9 to a middle school only slightly smaller in numbers than the high school. This may be an issue for parents of those pupils.

- Without knowing construction and maintenance costs, it is unclear how the construction of three new buildings, two of them requiring secondary facilities can be put forward as cost-effective or sustainable in the long term in the face of falling pupil numbers. In fact, a conservative estimate of the costs for a new high school, middle school and building for The Grove with 70 places would be circa £53m. There is currently £39.9m in the Council's medium-term plan for capital investment to support organisational changes across the whole partnership.
- The possibility of a 3-tier campus model was one of the original six potential models of organisation discussed with school leaders, which were then reduced to four potential models. This model was eventually discounted to be taken into Phase 1 consultation to the wider public as overall, while headteachers felt it had some merit, they felt it could operate under either a 2 or 3 tier structure they also did not believe it addressed the issues facing the partnership across all phases. Similarly, the majority of Governing Bodies did not support the model as they believed the benefits would be limited to those schools sited on the campus. The full analysis and feedback on these models are set out in the Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services, Berwick Partnership Organisation, 12 April 2022 in the Background Papers to this report.

For the reasons set out above, it is not recommended that further consultation should be undertaken on the alternative proposal Option C.

- b. Keep Scremerston open under either model / Scremerston to become a primary school*

#### Commentary

It is recommended that Scremerston First School should remain open, but with a reduced Planned Admission Number; the rationale for this recommendation is set out in the 'Conclusion' at para. 80.

- c. Academy to convert back under local authority control*

#### Commentary

There is currently no legislation to enable an academy to reconvert to become a local authority-maintained school. Academies can consult on proposals to join established multi-academy trusts or form their own multi-academy trust, with the final approval being made by the Regional DfE Director North East.

- d. Delivering an all-through SEMH provision within Berwick locality – an initial draft proposal from Berwick Academy and Berwick St Mary's Church of England First School*

The Trustees of Berwick Academy and Governing Body of St Mary's Church of England First School submitted an alternative model of specialist provision within the Berwick area, with similarities to the Council's proposal to create specialist units on school sites but also with some key differences. The proposal is included in the Background Papers.

Considerable thought and planning have clearly gone into the model, including a proposed management structure, approach to staffing and proposed offer of provision to students. The proposal aligns with the Council's aims with respect to creating SEMH and ASD provision within the Berwick locality and supports its aims with regard to the provision of a bespoke curriculum in line with best practice and the new statutory framework for SEND provision.

Furthermore, the Governing Body and staff body of the Grove Special School and staff body have responded that they would not support the relocation of the school to a larger site if it was in order to include provision for SEMH pupils. They believe this would be detrimental to the excellent educational and therapeutic experience enjoyed by the cohort of students whom they currently provide for i.e. particularly those students with primary needs in SLD and PMLD

### Commentary

Overall, this model to increase SEND provision is the same as that proposed in Model A during Phase 2 consultation, except for one fundamental difference, which is that in this model it is proposed that those pupils with more challenging behaviours would receive their education offsite at Alternative Providers. This element of the proposal is contrary to the Council's intention with regard to specialist SEN units located on school sites, which is that all pupils with needs within the specified categories would receive their education on-site, except where the unit would be unsuitable for the student's ability, aptitude or special educational needs or where accepting the student would affect other pupils' education.

It is encouraging and welcomed that the Governing Body of St Mary's and Trustees of Berwick Academy have supported the overall proposal to create specialist units on their respective sites and have set out a detailed proposal on how they could meet the needs of this vulnerable group of young people. Therefore, subject to the adjustment in relation to the proposed on-site provision, this proposal is recommended to be taken forward to statutory consultation as set out at para. 81.

#### *e. Paper/proposal of The Grove Special School Governing Body*

In order to address the need for additional specialist provision specifically for the growing number of children and young people with SEMH and ASD in the Berwick area (ref para. 16(iii)), the Council consulted on two proposals.

Feedback received from the Governing Body and staff of The Grove Special School has made it clear categorically that they did not support the proposal to extend the school's provision to meet the needs of SEMH students, facilitated through its relocation to the current Tweedmouth Middle School site. This is because they feel this would be detrimental to the educational experience of the current cohort of pupils whose needs are met by The Grove, particularly those pupils with PMLD and SLD. The Governing Body has indicated that it supports the proposal of the Governing Body of St Mary's and Trustees of Berwick Academy, and therefore the Council's proposal, to create specialist units for pupils with SEMH, ASD, MLD and SLCN on site.

The Governing Body of The Grove has also submitted an alternative proposal for consideration by Cabinet, the premise of which is a request for a new building for The Grove on a new site. The proposal is included in the Background Papers to this report, but in summary sets out where the school, in the Governing' Body's view, lacks space both inside and outside of the building which impedes on the school's ability to provide an even better educational experience for its students. The school also included a list of 24 future students that it suggests would require a place at The Grove.

### Commentary

The requirement to increase specialist provision is not limited to the Berwick area, but is an acknowledged need across the whole of Northumberland, hence why the SEND Capacity Strategy has been developed and is being implemented in stages over a five year period across the county. However, the Council's data indicates that the greatest area of growth is in relation to primary needs in SEMH and ASD; the Governing Body of The Grove has reiterated in its proposal that its specialism is in PMLD and SLD and that it does not wish to extend its designation to include provision for pupils with SEMH as previously outlined.

It is a probable that had officers asked every special school in the county to put forward a proposal for a new build and additional space, they would have put forward a proposal very similar to The Grove's, citing similar issues. In other words, the issues in relation to the suitability of The Grove buildings are not unique and as the school does not wish to extend its provision to meet the area of need that data indicates as shown is showing the highest area of growth i.e. SEMH, there is no rationale for the Council to place its request in greater priority than other special schools within the county. Indeed, the Council's data does not show that there is any increasing growth in the need for PMLD and SLD places or significant maintenance issues with the buildings to justify the capital investment in a new build school.

In relation to the list of pupils submitted by The Grove whom they imply would require a place at the school in the future, other than those pupils with a primary need of PMLD, it is unclear at this stage whether the school would be the most appropriate provision for the other pupils listed e.g. five pupils are listed as currently on roll at a middle school which would indicate that their needs may be able to be better met via the proposed specialist unit at Berwick Academy, while 13 pupils (including the middle schools pupils) do not have a primary need indicated.

In summary, the proposal of The Grove is highlighted to Cabinet for noting, but is not recommended to be taken forward as part of the proposal to increase specialist provision in the Berwick area at this time.

- f. *Provide Specialist SEMH provision from Belford St Mary's CE Middle School Building*

### Commentary

The former Belford St Mary's CE Middle School building is owned by the Church of England. The building is in the process of being undesignated as a school by

the DfE and will be taken on by a commercial operator. Therefore, it would no longer be possible to use the building as a specialist provision.

*g. Middle schools could become primary schools*

A small number of consultees put forward the alternative proposal that existing middle schools could convert to become primary schools.

Commentary

It is possible to change the age range of a middle school so that it can provide primary education only and this has occurred on a small number of occasions within Northumberland. However, where this has occurred in the county, such proposals have been put forward by the Governing Body of the middle school or academy. Furthermore, even if such proposal had been put forward, it is unlikely that they would have been supported as the buildings at Tweedmouth and Berwick Middle Schools would not have been sustainable as primary schools without the closure of several other first schools in the vicinity.

## **Conclusion**

79. Rationale for the Proposed educational system of schools in the Berwick Partnership to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure

As stated within this and previous reports, discussions have been ongoing for many years within the Berwick Partnership about which school structure would best serve all pupils across the whole of their years in statutory education. However, continuing to operate the same system with perhaps some minor tweaks will continue to deliver the same results and will not support schools to effectively address the significant issues facing the Berwick Partnership. A point has now been reached where a radical change in the organisational structure in the partnership is now required in order to strengthen and build on the good outcomes up to and including KS2, to effect the significant impact required to improve educational outcomes at Key Stage 4 and to provide sustainable and viable schools for the future.

Strong arguments from educationalists, parents, staff and governors within the partnership have been put forward during the Phase 1 and Phase 2 consultations (and before) outlining the benefits of the 3-tier system and its continuation (ref. Paras. 43,44,64 and 72). In particular, the supporters of the 3-tier system point to the consistently good results at Key Stage 2, the pastoral support given to students and the opportunities offered in specialist subjects, sports and so on and these are valid arguments. The campus model put forward by the Berwick Middle and Tweedmouth Middle Governing Bodies proposes the continuation of the 3-tier system, with those two schools amalgamating in one building and becoming part of a campus model on the same site with Berwick Academy and The Grove Special School. Yet the key question of how the continuation of the 3-tier system would deliver the step-change that would significantly improve outcomes at Key Stage 4 for young people in Berwick remains unanswered by its supporters who responded to this consultation.

At Phase 1 Consultation, the Governing Bodies of 10 of the 17 mainstream schools supported a move to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system as the preferred structure to achieve improvements in educational outcomes across all phases. In Phase 2

consultation, the Governing Bodies of 12 of the 17 mainstream schools now support a reorganisation of the partnership to a 2-tier system, with four schools (two of them the town middles) being in favour of retaining the current system. It appears that a critical mass of support for 2-tier among the educationalists in the partnership has been reached and this should be noted by Cabinet. These schools have put forward compelling arguments (ref. to feedback within Paras 32 to 63) as to why they believe a 2-tier structure of organisation would better serve the children and young people living in the Berwick area across all phases with an expectation that results at Key 4 would be positively impacted as a result.

Furthermore, the following bodies and organisations consulted as part of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 consultation support the proposal for a 2-tier(primary/secondary) structure for the Berwick Partnership:

- Newcastle Diocesan Education Board (6 of the 12 first schools are CE)
- RC Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
- Bishop Bewick Academy Trust (of which St Cuthbert's forms part)
- North Northumberland Branch of the National Autistic Society
- Ancroft, Duddo, Lowick and Norham Parish Councils (i.e. those pcs that responded)
- 2 local councillors representing wards that include Berwick Partnership schools.

Of those consultees who responded from the wider community, there differing views remain in equal measure on which model of school organisation would be better placed to address the issues facing the partnership now and in the future. Therefore, consensus agreement across all stakeholders who responded was not able to gained during the two phases of informal consultation. It should also be noted that with 2,323 pupils on roll in mainstream schools in the Berwick Partnership in January 2022, 724 responses were received from all consultees during Phase 2 consultation, including schools, individual governors, staff, parish councils and community members.

The Council has a duty to support schools to improve standards, support continuity of education, support schools to be financially viable and sustainable and support smooth transition of pupils between schools. The Council also has a duty to provide best value to the residents of Northumberland in relation to Capital investment of public monies in school buildings schools. Following the two phases of consultation, the local authority now as a responsibility to provide system leadership regarding school organisation. In the light of the rationale and reasons put forward by the majority of schools in the partnership who support a structural change to a 2-tier system, officers now recommend that a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure should be implemented across the mainstream schools within the Berwick Partnership for the following educational reasons:

- There would be only one transition point between primary and secondary education at the end of Key Stage 2 for pupils to cope with and schools to manage. Furthermore, having just one transition would be of particular benefit to pupils with special educational needs and this was supported by the North Northumberland Autistic Society in Phase 2 consultation;



- Schools would have responsibility for whole key stages (primary schools for EYFS, KS1 and KS2 and Berwick Academy for KS3, KS4 and KS5) allowing for consistency of curriculum and planning and this matches the National Curriculum and is the predominant structure across the country;
- Teachers are trained in either the primary or secondary system; there is no longer specific middle school teacher training;
- First school teachers are primary trained, with many having worked in primary schools, and already teach the first half of KS2. Therefore, the expertise and knowledge to deliver good outcomes at KS2 already exists in these schools (noting that currently in the 3-tier system when pupils are assessed at KS2 at the end of Year 6, they have been educated in first schools for five of their seven years in statutory education at that point);
- Schools would have longer relationships with pupils and their families;
- Students joining Berwick Academy in Year 7 would have two years to settle and become familiar with specialist subjects while teachers would have the opportunity to learn about their students in order to advise them before making critical subject choices for GCSE in Year 9. It is expected that this will be a key factor in delivering steady and significant improvement in outcomes at KS4 over time;
- It is expected that a 2-tier organisation of schools would support recruitment and retention of teaching staff, with wider opportunities for within individual schools;
- Pupils on roll in first schools becoming primary, especially the rural village schools would be able to be educated within their local communities for an additional two years;
- Education in Years 5 and 6 would continue to be provided in the North of Berwick.

80. Rationale for the changes to schools within the preferred 2-tier model for Berwick Partnership

In the light of the continuing fall in pupil numbers within the partnership, there is a need for sustainable and viable schools within Berwick Partnership. Under the current 3-tier system, there are 9.7 FE in first schools in the partnership; under the proposed preferred 2-tier model, there would be 7.6 FE provided by the primary schools remaining open in the partnership, taking into account the reallocation of Belford to the Alnwick Partnership. In the current middle school phase, there are 8.3 FE and at high school phase there are 7.5 FE; under the proposed 2-tier model there would be 6 FE at the secondary phase. The full preferred model is set out at para. 82, while the rationale for the proposed school closures and other aspects of the model are set out below:

- *Proposed closure of Berwick Middle, Tweedmouth Community Middle and Glendale Middle:*  
Under a 2-tier system, middle schools do not exist and therefore the middle schools would close if this model were to be approved for implementation. The process for supporting staff who would be placed at risk of redundancy as a result the proposed reorganisation is set out at para. 85.
- *Proposed reduction in the Planned Admission Numbers (PANs) of Scremerston First School and Spittal First:*  
In both the Model A and Model B proposed structures for Berwick Partnership, Scremerston First School was proposed to close. There has been a concerted effort made by the school, parents and other supporters of Scremerston First

School to put forward a rationale for the school to remain open since it was proposed for closure under both the 3-tier and 2-tier models consulted on in Phase 2, and that is to be commended. In setting out their vision as to how the school could operate effectively and sustainably as a primary school, the Governing Body, staff and parents have presented a persuasive argument and therefore it is proposed that the school should reorganise to become a primary school in line with the other first schools in the partnership.

However, while Scremerston is popular with its own community, only approximately 30% of the students on roll live in the Scremerston catchment and the remaining 70% of pupils live in other catchments and travel daily to the school, passing other schools along the way. The number of pupils being born in the Scremerston catchment has been falling consistently for some years; with future cohorts well under 10 pupils per year group (and some with five or fewer pupils), the school is being sustained by the pupils who live out of catchment. With reducing numbers of pupils across the Berwick area, and a planned admission number of 18 this has a serious impact on the viability of the other local schools within whose catchment area these pupils live. Furthermore, the significant movement of pupils across the partnership to attend out of catchment schools runs contrary to the aims of the Council's Climate Action Plan, which aims to reduce unnecessary car journeys and thereby reduce emissions within Northumberland. For these reasons, it is therefore proposed that the PAN of Scremerston should be reduced to 10 to better match the local community it serves; with an additional two year groups as a primary school and in light of its popularity, it is considered that the school would remain viable.

In relation to Spittal First school, a number of years ago there was a surge in the birth rate within its catchment area and additional capacity was added to the school at that time, with its PAN increased from 30 to 40. However, this surge in birth rate now appears to have been a temporary bulge and it is proposed that a PAN of 30 would now better match the number of children now being born in its catchment. For the same reasons set out in relation to Scremerston with regard to the impact of surplus places, it is proposed that the PAN at Spittal should be reduced to 30 to better match the catchment area it serves.

The four schools in the Tweedmouth area (Spittal, Tweedmouth West, Tweedmouth Prior Park and St Cuthbert's) and Scremerston currently have a total capacity in each year group of 133 places; with an average of 73 pupils per cohort actually living in this area in the next three years expected to join Reception classes, there is clearly an overprovision of places. In relation to forms of entry (FE), there are currently 4.4 FE across these four schools, while under the proposal to reduce the PANs of Scremerston and Spittal Primary Schools (as they would be) there would be 3.8 FE in the Tweedmouth and Scremerston area of the partnership.

- *Proposed reduction of Berwick St Mary's Church of England First School PAN*  
Along with Holy Trinity Church of England First School, St Mary's serves the area of Berwick north of the Tweed. These two schools currently have a joint capacity of 60 places in each year group; with an average of 30 pupils per cohort actually living in this area expected to join Reception classes in the next three years, there is a significant overprovision of places across these two catchment areas. While there could be an argument to close one of the schools in this area, there would

be too little capacity remaining and parental choice would be removed as the schools serve two different communities. Furthermore, it is proposed that the additional capacity in St Mary's would support the development of an SEN Unit for pupils specifically with SEMH, ASD, MLD and SLCN as part of the proposed SEN solution for the partnership (ref. Para. 81). Therefore, it is proposed that the current forms of entry of 2 FE in this area of Berwick are reduced to 1.5 FE, with St Mary's reducing to 0.5 FE.

- *Proposed reduction of Berwick Academy PAN*  
Given the continuing fall in pupil numbers in the Berwick area, it is proposed that a more realistic PAN for Berwick Academy would be 6 FE, or 180 pupils per cohort. This is slightly less than the proposed 7 FE at primary level as there is expected to continue to be some flow of pupils out of the partnership at the secondary phase e.g. from the south of the Wooler catchment into DCHS.
- *Proposed allocation of Belford Primary School to Alnwick Partnership:*  
The Governing Body of Belford Primary School has been consistent in its response to Phase 1 and Phase 2 consultation that it wishes the school catchment area to be incorporated within the Alnwick Partnership and for the feeder secondary school of pupils living in the catchment to become The Duchess's Community High School. The community in Belford supported a move for the first school to become a primary in conjunction with the closure of the middle school in the village several years ago so that pupils were able to join cohorts moving from Alnwick Primary schools when they joined DCHS, following the closure of the middle school in the village. Most pupils leaving Belford join DCHS in Year 7 and this proposal means that pupils will now be eligible for home to school transport if they meet the criteria.
- *Proposed retention of Wooler Primary (as it would become) in Berwick Partnership*  
The federated Governing Body of Wooler and Glendale have been concerned for a number of years about the financial impact of reducing numbers in Glendale Middle's Year 7 and 8 classes on the school's ability to continue to provide the broad and balanced curriculum required. With regard to models and proposals of organisation discussed since April 2021 within the Berwick Partnership, the school leaders of Wooler and Glendale have clear that they wished to move to a 2-tier structure but have been ambivalent as to which partnership the school or schools in the Wooler area would be aligned to. However, in Phase 2 consultation, the Governing Body has stated a preference not just for 2-tier organisation, but also for Wooler Primary School (as it would be) to be allocated to the Alnwick Partnership.

However, officers do not agree that it would be in the best interests of pupils living in the Wooler catchment area or for the greater Berwick Partnership for the catchment to be allocated to Alnwick on the grounds that it preserves the ability of those pupils in the north of the catchment to continue to attend Berwick Academy should they wish to do so with home to school transport, while supporting the viability of Berwick Partnership while it transitions through reorganisation. Those pupils living in the Wooler catchment area who live closer to DCHS than to Berwick Academy would continue to be eligible for home to school transport to that school.

Finally, Cabinet should note that while Tweedmouth Prior Park, Norham St Ceolwulf's Controlled First Schools and Berwick Academy currently have Requires Improvement gradings from Ofsted, these schools would need to extend their age ranges as part of the overall proposed reorganisation of the Berwick Partnership to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure should it be approved.

#### 81. Rationale for the Proposed Model for Special Educational Needs

The need to create additional specialist provision within the Berwick area specifically for pupils with SEMH or ASD as a primary need is set out at para. 16(iii). Of the two proposals to increase SEND capacity put forward for consultation, either would be able to exist within a 3-tier or a 2-tier organisation of schools.

The majority of stakeholders who responded to the question relating to the proposed creation of additional SEND provision within the Berwick area agreed that this was needed. In relation to responses received overall on the two proposed models of provision, the proposal to create specialist units on the site of mainstream schools to be managed and staff by those schools was the more popular (ref. Para. 73).

At their meetings with officers during Phase 2 and in a written response submitted by staff, Governors and staff of The Grove Special School have indicated that they support the creation of additional specialist provision in the Berwick area. However, in the light of the needs of the pupils currently on roll at The Grove they believe that it would be detrimental to their interests to be co-located with pupils who have primary needs in SEMH and therefore they could not support such a proposal. The Governing Body submitted a paper to the Council during Phase 2 consultation setting out their rationale for a new building and expansion of pupil numbers for The Grove School and this is commented on at para. 78(e).

Also during Phase 2 consultation, the Governing Body of St Mary's and the Trustees of Berwick Academy submitted a proposal to create specialist units at their respective sites, although there were some differences in this model compared to the intention of the specialist unit model put forward for consultation by the Council (ref. Para. 78(d)).

Therefore, it is proposed that the model of provision with specialist units based at existing schools is the preferred option and as the overall preferred school organisation model is for a 2-tier structure, St Mary's Church of England Primary School (as it would be) and Berwick Academy are proposed as the location for the units to be managed and staffed by the school and academy respectively. The following model is proposed to be included that the units in order to meet the needs of pupils with primary needs in SEMH, ASD, MLD (moderate learning difficulties) and SLCN (speech, language and communication) as follows:

- Berwick St Mary's Church of England First, in addition to the proposed age range change to also add an SEN unit with specialist provision for up to 30 places reserved for pupils aged 4 to 11 with primary needs in SEMH, ASD, MLD and SLCN.
- Berwick Academy in addition to the proposed age range change to also add an SEN unit with specialist provision for up to 40 places reserved for students aged 11 to 16 with primary needs in SEMH, ASD, MLD and SLCN. This element of

the proposal would require the approval of the Trustees of Berwick Academy and final approval from the Regional DfE Director North East.

### **Implications of the Proposal for reorganisation of the Berwick Partnership to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure**

#### **82. The proposed preferred model of school organisation for Berwick Partnership**

Table 6 shows the current structure of schools in the Berwick Partnership. In this structure, pupils leave their first school at the end of Year 4 and join middle schools in Year 5, then leave middle schools to join Berwick Academy as the feeder secondary for Year 5, (or another school according to parental choice).

**Table 6 – Current Structure of schools in Berwick Partnership**

<b>School</b>	<b>Number on roll in statutory education Jan 2023</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	84	187	1	30
Berwick St Mary's CE First	68	114	1	30
Holy Trinity CE First	140	150	1	30
Holy Island CE First	3	25	0.2	5
Hugh Joicey CE First	47	73	0.5	15
Lowick CE First	16	50	0.3	10
Norham CE First	26	50	0.3	10
Scremerston First	54	90	0.6	18
Spittal First	121	171	1.3	40
Tweedmouth Prior Park First	111	150	1	30
Tweedmouth West First	114	150	1	30
Wooler First	93	150	1	30
St Cuthbert's	71	75	0.5	15
Berwick Middle	335	456	3.8	114
Glendale Middle	103	169	1.4	42
Tweedmouth Middle	359	440	3.1	93
Berwick Academy	545 (inc 6 <sup>th</sup> Form)	916	7.5	225

Table 7 shows the proposal model of organisation of schools in the Berwick Partnership under a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure. In this structure,

- Berwick Academy would become an age 11-18 academy, with admissions into Year 7, 8 and 9 in September 2026, and then admissions into Year 7 only from September 2027
- 12 first schools (including an academy) would change their age range to become primary schools.
- Three middle schools would close.
- One primary school would have its catchment area reallocated to Alnwick Partnership.
- There would be significant capital investment in schools as appropriate to facilitate this, including a rebuild/refurbishment for Berwick Academy.
- In January 2023, there were 2,290 pupils on roll across all phases of the Berwick Partnership, with the capacity for 3,442 places in schools and academies; this equates to 33% surplus places.
- As stated, the partnership currently has the capacity for 3,442 places. Should the preferred model be implemented there would be 2,710 places available in schools and academies in the partnership, therefore 732 places would be removed.
- There are currently 7.5 FE into high school phase, 8.3 FE into middle school phase and 9.7 FE into first school phase. Under the preferred model, if every pupil living in the Berwick Partnership attended a school in the partnership, there would be 5.3 FE required at both secondary and primary phases. Under the preferred model, it is proposed that there would be 6 FE available into secondary phase and 7.6 FE available into primary phase.

**Table 7 – Proposed 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure of schools in Berwick Partnership**

<b>School</b>	<b>Number on roll Jan 2023</b>	<b>Proposed Capacity</b> (net no. Pupils able to be educated in the building)	<b>Proposed Forms of Entry in each year group</b> (1FE = average class of 30 pupils)	<b>Proposed Planned Admission Number (PAN – the number of children admitted to the school at usual transition point in September)</b>
Belford Primary	Moves into Alnwick Partnership and small area of current catchment allocated to Lowick.			
	84	187	1	30
Berwick St Mary's CE First	Becomes primary, reduces PAN, no change to catchment Opens on-site primary specialist SEN provision			
	68	105	0.5	15
Holy Trinity CE First	Becomes primary, no change to catchment			
	140	210	1	30
Holy Island CE First	Becomes primary, no change to catchment			
	3	35	0.2	5
Hugh Joicey CE First	Becomes primary, no change to catchment			
	47	105	0.5	15

Lowick CE First	Becomes primary, small extension to catchment area as a result of reduction of Belford catchment.			
	16	70	0.3	10
Norham CE First	Becomes primary, no change to catchment			
	26	70	0.3	10
Scremerston First	Becomes primary, no change to catchment			
	54	70	0.3	10
Spittal First	Becomes Primary and reduces PAN to 30, no change to catchment			
	130	210	1	30
Tweedmouth Prior Park First	Becomes primary, no change to catchment			
	124	210	1	30
Tweedmouth West First	Becomes primary, no change to catchment			
	118	210	1	30
Wooler First	Converts to become a primary and remains in Berwick Partnership, no change to catchment			
	103	210	1	30
St Cuthbert's*	Becomes Primary (RC schools do not have catchments)			
	71	105	0.5	15
Total forms of entry in primary phase – 7.6FE				
Berwick Middle	Closes			
Glendale Middle	Closes			
Tweedmouth Middle	Closes			
Berwick Academy*	Catchment area reduced as Belford Primary moves to Alnwick Partnership, transition into Year 7 (age 11) from 2026 onwards			
	523 (inc 6 <sup>th</sup> Form)	1100	6	180

83. Implications for individual schools and academies of the proposed preferred 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure

- a. Belford Primary School – As the school is already an age 2-11 primary school, there are no structural proposals for Belford but in light of the historical pattern of pupils feeding to Alnwick The Duchess's High School, it is recommended that the catchment area would be re-allocated to the Alnwick Partnership with effect from 1 September 2024, with the reallocation of a small part of the north of the catchment to be reallocated to Lowick Church of England Primary School (as it would be). If Cabinet approves the recommendation, a request to amend the Council's admissions arrangements from September 2024 would be submitted to the Schools Adjudicator.
- b. Berwick St Mary's Church of England First School - It is recommended that the school would become an age 3-11 primary school with a reduced PAN of 15 with effect from 1 September 2025. This is a non-statutory prescribed alteration and therefore Cabinet would be requested to approve this in conjunction with recommendations for schools set out in the published statutory proposal (if the

latter is permitted for publication). It is also recommended that a 30 place SEN unit reserved for pupils with primary needs in SEMH, ASD, MLD and SLCN be established at the St Mary's site to be managed and staffed by the school with effect from 1 September 2025; as a prescribed alteration this recommendation would be required to be included in the statutory proposal. There is no proposed change to the school's current catchment area.

- c. Holy Trinity Church of England First School - It is recommended that the school would become an age 3-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025. This is a non-statutory proposal and therefore Cabinet would be requested to approve it in conjunction with recommendations for schools set out in the published statutory proposal (if the latter is permitted for publication). There is no proposed change to the school's current catchment area.
- d. Holy Island Church of England First School - It is recommended that the school would become an age 3-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025. This is a non-statutory prescribed alteration and therefore Cabinet would be requested to approve it in conjunction with recommendations for schools set out in the published statutory proposal (if the latter is permitted for publication). There is no proposed change to the school's current catchment area.
- e. Lowick Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School - It is recommended that the school would become an age 2-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025. This is a non-statutory prescribed alteration and therefore Cabinet would be requested to approve it in conjunction with recommendations for schools set out in the published statutory proposal (if the latter is permitted for publication). It is also recommended that the school's catchment area would be expanded slightly to include part of the catchment area of Belford Primary School (ref. sub-para. a. above).
- f. Hugh Joicey Church of England First School - It is recommended that the school would become an age 4-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025. This is a non-statutory prescribed alteration and therefore Cabinet would be requested to approve it in conjunction with recommendations for schools set out in the published statutory proposal (if the latter is permitted for publication). There is no proposed change to the school's current catchment area.
- g. Norham St Ceolwulf's C of E Controlled First School – It is recommended that the school would become an age 3-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025. This is a non-statutory prescribed alteration and therefore Cabinet would be requested to approve it in conjunction with recommendations for schools set out in the published statutory proposal (if the latter is permitted for publication).
- h. Scremerston First School - It is recommended that the school would become an age 4-11 primary school with a reduced PAN of 10 with effect from 1 September 2025 and that it is included in the statutory proposal. There is no proposed change to the school's current catchment area.
- i. Spittal Community School - It is recommended that the school would become an age 4-11 primary school with a reduced PAN of 30 with effect from 1 September 2025 and that it is included in the statutory proposal. It is also recommended that



the school's catchment area would be amended slightly to include a small area of the Scremerston First School catchment.

- j. St Cuthbert's Catholic First School - It is recommended that the school would become an age 3-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025 and that it is included in the statutory proposal. As St Cuthbert's is an academy, approval for this recommendation would need to be given by the Bishop Bewick Trust and subsequently by the Regional DfE Director North East. Both decisions would be contingent on Cabinet approving the publication of the statutory proposal and approving a final decision for implementation at a later date.
- k. Tweedmouth Prior Park First School - It is recommended that the school would become an age 3-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025 and that it is included in the statutory proposal. There is no proposed change to the school's current catchment area.
- l. Tweedmouth West First School - It is recommended that the school would become an age 4-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025 and that it is included in the statutory proposal. There is no proposed change to the school's current catchment area.
- m. Wooler First School - It is recommended that the school would become an age 2-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2025 and that it is included in the statutory proposal. There is no proposed change to the school's current catchment area.
- n. Berwick Middle School – It is recommended that the school would not receive a Year 5 intake in September 2025 and would close on 31 August 2026 and that it is included in the statutory proposal. Displaced pupils would be guaranteed a place in Berwick Academy or would join another school according to parental preference.
- o. Tweedmouth Community Middle School - It is recommended that the school would not receive a Year 5 intake in September 2025 and would close on 31 August 2026 and that it is included in the statutory proposal. Displaced pupils would be guaranteed a place in Berwick Academy or would join another school according to parental preference.
- p. Glendale Middle School - It is recommended that the school would not receive a Year 5 intake in September 2025 and would close on 31 August 2026 and that it is included in the statutory proposal. Displaced pupils would be guaranteed a place in Berwick Academy or would join another school according to parental preference.
- q. Berwick Academy - It is recommended that the school would become an age 11-18 secondary school with a reduced PAN of 180 with effect from 1 September 2025 and that it is included in the statutory proposal. As an academy, approval for this recommendation would need to be given by Berwick Academies Trustees and subsequently by the Regional DfE Director North East. Both decisions would be contingent on Cabinet approving the publication of the statutory proposal and approving a final decision for implementation at a later date.

## 84. Timeline for Implementation

### *Belford Primary School*

#### **Autumn Term 2023**

- Parents of pupils in Year 6 of Belford Primary would apply for places in Year 7 at Alnwick The Duchess's High School (DCHS) for 1 September 2024 as catchment students (subject to Schools Adjudicator approval) or another school according to parental preference.

#### **1 September 2024**

- Pupils in Year 6 on 31 August in Belford Primary would join Alnwick DCHS in Year 7 or another school according to parental preference.
- Belford Primary catchment would be slightly reduced (with area removed going to Lowick CE First School) and would become part of DCHS greater catchment. As a result, pupils living within Belford Primary catchment would now become eligible for Home to School Transport to DCHS, subject to meeting relevant criteria.

### *First Schools in the Berwick Partnership proposed to become Primary schools*

#### **Autumn Term 2024**

- Parents apply for places in Reception classes for September 2025 as usual.

#### **1 September 2025**

- Pupils in Year 4 on 31 August 2025 in first schools would be retained by their new primary schools as Year 5 as the schools extend their age ranges.
- New Reception classes join school as usual but Berwick St Mary's CE, Scremerston and Spittal Primary Schools would have reduced PANs in that year group (see model).

#### **1 September 2026**

- Pupils in Year 5 on 31 August 2026 in first schools would be retained by their new primary schools as Year 6 as the schools extend their age ranges.
- Parents of Year 6 pupils would apply in Autumn for places in Year 7 classes for September 2027 at Berwick Academy (which would have a reduced PAN of 180) or another school according to parental preference.

### *Middle Schools in the Berwick Partnership proposed for closure*

#### **Autumn Term 2024**

- Parents of pupils in Year 8 in Berwick, Tweedmouth and Glendale Middle Schools apply as usual for a place in Year 9 at Berwick Academy or another school according to parental preference for 1 September 2025.

### **1 September 2025**

- Pupils on roll in Year 8 at Berwick Middle, Tweedmouth Middle and Glendale Middle Schools on 31 August 2025 transfer as usual into Year 9 at Berwick Academy or another school according to parental preference.
- Middle schools would not receive a Year 5 and would operate with Years 6, 7 and 8 only.
- Parents of pupils on roll in Year 8 at Berwick Middle, Tweedmouth Middle and Glendale Middle Schools apply as usual for places in Year 9 at Berwick Academy or another school according to parental preference.
- Pupils on roll in Years 6 and 7 at Berwick Middle, Tweedmouth Middle and Glendale Middle Schools would be guaranteed a place in Years 7 and 8 in Berwick Academy in September 2026 should they wish to take it up or would apply for places in other schools according to parental preference.

### **31 August 2026**

- Glendale, Berwick and Tweedmouth Middle Schools close.

### **1 September 2026**

- Pupils on roll in Year 8 at Berwick Middle, Tweedmouth Middle and Glendale Middle Schools on 31 August 2026 would transfer as usual into Year 9 at Berwick Academy or another school according to parental preference.
- Pupils on roll in middle schools in Years 6 and 7 on 31 August 2026 would take up guaranteed places as the new Years 7 and 8 to Berwick Academy or join another school according to parental preference.

#### *Berwick Academy*

### **1 September 2026**

- Berwick Academy would change its age range from an age 13 to 18 academy to an age 11 to 18 secondary school.
- Pupils on roll in Year 8 at Berwick Middle, Tweedmouth Middle and Glendale Middle Schools on 31 August 2026 would transfer as usual into Year 9 at Berwick Academy or another school according to parental preference.
- Pupils on roll in middle schools in Years 6 and 7 on 31 August 2026 would take up guaranteed places as the new Years 7 and 8 to Berwick Academy or join another school according to parental preference.

### **1 September 2027**

- Berwick Academy reduces its PAN from 225 to 180 for students joining in year 7.
- Pupils in Year 6 in the primary schools on 31 August 2027 would transfer as the new Year 7 to Berwick Academy or another school according to parental preference.
- From this point forward transition is into Year 7 only, with entry into other year groups treated as in-year transfers.

85. Implications for staff working in maintained mainstream schools and academies in Berwick Partnership

Should approval be given for the schools in the Berwick Partnership to reorganise to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure, there would be implications for staff in all of the relevant schools in the partnership. Staff in schools proposed for closure would be at risk of redundancy, while the staffing structures of schools and academies proposed to continue would need to be amended to reflect the additional year groups and to identify new posts.

In the light of proposed changes to school structures being required whether the 3-tier structure remained in place or whether reorganisation to 2-tier was approved, Council Officers have begun working with headteachers in the Berwick Partnership to broker a draft Staffing Protocol agreement with the ambition to have all Governing Bodies sign up to the agreement. The purpose of the protocol is to ensure where new posts are identified in the continuing schools, a fair and equitable selection process is in place that provides a job interview guarantee for such posts for staff at risk of redundancy and that these staff are supported to find alternative suitable posts throughout the period of transition to the new structure i.e. to 1 September 2026.

The allocation of new posts within the reorganised structure ahead of implementation to as many at risk staff as possible will not only provide stability to them on a personal level but will assist in provide educational stability across schools in the partnership as well as aiding with successful pupil transition. Trades Unions would also be consulted on the terms of the protocol agreed with the schools and academies.

Wooler First School and Glendale Middle School are federated under one Governing Body, therefore should Glendale be approved to close, there would be an element of protection for the middle school staff to be redeployed in the primary school.

86. Catchment areas

A number of amendments to catchment areas are proposed arising from the preferred 2-tier model.

The move of the catchment area of Belford Primary School into the Alnwick Partnership, with feeder secondary school for pupils living in the Belford area becoming The Duchess's High School, is included in the recommendations to Cabinet. It is also recommended that a small area of the northern-most part of the catchment is allocated to Lowick Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School (as it would become).

First schools would retain their current catchment areas as they become primaries, noting that as for all Roman Catholic schools in the county, St Cuthbert's Catholic First School (academy) does not have a catchment area but allocates places in accordance with the oversubscription criteria set out in its Admissions Policy (when oversubscribed).

Berwick Middle, Tweedmouth Community Middle and Glendale catchment areas would apply to students in Years 6, 7 and 8 only from 1 September 2025 and would become invalid after 31 August 2026. The first school catchment areas would apply up to Year 5 from 1 September 2025 as they become primary schools and would then

apply until the end of Year 6 from 1 September 2026. Similarly, the catchment area of Berwick Academy would apply from Year 7 from 1 September 2026.

87. Special Educational Needs Provision within mainstream schools and academies

The specific proposal to increase SEND provision in the Berwick Partnership in relation to the growth in the number of children and young people diagnosed with a primary special educational need in SEMH or ASD is set out at para 16(iii).

Current SEN provision at those schools proposed to remain open would continue to be provided should reorganisation be approved. Reorganisation may benefit some pupils with SEN who would be able to remain at their primary school for an additional 2 years. During consultation, some first schools stated that they would benefit from specialist peripatetic send support accessed from a specialist provision hub at St Mary’s and Berwick Academy as well as The Grove Special School. It is hoped that this type of support provision can be developed within the partnership going forward.

88. Early Years Provision

While the extent and the quality of early years provision in the Berwick Partnership was considered as part of this consultation, officers in the Council’s Early Years team confirmed that there is enough provision of sufficient quality currently in the partnership area, including provision for two-year-olds. As any changes to current early years provision in first schools as they became primaries could have a destabilising effect, no proposals to change or increase Early Years provision in those schools remaining open are included within the preferred 2-tier model proposed for statutory publication. However, with the introduction of the Government’s new scheme to introduce free childcare to all children from the age of nine months from September 2024, this may bring additional opportunities to extend provision in some settings and this would be supported and monitored by the Council’s Early Years Team.

89. Transport

Eligibility for Home to School Transport in Northumberland is arranged in accordance with the Council’s Home to School Transport Policy. Should the proposal for reorganisation of the Berwick Partnership to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system be approved, pupils remaining in their first schools as they become primary would have shorter distances to school in Years 5 and 6. This is likely to result in a saving of circa £14,000 per annum to the Council’s Home to School Transport budget in relation to those pupils that would normally have been eligible for transport to the middle schools in those year groups.

90. Buildings Implications

Building costs set out in Table 8 below are indicative and would be subject to further detailed work should the proposed to reorganise schools to a 2-tier structure be approved:

**Table 8 – Estimate of Building costs to implement reorganisation**

School	Description	Indicative cost
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St Mary's First School	Internal reconfiguration to create dedicated SEN unit for ASD and SEMH primary pupils.	£0.500m
Norham First School Capital costs if remain open	A small extension to increase capacity within early years/foundation stage classroom	£0.119m
Scremerston Capital costs if school were to remain open	Potential small extension	£0.220m
Tweedmouth West First School	One classroom, one group room, a Medical Inspection room and additional WC provision	£1.038m
Wooler First School	Remodel existing building to create primary facilities, a community hub.	£2.800m
Berwick Academy	New build Secondary school, with specialist SEN unit for pupils with ASD and SEMH	£35.400m
<b>Total</b>		<b>£40.077m</b>

Table 9 below sets out how the overall reorganisation would be funded if approval is given to implement the changes following the statutory process and Cabinets' final decision later in the year.

**Table 9 – Funding breakdown to deliver Capital improvements above.**

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Value</b>
NCC Capital (MTFP)	£39.750m
School Condition Allocation (SCIP)	£0.146m
High Needs Provision Capital Allocation	£0.181m
<b>Total</b>	<b>£40.077m</b>

As stated, capital funding £39.896 has already been allocated for the investment for the Berwick Partnership of schools. Whilst the plan includes a replacement/refurbishment of the Berwick Academy buildings the final building solution would be the subject of a separate business case for approval by Cabinet, this process wouldn't begin until after the final decision following the outcome of the statutory consultation if approved. However, the extent of this project will depend on whether Cabinet approves the proposed reorganisation to the 2-tier structure, in which case the replacement buildings at Berwick Academy would need to accommodate Years 7 to 13.

There is sufficient capacity within the existing buildings at Berwick Academy for reorganisation to take place ahead of investment in new or refurbished school buildings.

## 91. Sport and Recreation

There would be no negative impact on the current sport and recreation facilities at the first schools proposed to become primaries under the proposed reorganisation to the 2-tier structure.

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

In relation to the proposed closure of Berwick Middle and Tweedmouth Community Middle Schools, should Cabinet approve the publication of the recommended statutory proposal and subsequently decide to implement it, under legislation the Council would need to have regard to The School Premises (England) Regulations 2012 and Section 77 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 in relation to any potential loss of playing fields.

## **Implications of the Proposal to increase specialist SEND Provision in the Berwick Partnership**

### 92. Preferred proposed model

For the reason set out at para. 81, it is proposed that the model of provision with specialist units based at existing schools is preferred and, as the overall preferred school organisation model is for a 2-tier structure, St Mary's Church of England Primary School (as it would be) and Berwick Academy are proposed as the location for the units. The following model is proposed to be included in order to meet the needs of pupils with primary needs in SEMH, ASD, MLD (moderate learning difficulties) and SLCN (speech, language and communication) specialist provision units on site at St Mary's and Berwick Academy would be created as follows:

- Berwick St Mary's Church of England First, in addition to the proposed age range change to also add an SEN unit with specialist provision for up to 30 places reserved for pupils aged 4 to 11 with primary needs in SEMH, ASD, MLD and SLCN.
- Berwick Academy in addition to the proposed age range change to also add an SEN unit with specialist provision for up to 40 places reserved for students aged 11 to 16 with primary needs in SEMH, ASD, MLD and SLCN. This element of the proposal would require the approval of the Trustees of Berwick Academy and final approval from the Regional DfE Director North East.

### 93. Timeline for Implementation

It is proposed that the establishment of the SEN units at St Mary's and at Berwick Academy would follow the same timeline as the proposed change in age ranges i.e. the SEN unit at St Mary's would be effective from 1 September 2025 and the SEN unit at Berwick Academy would be effective from 1 September 2026.

### 94. Implications for staff

It is envisaged that both St Mary's and Berwick Academy would need to develop a staffing structure for their respective SEN units suitable to meet the needs and number of pupils with SEMH, ASD, MLD and SLCN.

95. Transport

Students attending special schools in Northumberland are subject to the same eligibility criteria for Home to School Transport as mainstream students. It is anticipated that the provision of local specialist provision within the Berwick Partnership area would reduce the need for many students with the relevant SEND primary needs to travel outside of their local area, and therefore this would have a positive impact on the Council's Home to School Transport budget.

96. Building Implications

The indicative costs for provision of SEN units at St Mary's and at Berwick Academy are included in Table 9 at para. 90.

97. Sport and Recreation

Pupils on roll in the SEN units at St Mary's and Berwick Academy would be able to have timetabled access to the playing fields and recreational facilities on the respective school sites as part of their curriculum.

**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 £39.9m has been allocated by the Council in the Medium-Term Plan. Part of the rationale for informal 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. There would be a small saving to the home to school transport budget as a result of the Berwick town middle school closures which is currently estimated to be in the region of £14k; this would be as a result of Year 5&6 pupils remaining in their primary schools.
<b>Legal</b>	Consultation carried out on proposals has complied with The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and updated guidance January 2023
<b>Procurement</b>	An outline business case (OBC) will be developed and submitted to cabinet with the outcomes of the statutory consultation which will also set on the procurement options and recommendations to deliver best value for the councils investment.
<b>Human Resources:</b>	There would be a need to support staff placed at risk of redundancy a result of the proposed reorganisation with redeployment opportunities. A draft staffing protocol would be developed to manage this process within the partnership of schools.
<b>Property</b>	Refer to 'Finance and value for money' above
<b>Equalities</b>	Impact assessment is contained as Appendix 5 of this report



(Impact Assessment attached) Yes X	
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	A full project risk assessment will be presented as part of the OBC, following the statutory 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>Consultation</b>	This report has been considered by the Executive Director Children's Services and the Member for Children's Services
<b>Wards</b>	Berwick East; Berwick North; Berwick West with Ord; Norham and Islandshires; Wooler

## Background Papers

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

Report of the Joint Interim Director of Children's Services, 11 October 2022 - The Outcomes of Consultation on Berwick Partnership Organisation,

Feedback from Phase 2 Consultation

## Report Sign Off

Executive Director of Resources and Transformation (S151 Officer)	JW
Interim Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer	SB
Chief Executive	HP
Executive Director	AK
Portfolio Holder	GR-T

## Appendices

Appendix 1 - Consultation About Education in the Berwick Partnership

Appendix 2 - Consultation Register

Appendix 3 - Maps showing proposed changes to school catchment areas

Appendix 4 - Option C – An Inclusive Model

Appendix 5 - Equalities Impact Assessment

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Northumberland  
County Council

## CONSULTATION ABOUT EDUCATION IN THE BERWICK PARTNERSHIP

An opportunity to give us your views



**PHASE 2 - 31 OCTOBER 2022 UNTIL MIDNIGHT ON  
3 MARCH 2023**

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Phase 2 Consultation on the future of schools in the Berwick Partnership.

Phase 1 Consultation asked parents, staff and the wider community in Berwick whether they believed a reorganised 3-tier structure (the current structure) or a reorganisation to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure would be better able to secure a viable, sustainable and successful education system across all phases from nursery to sixth form. While many of the consultees who responded, including many schools in the Berwick Partnership, had very strong views about which system schools should be organised within, there was no majority view for either system.

As a result, this Phase 2 Consultation sets out possible models of school organisation within both the current 3-tier system and within a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system. This consultation document sets out the issues facing schools in the Berwick Partnership and why there have to be changes to the way schools are organised in the area, including possible school closures, in whatever system it is decided should be in place.

Before you continue to read this Phase 2 consultation document, it is important to understand that Northumberland County Council does not have any powers to make changes to academies – within the Berwick Partnership, this applies to Berwick Academy and St Cuthbert's Catholic First School. However, the Council is carrying out this consultation on their behalf also so that everyone's views can be collected and analysed in a consistent way. The Diocese of Newcastle and the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle also have a significant role to play in this consultation process.

The following table summarises the roles and powers of the various organisations with responsibilities for schools and academies.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Role/Responsibility</b>	<b>Powers</b>
Local Authority: Northumberland County Council	Northumberland County Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient good school places for the parents and children who live in Northumberland. They must ensure sensible place planning. They must hold maintained schools to account for their educational and financial performance (but not academies).	The Local Authority can hold consultations. Elected members of the Council Cabinet are the 'decision making' body and can merge, close, or extend age ranges of maintained schools (but not academies). They cannot establish solely run academy trusts but can be stakeholders.
Regional Schools Commissioner/ Department for Education	The RSC brokers the academy conversion of failing schools and through its Advisory Board, approves or declines requests of maintained schools to become converter academies. They hold Academy trusts to account for both their financial and educational performance	The RSC has powers to instruct the Local Authority to close (discontinue) schools. The RSC is the 'decision-making' body for any changes to Academies, including closure or age range extensions.
Academy Trusts (e.g. Berwick Academy; Bishop Bewick Trust	Academy Trusts are accountable for the financial and educational performance of the academy schools within its trust.	Trusts can carry out consultation on proposed changes including age range, but permission to make such changes is given by the RSC.
Governing Bodies of maintained schools (community/com munity; voluntary; foundation)	Accountable to the Local Authority for financial and educational performance.	Maintained schools have some powers to make changes to schools depending on the type of change; typically, the type of change and thresholds within which voluntary and foundation schools can make changes are more extensive than for community schools.
Dioceses	The Dioceses provides support and advice to their schools through consultation. They can hold consultations. They should be consulted and provide a strategic view on behalf of their schools. They hold their schools to account for their educational and financial performance.	The Diocese can provide capital investment for maintained faith schools. They can support or oppose closures or changes and have the right to appeal decisions made by the Local Authority with regard to changes to maintained schools to the Schools Adjudicator. They can establish multi-academy trusts.

# BACKGROUND

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 Schools.

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.

While the educational standards achieved by many of the schools and academies in the Berwick Partnership are good, the medium to long-term future of schools in the area remains uncertain due to a number of factors beyond the direct control of Northumberland County Council.

It has been well-publicised during Phase 1 Consultation that the Council has committed £39.9m towards the replacement and refurbishment of school buildings in the Berwick Partnership. The reason for carrying out Phase 1 Consultation and Phase 2 Consultation on the structure of schools in the Berwick area is to ensure that this investment is made in a school structure that can deliver consistently good outcomes for all children and young people within a viable and sustainable educational pathway, now and for the future generations to come. These objectives are articulated in the 'Vision for Change for Berwick Partnership', agreed by the schools and academies in the partnership as follows:

#### **'Vision for Change for Berwick Partnership'**

- **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 **best value for NCC capital Investment** as well as any wider investment opportunities that may arise.



As for Phase 1 Consultation, while everyone's view is welcome in this next phase and will form part of the overall feedback to the 'decision-makers', again it is not a referendum and any decision about the structure of schools will be based on the quality of the educational rationale rather than 'votes' for one system or another.

The factors facing schools in the Berwick Partnership highlighted during Phase 1 Consultation remain the same:-

### External Factors

- The need to ensure investment in school buildings in the Berwick Partnership;
- The need to provide appropriate specialist provision for a growing number of children and young people living in the Berwick area with Special Educational Needs as close their home communities as possible;
- The need to reduce the over-provision of school places in the light of falling school rolls to support viable and sustainable schools in the Berwick area for decades to come.

### Opportunities

- Investment of millions of pounds into school buildings in the partnership;
- Opportunity for all parties who have an interest in education in the Berwick area to shape a school system that will be in place for decades to come;
- Opportunity for a wide-ranging view of education to be taken that includes mainstream, specialist and Post-16 and Post-18 provision;
- Opportunity for alternative proposals for school organisation to be put forward and considered.



# SCHOOL CAPACITY, SURPLUS PLACES AND FALLING NUMBERS

The 'capacity' of a school building is based on a calculation that works out the appropriate number of pupils that can be educated within it. The calculation is slightly different depending on whether a school is a primary or secondary school, as pupils of different ages have differing educational and space requirements. For middle schools in Northumberland which are 'deemed secondary', their capacities are worked out from a mixture of primary and secondary needs.

The number of 'Surplus places' in a school is the difference between the number of children on the school roll and its capacity – e.g. a first school with a capacity for 150 pupils which has 135 pupils on roll has 15 surplus places, or about 10% spare capacity. A small amount of capacity in a school is a good thing as the school will generally be viable and sustainable, as it allows for some fluctuation over the school year if some children leave and some joining without impacting the school staffing or finance arrangements. It also allows for some parental preference with regard to school choice.

However, the number of pupils being born in the Berwick Partnership has been falling for a number of years and according to the latest data available to the Council, this is set to continue for the foreseeable future.

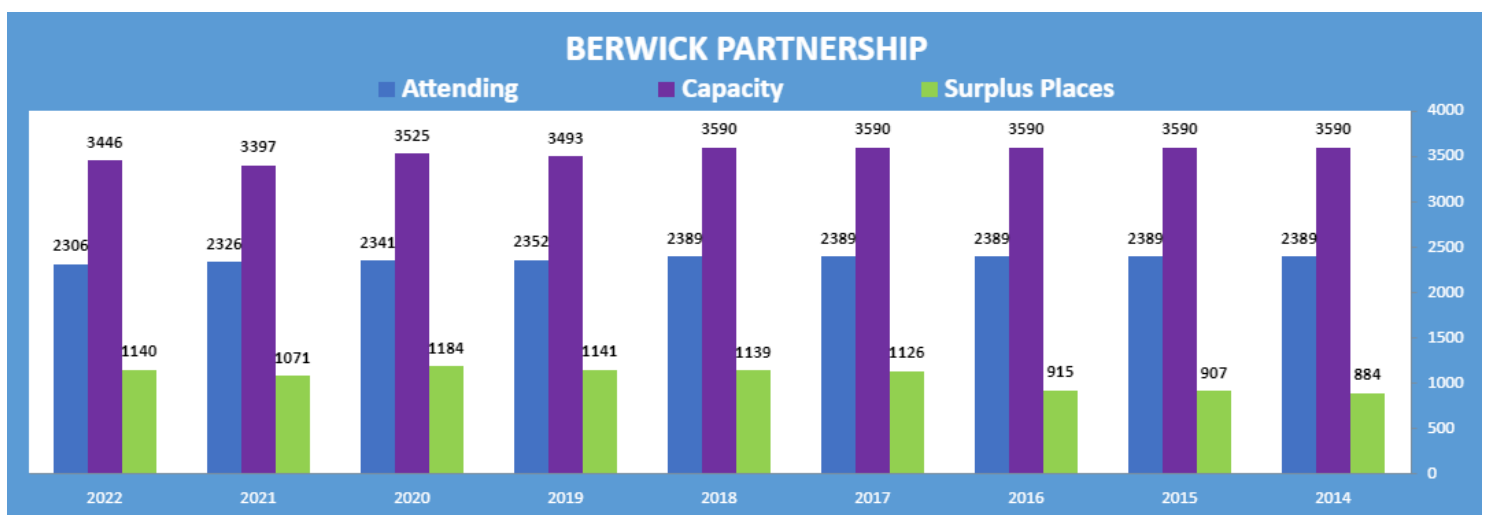
At first school level, there are currently 1,435 places in the Berwick Partnership. As at October 2022, there are 950 pupils on roll in these schools. This means there are currently 485 unfilled places in these schools. This is the equivalent number of places that would fill 3 schools the same size as Belford, Holy Trinity and Wooler First Schools. In last year's cohort, there were 978 pupils on roll in Berwick first schools and in the previous year there were 1,058, demonstrating the yearly decline in numbers.

Excessive surplus places due to falling pupil numbers can be seen as beneficial for parents, as they are more than likely to secure a place for their child in the school of their choice, whether it is their local catchment school or another school. However, this is a short-term benefit as schools begin competing with each other to attract pupils from a reducing pool of pupils year on year and all schools' finances are affected. Some schools

gain pupils from outside of their own catchment area which supports their own viability, while other schools that are less popular at a given point in time with parents have their finances severely impacted.

Without intervention to better match schools with their populations, this situation could result in schools competing for pupils, with the potential for some schools closing that have larger pupil populations than the surviving schools, resulting in longer journeys to schools.

The following graph shows the total number of pupils attending schools in the Berwick Partnership (blue bar), the total number of places available in schools (purple bar) and the number of those places that are unfilled (green bar).



As can be seen, there has been an upward trend in the number of surplus places since 2014 and this trend will continue as the number of pupils living in the Berwick area continues to fall.

The location of schools in rural areas is also particularly important, as there is a limit to the length of journey that is acceptable for children in these areas to undertake daily. This inevitably means that in rural areas of Northumberland, there has to be an acceptance there will always be a level of surplus places in certain rural schools, providing they are able to remain viable.

Linked to this, the distance travelled by pupils daily to school is a key factor in their educational experience. It is an objective of the Council that children and young people of statutory school age have access to good schools as close to their home communities as possible.

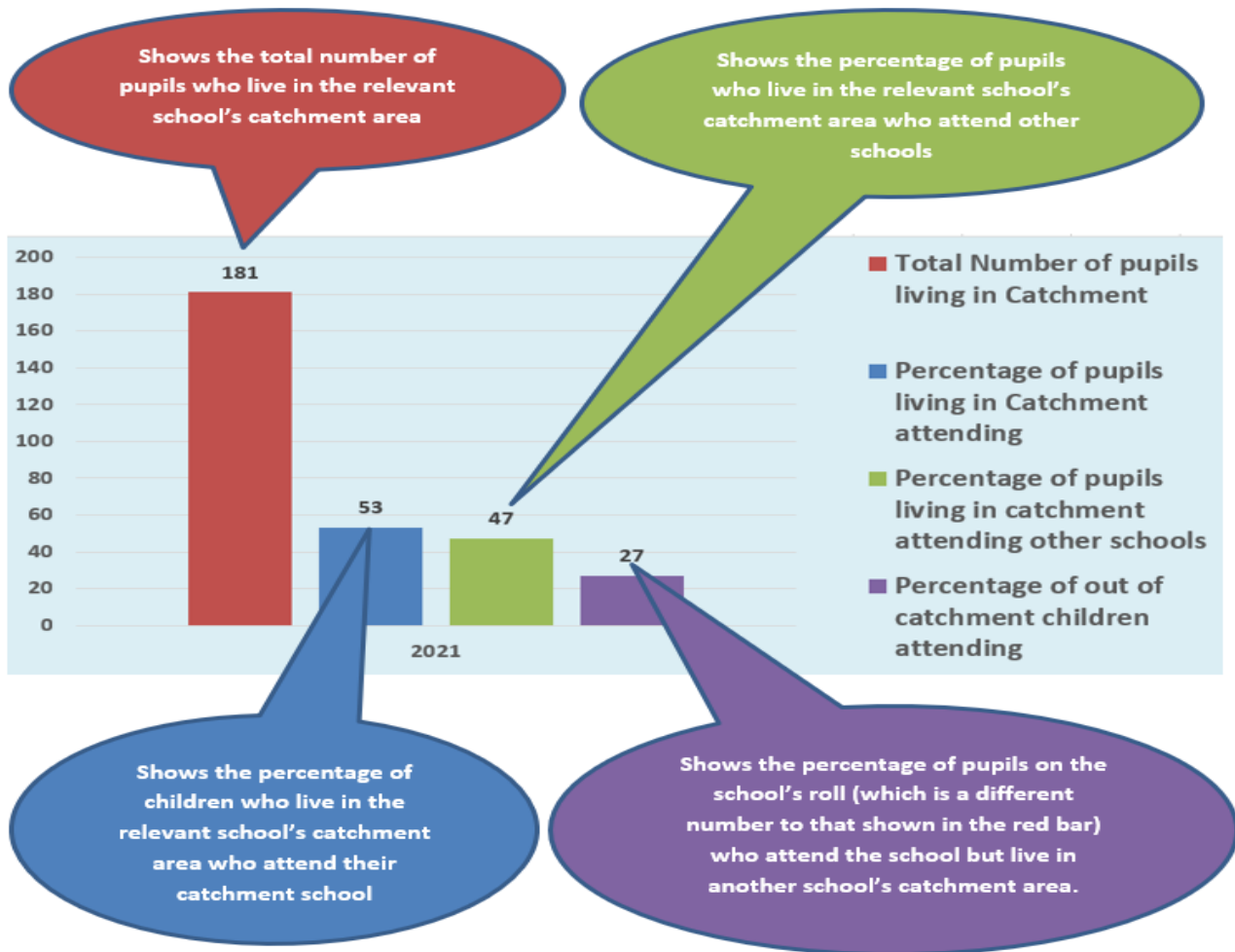
At the same time, the Council is committed to reducing the carbon footprint of residents and businesses across the county through the implementation of its Climate Change Action Plan 2021-23. Reducing unnecessary car journeys, including the daily transportation of pupils passing local schools to schools outside of their home communities, is a key plank of this strategy and is supported by the Council's School Organisation Plan 2021-24.

The following graphs show the pattern of pupils attending schools in the Berwick Partnership for each of the last 5 years. These show the number of children that live in the school's catchment area (as at January 2022), the percentage of children who attend their own catchment school and the percentage of the school's catchment children who attend other schools. It also shows as a percentage how many children who are on the school's roll actually live in other school's catchment areas.<sup>1</sup>

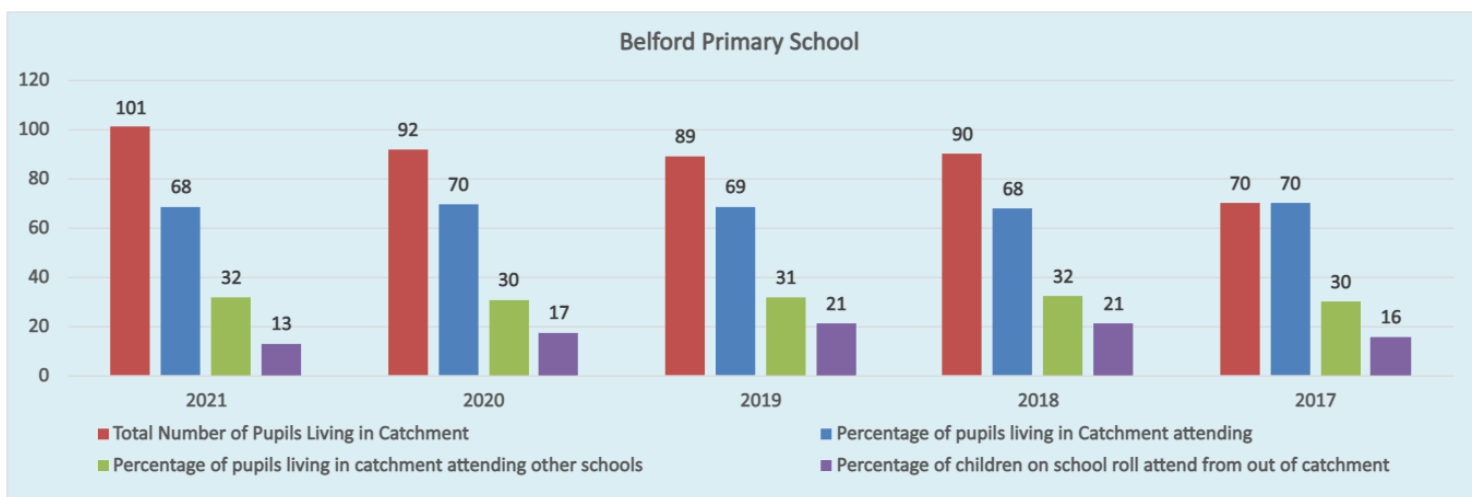
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<sup>1</sup> Note that St Cuthbert's RC First School does not have an allocated catchment area, therefore all pupils who attend reside in other school's catchment areas.

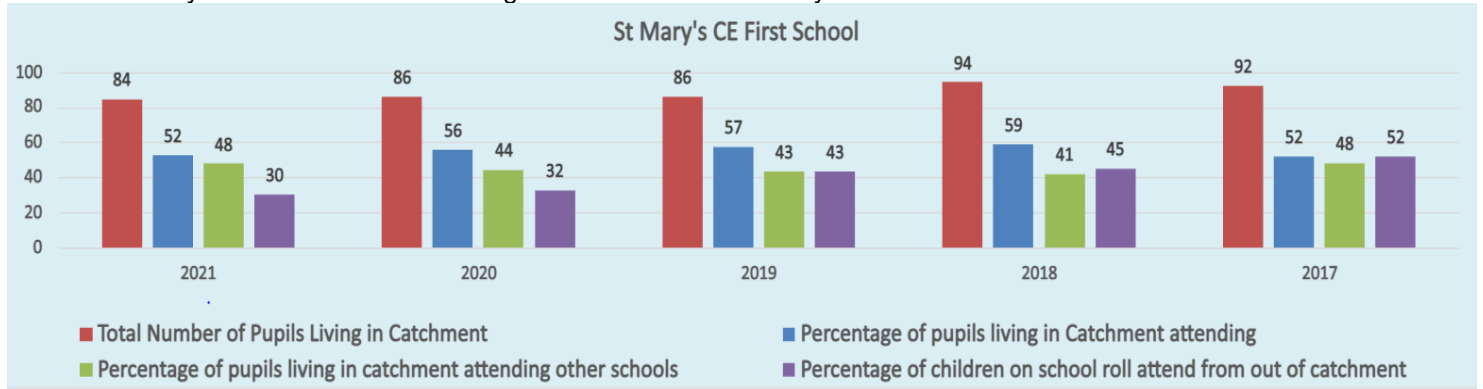
Key For Graphs:



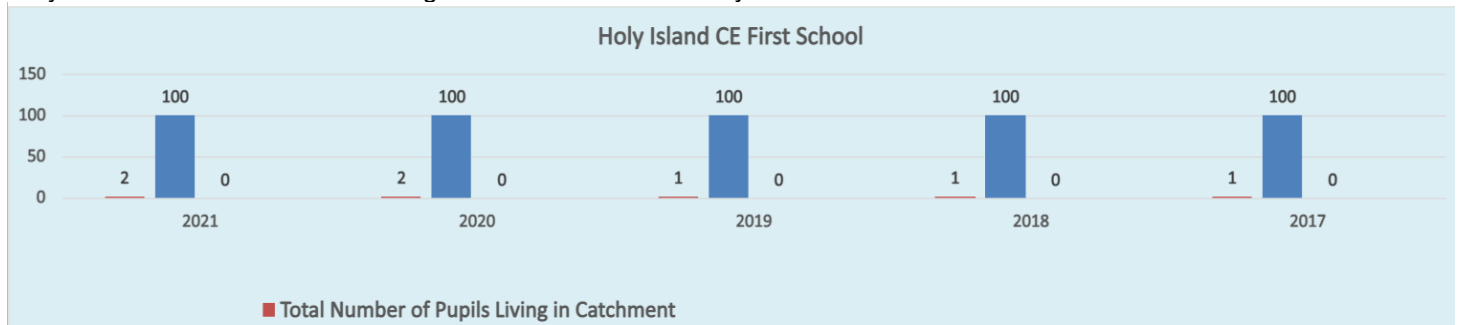
Belford Primary School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



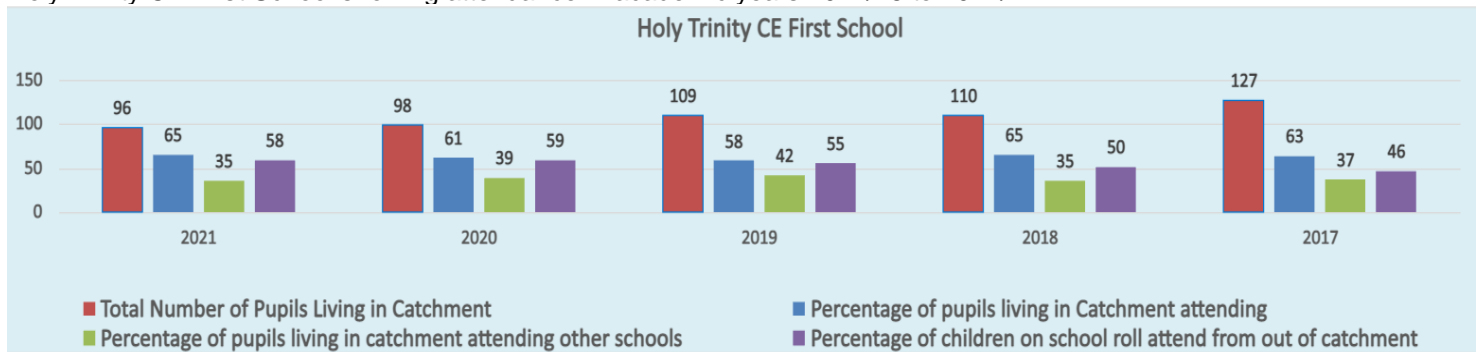
Berwick St Mary's CE First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



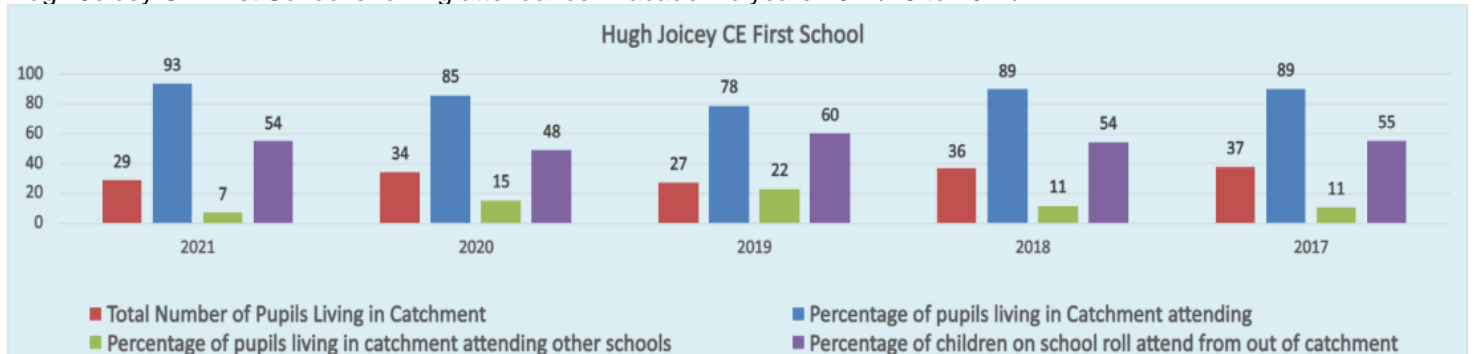
Holy Island CE First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



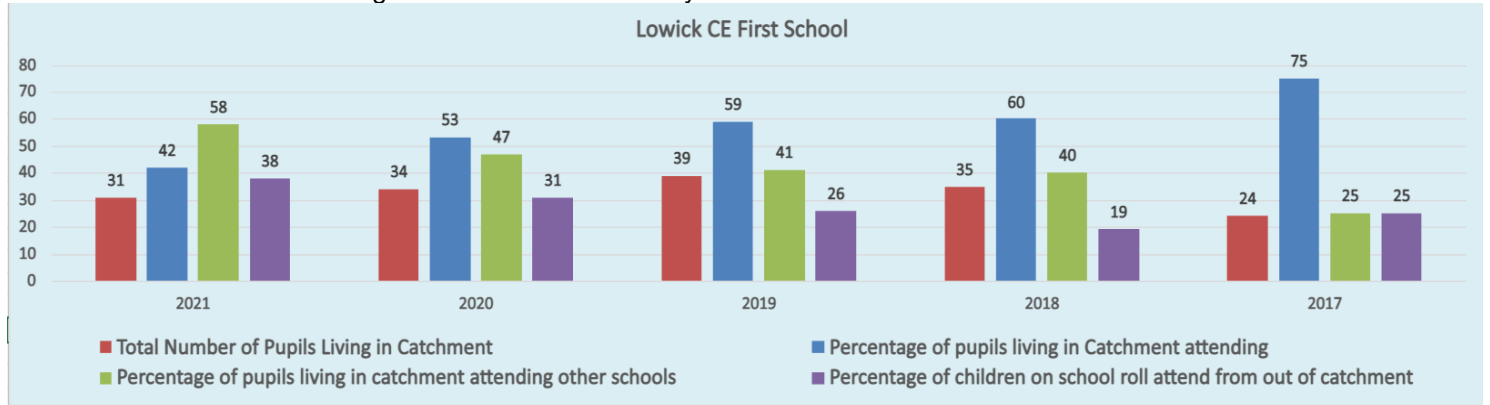
Holy Trinity CE First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



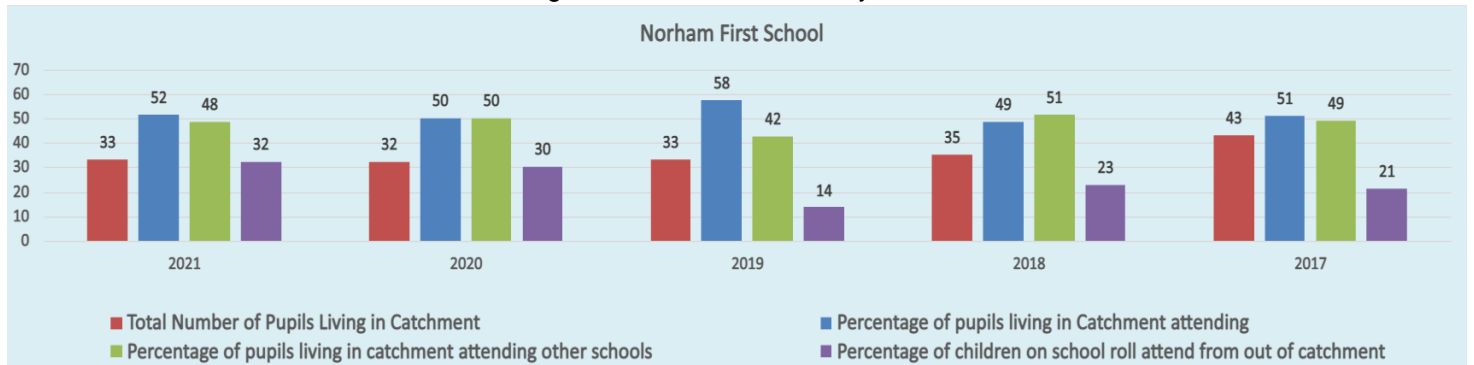
Hugh Joicey CE First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



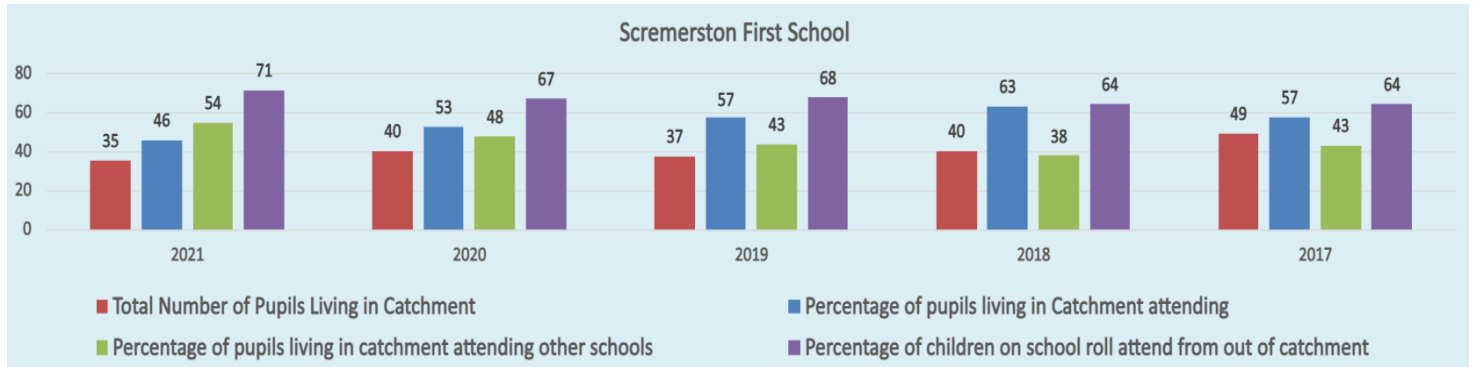
Lowick CE First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



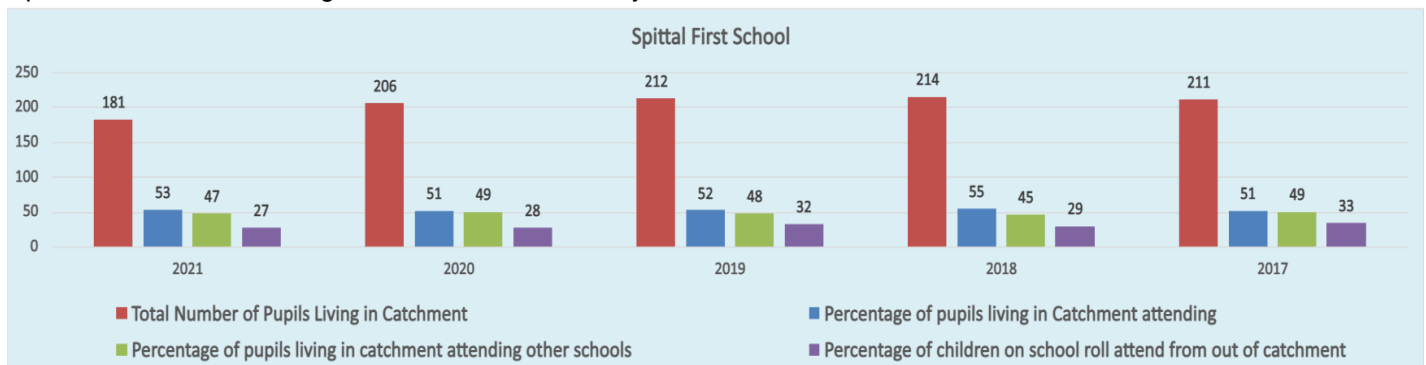
Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



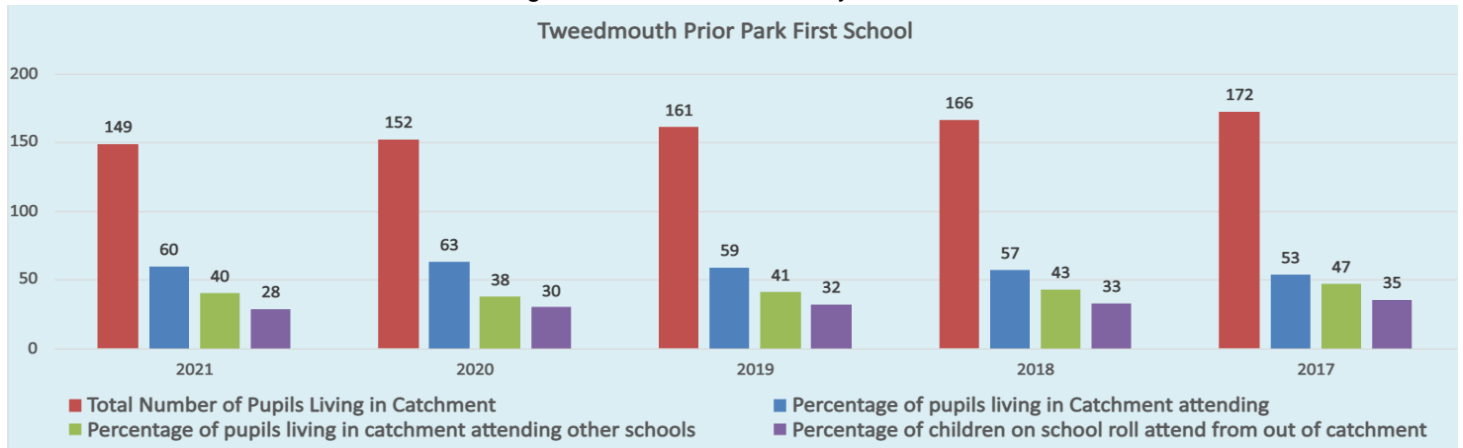
Scremerston First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



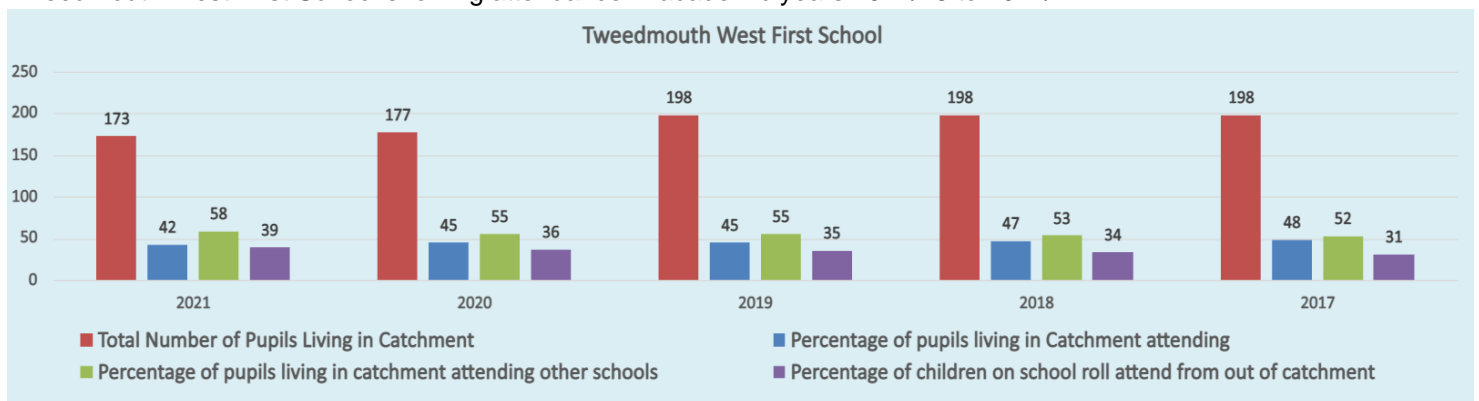
Spittal First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



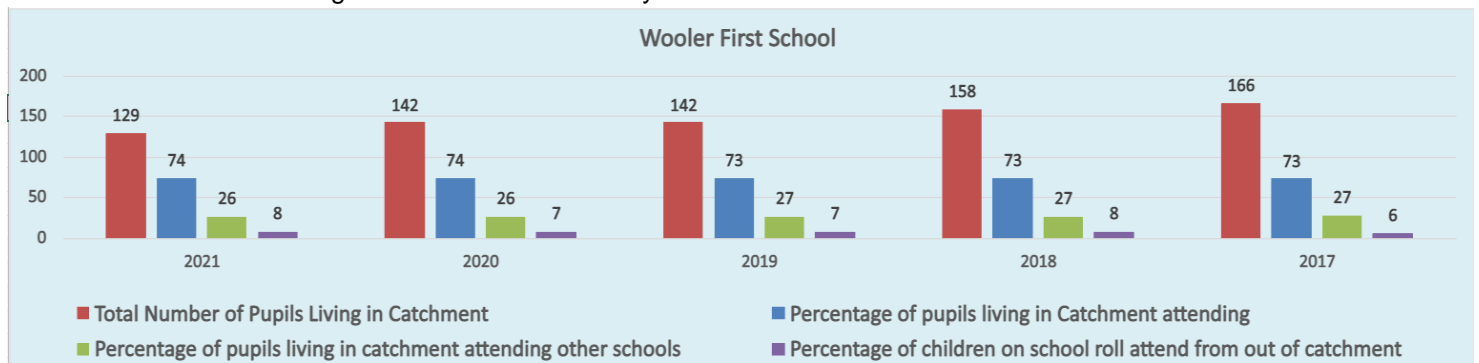
Tweedmouth Prior Park First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



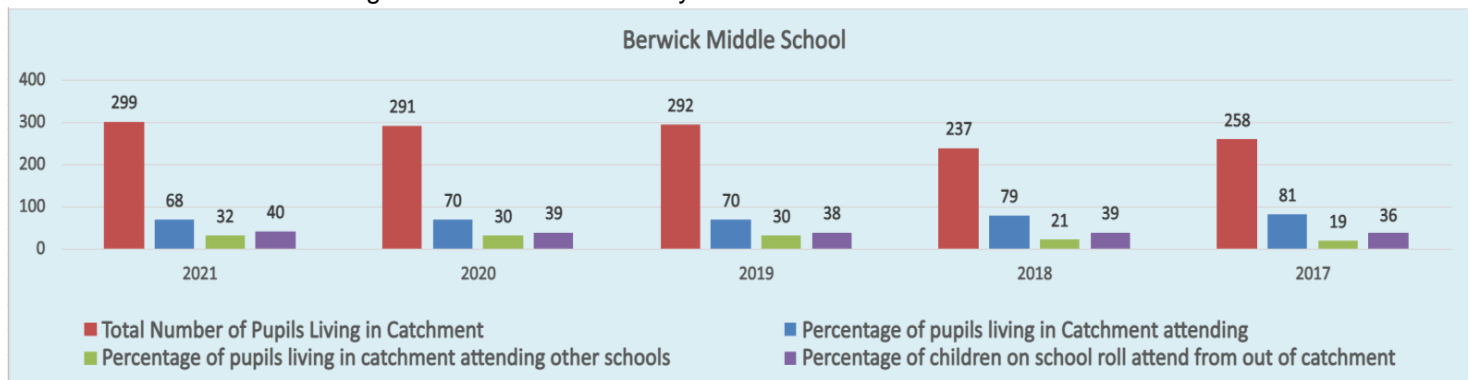
Tweedmouth West First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



Wooler First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22

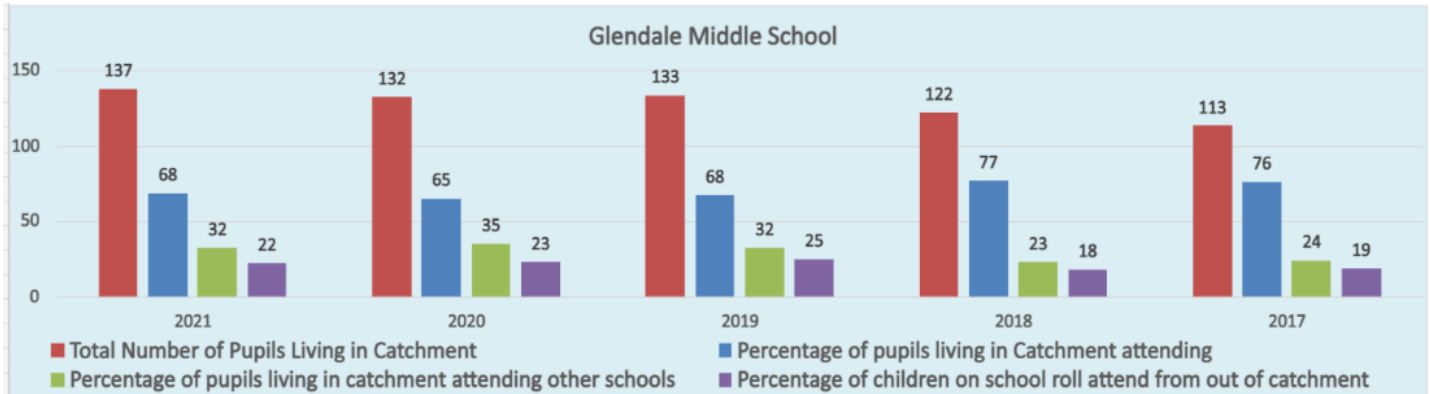


Berwick Middle School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22

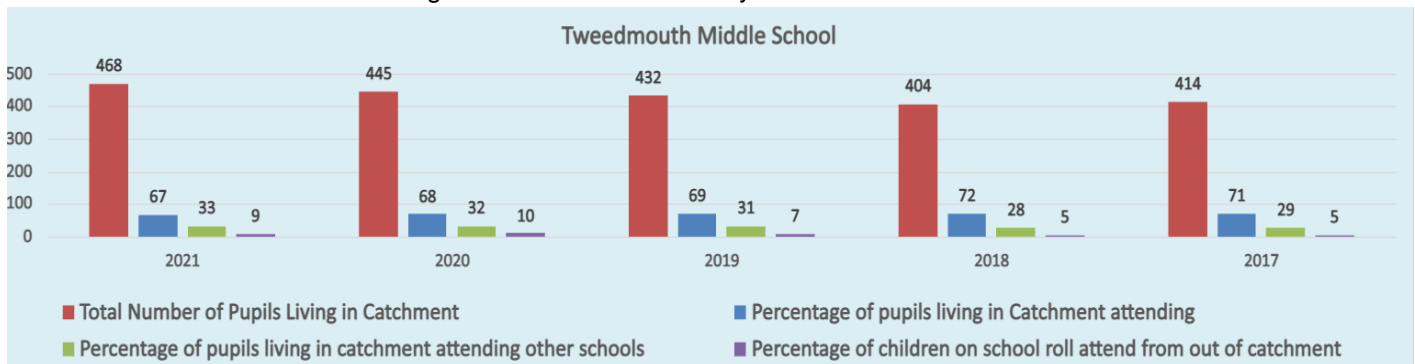




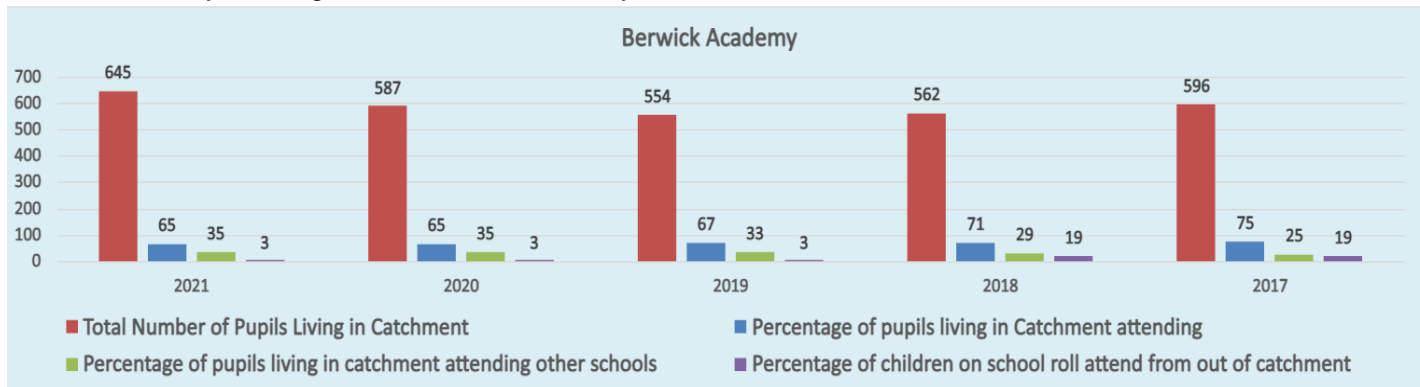
Glendale Middle School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



Tweedmouth Middle School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



Berwick Academy showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



# EDUCATION OUTCOMES

All parents want their children to have the best opportunity to achieve to the best of their ability when they are at school. This desire is shared by the Council for every pupil within Northumberland, with the additional objective that we want pupils to be able to access a good education within or as close to their home community as possible.

As we stated in Phase 1 consultation, achievement can cover a number of different factors that measure the quality of a pupil's educational experience, with academic achievement being just one. Whichever model of school structure is finally approved for the Berwick Partnership, it would need to demonstrate that it has the potential to not just improve academic achievement, but the whole educational experience of pupils throughout their educational journey.

Educational outcomes were included in Phase 1 consultation in the Summer Term, but as the outcomes for 2022 of the tests and examinations that pupils sat in the Summer Term for 2022 are not yet available, they are repeated here again for your 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 as results from summer 2022 will not be available until this coming December.

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 were provided in the Phase 1 Consultation and they are repeated here again for your information, together with the Northumberland and England averages that year.

***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 the previous table, 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 the following table – we are expecting the verified outcomes from Summer 2022 in late Autumn. However, the DfE has stated that the Covid pandemic has had an uneven impact on 2021/22 performance data and therefore when the data is made available, it is not recommended to make direct comparisons of a school’s outcome data

for this year with results from previous years (such as 2019) when examination conditions were the same. In the same way, it is not recommended to make comparisons of a school's 2022 GCSE data with that of other schools.

In Phase 1 consultation, we also reported that the DfE had stated that the GCSE results from 2020 and 2021 could not be meaningfully compared to previous years' results as a way of measuring pupil performance due to the way they were assessed and awarded in those years.

However, the key measures of pupil performance at GCSE in 2019, 2020 and 2021 for Berwick Academy were included in Phase 1 Consultation and so they are included here again in the following table for information purposes. For the reasons explained it is not possible to produce a Northumberland or England average.

## 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>	-0.55	-0.26	Not available, but expected to make progress on 2020 results
	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>	47%	62%	63%
	Northumberland Average	65%	N/A	N/A
	England Average	65%	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>	21%	35%	36%
	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>	38.9	43.8	41.8
	Northumberland average	46.5	N/A	N/A
	England average	46.7	N/A	N/A

## 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 the following table for information.

### '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.**

# FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

There are 16 local authority-maintained schools in the Berwick Partnership (including The Grove Special School) and 2 academies.

Currently 1 school is forecast to be in budget deficit at the end of the 2023/24 academic year, 4 schools are forecast to be in budget deficit by the end of 2024/25 and 8 schools forecast to be in deficit by 2025/26<sup>2</sup>. Therefore by 2025/26, there is predicted to be a deficit of circa £839,000 across the partnership, not including academies (the Council does not hold the financial responsibility for academies and therefore Berwick Academy and St Cuthbert's Catholic First School forecasts are not included in this information).

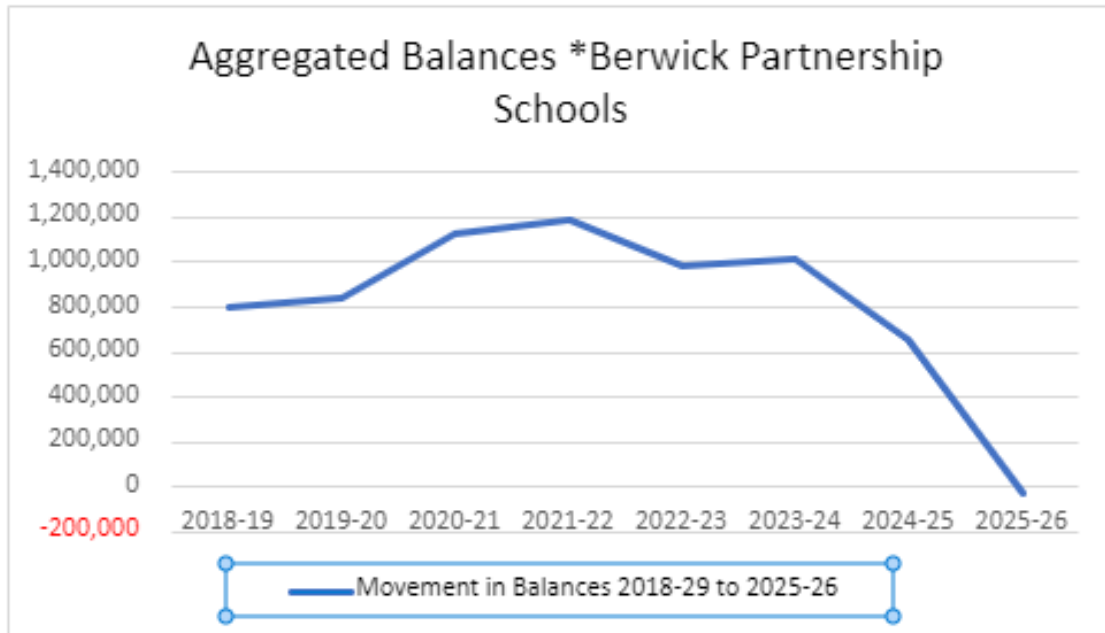
Furthermore, these forecasts do not take into account the impact on school budgets of the forthcoming planned salary increases for school staff, while there is also evidence that some schools have over-predicted the number of pupils they would have on roll when forecasting their future budget position. This may impact some schools currently forecasting deficits even more negatively, while some schools currently not predicting deficits may in fact end up in deficit within the 3-year forecasting period.

The following charts shows the current forecast predictions for the Berwick Partnership overall, at first/primary school phase and at middle school phase, bearing in mind that they do not include the financial positions of the two academies in the partnership:

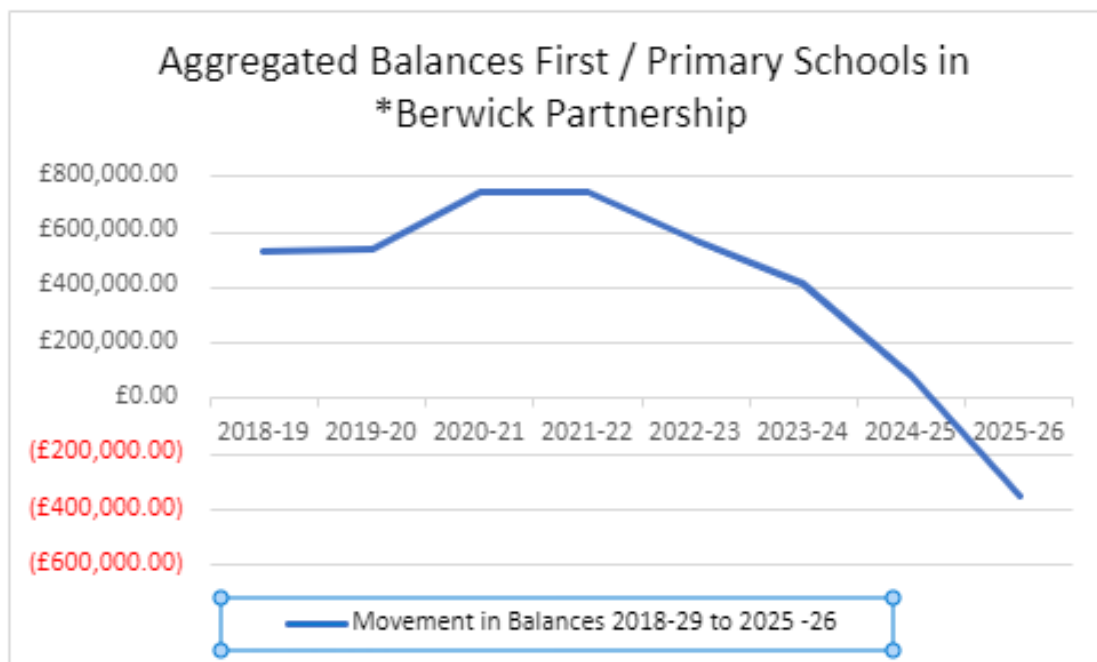
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<sup>2</sup> The Grove Special School is not included in these financial forecasts as specialist provision is funded differently compared to mainstream schools

**Berwick Partnership - current Total Predicted budget position by 2025-26**

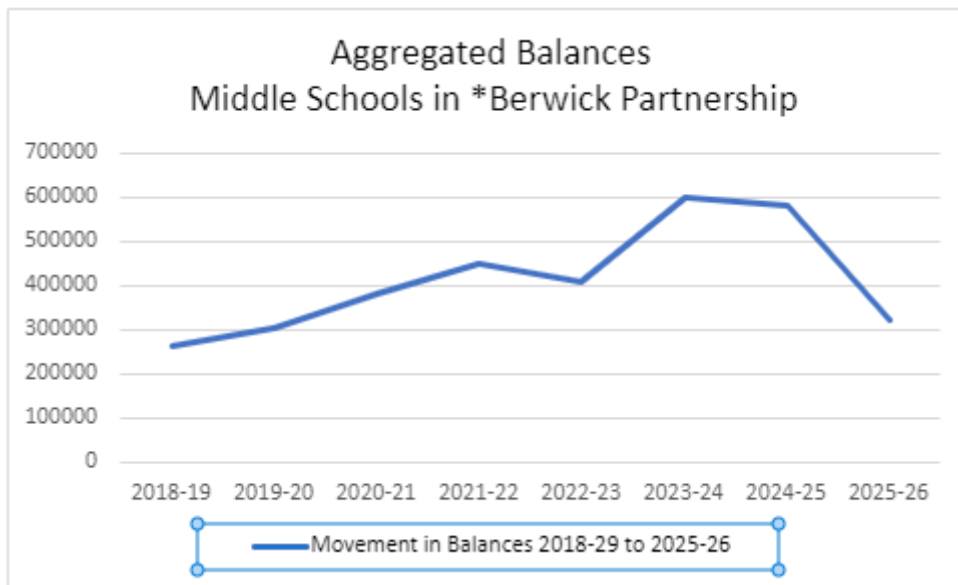


**First/Primary schools in Berwick Partnership - current Total Predicted budget position by 2025-26**





**Middle schools in Berwick Partnership - current Total Predicted budget position by 2025-26**



# POTENTIAL MODELS

## Model A (Revised 3-tier System of Schools in Berwick)

In this model Berwick Academy would remain as 13 to 18 high school but with a reduced PAN of 180 (6 Forms of Entry).

Berwick Middle and Tweedmouth Middle Schools would operate as they do currently on their existing sites, within their existing capacity. It is proposed that Glendale Middle School, within this model, would close and pupils in Years 7 and 8 would transfer to Duchess High School in Alnwick.

Under this model it is proposed that three first schools would either close or amalgamate.

Belford Primary – The school is already a primary school; the proposal under this model is that it moves into the Alnwick Partnership. As part of the move, the catchment area for Belford Primary would be reduced.

Berwick St Mary's CE First – The school would remain a first school on its current site but would have a reduced PAN of 15 (0.5 Form of Entry). It is also proposed that on-site specialist SEN provision would be created at the school.

Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First – The proposal is that the school would close, and its catchment area would be split between Tweedmouth Prior Park, Tweedmouth West First and Hugh Joicey CE First.

Scremerston First – The proposal is that the school would close, and its catchment area split between Tweedmouth Prior Park First, Tweedmouth West First and Spittal First Schools.

Spittal First - The school would remain a first school on its current site but would have a reduced PAN of 30 (1 Form of Entry).

Tweedmouth Prior Park First – The school would amalgamate with Tweedmouth West First School on the Tweedmouth Prior Park site. The school would take on Tweedmouth West’s DfE number and URN.

Tweedmouth West First – The school would amalgamate with Tweedmouth Prior Park First school on the Tweedmouth Prior Park site. The school would retain its DfE number and URN.

Wooler First – The proposal is the school would change its age range and become a primary school on its current site and become part of the Alnwick Partnership. If approved the greater catchment area for Alnwick would be expanded.

The following table for Model A, provides further detail

**Model A – Revised 3-tier system of schools in Berwick**

School	Current Situation				Possible Model			
	No. on Roll in Sept. 2022 *	Forms of Entry (FE)	Planned Admission Number (PAN)	Latest Ofsted	Capacity	Forms of Entry (FE)	Planned Admission Number (PAN)	Distance in miles to nearest school
Belford Primary	84	1	30	Good	Moves into Alnwick Partnership and catchment area reduced			
					187	1	30	8.5
Berwick St Mary's CE First	64	1	30	Good	Reduces PAN and opens on-site specialist SEN provision			
					75	0.5	15	0.9m
Holy Island CE First	3	0.2	5	Outstanding	25	0.2	5	8.4m
Holy Trinity CE First	141	1	30	Good	150	1	30	0.9m
Hugh Joicey CE First	47	0.5	15	Good	73	0.5	15	4.8m
Lowick CE First	16	0.3	10	Good	50	0.3	10	4.8m
Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First	28	0.3	10	Outstanding	Closes and catchment split between amalgamated Tweedmouth West/Tweedmouth Prior Park and Hugh Joicey First Schools			7.5
Scremerston First	54	0.6	18	Good	Closes and catchment split between amalgamated Tweedmouth West/Tweedmouth Prior Park and Spittal First Schools			1.7
Spittal First	122	1.3	40	Good	Reduces PAN			
					171	1	30	1.1
St Cuthbert's Catholic First	72	0.5	15	n/a	75	0.5	15	n/a
Tweedmouth Prior Park First	114	1	30	Requires Improvement	School amalgamates with Tweedmouth West First School on Tweedmouth Prior Park site and retains Tweedmouth West First School's DfE Number and URN			
Tweedmouth West First	114	1	30	Good				
					300	2	60	1.1
Wooler First	91	1	30	Good	Converts to become a primary and moves into Alnwick Partnership			
					210	1	30	8.7
Berwick Middle	338	3.8	114	Good	Opens on-site specialist SEN provision			
					456	3.8	114	
Glendale Middle	104	1.4	42	Good	School Closes			
Tweedmouth Middle	362	3.1	93	Good	440	3.1	93	
Berwick Academy	552	7.5	225	Requires Improvement	Reduces PAN and opens on-site specialist SEN provision			
					740	6	180	

**\*Note number on roll is an estimate as October Census not yet available**

## Model B (2-tier (Primary/Secondary System) of Schools in Berwick)

In this model Berwick Academy would change its age range to become an 11-18 secondary school but with a reduced PAN of 180 (6 Forms of Entry).

The three middle schools (Berwick Middle, Tweedmouth Middle and Glendale Middle Schools) in the partnership would close on 31 August 2026. Children in Years 7 and 8 would be educated at Berwick Academy and children in Years 5 and 6 educated in the new primary schools.

Under this model it is proposed that the 11 first schools (Berwick St Mary's CE, Holy Trinity CE, Holy Island CE, Hugh Joicey CE, Lowick CE, Norham St Ceolwulf's CE, Spittal, Tweedmouth Prior Park, Tweedmouth West and Wooler) change their age range to become primary schools. One first school (Scremerston First) could close.

Belford Primary – The school is already a primary school, and the proposal is that it remains a primary school and moves into the Alwick Partnership. As part of the move the catchment area for Belford Primary would be reduced.

Berwick St Mary's CE First – The school would become a primary school on its current site but would have a reduced PAN of 15 (0.5 Form of Entry). It is also proposed that on-site specialist SEN provision would be created at the school.

Scremerston First – The proposal is that the school would close, and its catchment area split between Tweedmouth Prior Park First, Tweedmouth West First and Spittal First Schools.

Spittal First - The school would become a primary school on its current site but would have a reduced PAN of 30 (1 Form of Entry).

Wooler First – The proposal is the school would change its age range and become a primary school on its current site and remain in the Berwick partnership.

The table, for Model B, provides further detail. As stated previously these are only proposals and are the subject of this consultation. We welcome your views and any alternative suggestions you might have.



**Model B – Proposed model for a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system of schools**

School	Current Situation				Possible Model			
	No. on Roll in Sept. 2022*	Forms of Entry (FE)	Planned Admission Number (PAN)	Latest Ofsted	Capacity	Forms of Entry (FE)	Planned Admission Number (PAN)	Distance in miles to nearest school
Belford Primary	84	1	30	Good	Moves into Alnwick Partnership and catchment area reduced			
					187	1	30	8.5
Berwick St Mary's CE First	64	1	30	Good	Becomes primary, reduces PAN			
					105	0.5	15	0.9m
Holy Island CE First	3	0.2	5	Outstanding	Becomes primary			
					35	0.2	5	8.4m
Holy Trinity CE First	141	1	30	Good	Becomes primary			
					210	1	30	0.9
Hugh Joicey CE First	47	0.5	15	Good	Becomes primary			
					105	0.5	15	4.8
Lowick CE First	16	0.3	10	Good	Becomes primary			
					70	0.3	10	4.8
Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First	28	0.3	10	Outstanding	Becomes primary			
					70	0.3	10	7.5
Scremerston First	54	0.6	18	Good	Closes and catchment split between Tweedmouth Prior Park and Spittal First Schools			
								1.7
Spittal First	122	1.3	40	Good	Becomes primary and reduces PAN			
					210	1	30	1.1
St Cuthbert's Catholic First	72	0.5	15	n/a	Becomes primary			
					75	0.5	15	n/a
Tweedmouth Prior Park First	114	1	30	Requires Improvement	Becomes primary			
					210	1	30	1.2m
Tweedmouth West First	114	1	30	Good	Becomes primary			
					210	1	30	1.1m
Wooler First	91	1	30	Good	Converts to become a primary and remains in the Berwick Partnership			
					210	1	30	8.7
Berwick Middle	338	3.8	114	Good	School Closes			
Glendale Middle	104	1.4	42	Good	School Closes			
Tweedmouth Middle	362	3.1	93	Good	School Closes			
Berwick Academy	552	7.5	225	Requires Improvement	1100	6	180	

\*Note number on roll is an estimate as October Census not yet available

# POTENTIAL TIMELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION



## Potential timeline for implementation of revisions to 3-tier Structure of Schools in Berwick Partnership and additional SEND Provision

### 1 September 2024

- Wooler First School extends its age range to become a primary school and retains pupils on roll in Year 4 on 31 August 2024 as they become Year 5;
- Glendale Middle School operates with Years 6, 7 and 8 only.
- Parents of pupils in Years 6 of Belford Primary and Years 6 at Glendale Middle School are able to apply for places in Year 7 at Alnwick The Duchess High School for 1 September 2025 as catchment students.
- Parents of pupils in Year 8 in Glendale apply as usual in Autumn 2024 for a place in Year 9 at Alnwick The Duchess High School for 1 September 2025 as catchment students (in-year applications), or to another school according to parental preference.
- Parents of pupils in Year 8 in Berwick and Tweedmouth Middle Schools apply as usual in Autumn 2024 for a place in Year 9 at Berwick Academy or another school according to parental preference for 1 September 2025.



### **31 August 2025**

- First schools approved for closure/amalgamation would close on 31 August 2025.
- Glendale Middle School would close on 31 August 2025.
- Pupils in Years 7 of Glendale Middle School on 31 August 2025 are guaranteed a place in Years 8 at Alnwick The Duchess High School for 1 September 2025 due to the discontinuance of Glendale Middle School from 31 August 2025.

### **1 September 2025**

- Pupils in Reception to Year 3 on 31 August 2025 in first schools approved for amalgamation/closure would transfer to their new catchment school or other school according to parental preference into Years 1, 2, 3 and 4 for 1 September 2025.
- Pupils in Year 4 on 31 August 2025 in first schools approved for amalgamation/closure would transfer into Year 5 as usual at their catchment middle school or other school according to parental preference for 1 September 2024.
- Wooler First retains pupils on roll in Year 5 on 31 August 2025 as they become Year 6 and its catchment area becomes part of the Alnwick Partnership;
- Pupils on roll in Glendale Middle School in Years 6, 7 and 8 on 31 August 2025 transfer to Alnwick The Duchess High School or other school according to parental preference as Years 7, 8 and 9. Alnwick The Duchess High School operates with bulge Years in Years 8 and 9 if necessary to accommodate the displaced pupils transferring from Glendale Middle School only.
- Pupils on roll in Year 8 at Berwick Middle and Tweedmouth Middle Schools on 31 August 2025 transfer as usual into Year 9 at Berwick Academy or another school according to parental preference.
- Alnwick The Duchess High School extends its catchment area to include Wooler Primary (as it would be) and Belford Primary Schools catchment areas – Belford's catchment would be slightly reduced.
- Berwick St Mary's CE First School, Berwick Middle School and Berwick Academy open their specialist provision for students with ASD, SEMH and SLCN.
- Berwick St Mary's CE and Spittal First Schools reduces their PANs (see model) for children joining in Reception.
- Berwick Academy reduces its PAN for students joining in Year 9 from 225 to 180.

## **Potential timeline for implementation of 2-tier Structure of Schools in Berwick Partnership and additional SEND Provision**

### **September 2024**

- No applications accepted for Reception places for September 2025 in first schools planned to close in August 2025;
- No applications accepted for Year 5 places for September 2025 in middle schools.

### **31 August 2025**

- First schools approved for closure/amalgamation would close on 31 August 2025.

### **1 September 2025**

- Pupils in Reception to Year 4 on 31 August 2025 in first schools approved for amalgamation/closure would transfer to their new catchment school or other school according to parental preference into Years 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 for 1 September 2025.
- First schools remaining open would extend their age ranges to become primary schools and retain pupils on roll in Year 4 on 31 August 2025 as they become Year 5;
- Pupils in Reception classes join their new primary schools, with Berwick St Mary's CE and Spittal Primary Schools reducing their PANs (see model).
- Middle schools operate with Years 6, 7 and 8 only.

### **31 August 2026**

- Glendale, Berwick and Tweedmouth Middle Schools close.

### **1 September 2026**

- Pupils on roll in middle schools in Years 6, 7 and 8 on 31 August 2026 transfer to Berwick Academy or other school according to parental preference as Years 7,8 and 9;
- Berwick Academy reduces its PAN from 225 to 180 for students joining in year 7;
- First schools would extend their age ranges to become primary schools and retain pupils on roll in Year 5 on 31 August 2025 as they become Year 6;
- Belford Primary School amended catchment area becomes part of the Alnwick Partnership.

- The Grove Special School transfers site to the former Tweedmouth Middle School and extends its provision to include places for SEMH students across all age groups.



# IMPACT OF PROPOSALS ON ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS INTO MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

## Changes to Admissions Arrangements if planned revisions to the 3-tier Structure of Schools in Berwick Partnership are implemented

### *Scremerston, Norham St Ceolwulf's CE, Tweedmouth Prior Park and Tweedmouth West First Schools*

Under the revised 3-tier proposal, Scremerston and Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First Schools would close and their catchment areas would be joined with the amalgamated catchments of Tweedmouth West and Tweedmouth Prior Park. The Tweedmouth West DfE number would continue to be used and it would become a 2-form Entry school (2 classes of 30 pupils per year group) on the Tweedmouth Prior Park site. The new Governing Body of the amalgamated schools may decide to change the name of the school.

As these changes are proposed to begin in September 2025, only two of the current year groups in these schools (Reception and Year 1) would still be in the first school phase when the new arrangements would begin and these would be Years 3 and 4 at that time. The current number of pupils on roll in these year groups at the 4 schools indicates they would all be able to be accommodated within Tweedmouth West, which would be a 2-form entry school from that date. The number of children that would be in the Year 1 and 2 classes at that point is currently unknown but given the falling pupil numbers in the area, it is assumed they would also be able to be accommodated in the school. Children who would join Reception in the larger Tweedmouth West in September 2025 would apply in the Autumn of 2024 as usual.

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

The Wooler Primary (as it would become) and Belford Primary Schools catchments and Transport Eligibility Areas would become part of the Alnwick Partnership from 1 September 2025.

Applications from students in Year 6 at Glendale Middle School and in Year 6 at Belford Primary School in Autumn 2024 would apply for places in Year 7 at Alnwick The Duchess High School for September 2025 and would be treated as catchment applications for places and transport where eligible.

To support the transition, students in Years 7 and 8 on roll at Glendale Middle School on 31 August 2025 would be guaranteed places in Years 7 and 9 at Alnwick The Duchess High School as it becomes their catchment school and would not have to apply for places. Parents of students who did not wish their child to take up a place in Year 8 or 9 at Alnwick The Duchess High School would need to apply for a place at another age-appropriate school.

#### *Berwick St Mary's CE and Spittal First Schools*

From 1 September 2025, the Planned Admission Number (PAN) of Berwick St Mary's CE First School would reduce from 30 to 15, while the PAN of Spittal First School would reduce from 40 to 30. This would impact the number of children joining their Reception class in that year.

#### *Other first schools and middle schools*

There would be no changes to the process for applications into Reception classes at the other first schools remaining open or into Year 5 at the middle schools remaining open in the Berwick Partnership for September 2025.

#### *Berwick Academy*

Subject to the agreement of the Berwick Academy Trustees and the subsequent approval of the Regional Schools Commissioner, the PAN of Berwick Academy would reduce from 225 to 180 for students joining Year 9 in September 2025.

## **Changes to Admissions Arrangements if 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure of schools in Berwick Partnership implemented**

### *Scremerston and Tweedmouth Prior Park First Schools*

Under the proposed 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure, Scremerston First School would close and pupils on roll at the school in Reception to Year 4 on 31 August 2025 would be allocated places at Tweedmouth Prior Park Primary (as it would be) in Years 1 to 5. The catchment area of Scremerston would be joined with that of Tweedmouth Prior Park Primary, save for a small area that would be allocated to Spittal Primary (as it would be) in a tidying up process.

As these changes are proposed to begin in September 2025, three of the current year groups in these schools (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2) would be impacted by the new arrangements and these would be Years 3, 4 and 5 at that time. The current number of pupils on roll in these year groups at the 2 schools indicates that Years 3 and 4 would be able to be easily accommodated within Tweedmouth Prior Park, but that the Year 5 year group may be a 'bulge' year with more than 30 pupils; this would be factored into the accommodation and staffing arrangements as they moved through the school. The number of children that would be in the Year 1 and 2 classes at that point is currently unknown but given the falling pupil numbers in the area, it is assumed they would also be able to be accommodated in the school. Children who would join Reception in the larger Tweedmouth Prior Park Primary in September 2025 would apply in the Autumn of 2024 as usual.

### *Berwick St Mary's CE and Spittal First Schools*

From 1 September 2025, the Planned Admission Number (PAN) of Berwick St Mary's CE First School would reduce from 30 to 15, while the PAN of Spittal First School would reduce from 40 to 30. This would impact the number of children joining their Reception class in that year.

### *Belford Primary School*

The Belford Primary School catchment and Transport Eligibility Area would become part of the Alnwick Partnership from 1 September 2026 and therefore applications from students in Year 6 at the school in Autumn 2025 for places in Year 7 at Alnwick The Duchess High

School in September 2026 would be treated as catchment applications for places and transport where eligible.

#### *Other first schools becoming Primaries*

There would be no changes to the process for applications into Reception classes at the other first schools in the Berwick Partnership as they become primary schools in September 2025.

#### *Berwick Academy*

Subject to the agreement of the Berwick Academy Trustees and the subsequent approval of the Regional Schools Commissioner, on 1 September 2026, Berwick Academy would have an intake of students into Year 7, 8 and 9, while in subsequent years admissions would be into Year 7 only. Students applying for places in Year 7 and Year 9 for September 2026 in Berwick Academy would apply through the Admissions Portal in Autumn 2025.

Students in Year 7 at the middle schools on 31 August 2026 would be guaranteed a place at Berwick Academy in Year 8 on 1 September 2026 as a result of the closure of the middle schools and would not need to apply for a place. However, if parents of students in this year group did not wish their child to take up a place at Berwick Academy in Year 8 in September 2026, they would need to apply for a Year 8 place for them at other schools.

The PAN of Berwick Academy would reduce from 225 to 180 for students joining Year 7 in September 2026 and in subsequent years.

# IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSED MODELS FOR STAFF



There would be implications for staff working in the schools in the Berwick Partnership under both proposed models of school organisation.

It is likely that as a result of the proposed closure and/or amalgamation of some schools in the Berwick Partnership under both models, there would be a number of staff placed at risk of redundancy.

In relation to the proposed 2-tier (primary/secondary) model, the continuing first schools becoming primary schools would need to redesign their curriculum and staffing structures to incorporate appropriate teaching and learning for pupils in Years 5 and 6, and this would be likely to include the recruitment of additional staff. Likewise, the Trustees of Berwick Academy would need to accommodate an additional two year groups at Years 7 and 8 and therefore would also need to redesign its staffing structures, with the likelihood that additional staff would be required.

In order to ensure that as many staff as possible would be retained within the Berwick Partnership if either a revised 3-tier structure or 2-tier structure is approved, Council HR Officers will work with schools and staff representatives (Trade Unions) during this consultation period to develop a 'Staffing Protocol' agreement that hopefully all schools and academies would sign up to. This protocol would ensure that staff at risk of



redundancy would be guaranteed interviews for any vacancies they choose to apply for that are identified within the Berwick schools over the transition period of the relevant model of organisation. This would ensure that the appointment process across the schools is fair for all staff and hopefully would retain staff within the Berwick system.

# IMPACT OF PROPOSALS ON SCHOOL CATCHMENT AND TRANSPORT ELIGIBILITY AREAS

Northumberland County Council holds the responsibility for setting and implementing the Home to School Transport Policy in the county. The Council therefore sets the Transport Eligibility Areas for every area of the county. The Council also sets the school catchment areas for community and voluntary controlled schools for managing admissions when places are oversubscribed, and these match their Transport Eligibility Areas.

The Governing Bodies of voluntary aided and foundation schools and academies set their own school catchment areas to manage admissions into their schools (although some academies do not have catchments and use distance from home to school as a criterion instead). Historically, in Northumberland the catchment areas of these types of school match the Council's Transport Eligibility Areas, but this is not always the case. For example, the Council does not have Transport Eligibility Areas at all for Roman Catholic schools or for some foundation schools and academies e.g. St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary in Berwick does not have a catchment area, but some pupils may meet the eligibility criteria to qualify for transport there on the basis of religious preference.

Within the proposals for both the revised 3-tier structure and for the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure for the Berwick Partnership, some school closures or amalgamations are proposed. If implemented, this would mean that the Council would need to amend the school catchment and Transport Eligibility Areas of the schools that would continue and this is indicated in the proposed Model A and Model B set out previously. Revised proposed catchment/Transport Eligibility Area maps will be displayed at all of the public events that will take place during the consultation period so that you can express your views on these as well as the proposals generally. The revised proposed catchment/Transport Eligibility Area maps will also be taken to each of the staff and Governing Body meetings that will take place throughout the consultation period.

## SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS



During Phase 1 consultation, we informed you of the increasing number of children and young people living in the Berwick area who are being diagnosed with primary special educational needs in Autism (ASD) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH). 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.

The increase in vulnerable students with these types of primary need is not limited to Berwick, but can also be seen across Northumberland and the country. 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.

The Council's forecasts for the number of students with ASD and SEMH needs were included in the Phase 1 document and are repeated below for your information:

*Forecast for number of pupils with ASD as a primary need living in Berwick area*

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

*Forecast for number of pupils with SEMH as a primary need living in Berwick area*

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

As for all forecasts, the data in the previous tables is an educated prediction of what could happen in the future and various factors could occur that mean the actual number varies from the forecast number. Also, not all students would need to attend a Special school. However, the forecasts clearly show the increasing numbers of children and young people with these primary years is set to continue.

The discussions that have taken place on the structure of schools in the Berwick Partnership over the last 28 months have also presented the opportunity to have a 'joined-up' approach to reviewing the current specialist provision within the area. Headteachers in the Berwick Partnership, including The Grove Special School have met in the last few months to discuss what, where and how provision could be put in place to address this

growing need. Council Officers and some schools have also had informal meetings with representatives from some groups who support children with special educational needs and their families to find out if they had any suggestions that could be consulted on with the wider community of the Berwick area.

The initial feedback received in relation to ideas for additional specialist provision are set out here. The potential models for specialist provision would need to work within either the current (revised) 3-tier system of school organisation or within a 2-tier(primary/secondary) structure and therefore 2 models have been put forward for you to consider and submit your views as part of this consultation as follows:

<b>Proposed Model of Specialist Provision in revised 3-tier structure</b>	<b>Proposed Model of Specialist Provision in 2-tier(primary/secondary) structure</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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);</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Grove Special School relocates to the site of Tweedmouth Middle School, increases its planned student numbers to 70 across all year groups and amends its SEND designation to include SEMH.</li> <li>• Shared site with Berwick Academy would enable opportunities for older students to access mainstream education and study for qualifications where appropriate.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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 pupils to access mainstream education where appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary phase – 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.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	

## POTENTIAL MODELS – POST-16 AND POST-18

In the same way as the consultation on school structure is providing a broader opportunity to review and improve special educational needs provision in the Berwick area, there is a desire to also consider how the investment in the partnership could provide opportunities to extend and improve Post-16 and Post-18 provision for students and the wider community with links to business, apprenticeships and further education.

The vision agreed by the schools in the Berwick Partnership and shared by Northumberland County Council (set out in the Background of this document) sets out the ambition for young people and the wider community to be able to gain the skills and/or qualifications to equip them for employment or further education and enable them to contribute positively to the local and wider community.

Discussions have already begun between Berwick Academy and Northumberland County Council to see how this vision can become a reality through the development of achievable plans linked to the capital investment in the Berwick Partnership, which will lead to young people being able to access the right vocational, academic or mix of studies that will equip them for the world of work. These discussions also include proposals on how this offer could be broadened and extended over time to the wider community to offer Post-18 skills, learning or qualifications, therefore creating a community learning hub.

Again, as part of this consultation we are seeking your views on what opportunities you would like to see being offered at Post-16 and Post-18 for young people and the wider community of the Berwick area.

# SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND ESTATES

As for many areas in the county, school buildings in Berwick Partnership are in need of significant capital investment.

£39.9m has been identified in the Council's Medium Term Plan and as already stated, a key element of the rationale for carrying out this consultation is to ensure that this investment is made in a school structure in the Berwick area that secures viable and sustainable schools for decades to come.

The Council's information on the combined backlog maintenance (capital works required to the fabric of school buildings) for schools in the Berwick Partnership amounts to approximately £7.2m. This figure does not include backlog maintenance for Berwick Academy and St Cuthbert's RC Catholic First School, since as they are funded by the Department for Education (DfE), requests for capital funding for maintenance are managed directly through them. However the Council is aware that Berwick Academy currently has approximately £10.9m backlog maintenance. The DfE also allocates around £7m to Northumberland County Council towards backlog maintenance for community and voluntary controlled schools and therefore the council has to operate a priority list for capital works, with school buildings that are in the greatest need of repair or maintenance at the top of the list.

If either of the models set out in this document were implemented, there would be a need to carry out some building works, especially in relation to Berwick Academy. While investment would be primarily to enable schools to operate within the revised 3-tier or reorganisation to 2-tier, it may provide opportunities to address some of the other maintenance issues within a school building, for instance if a school wished to 'piggy-back' on works being carried out at their school through the addition of their own maintenance funding. If any schools are approved to be closed or amalgamated, the future of the relevant school buildings would be reviewed for need. In general, buildings owned by the Council are assessed in the first instance to see whether it could be used by any other educational or social care service; it would then be assessed whether there was an opportunity for the building to be taken on by the community to provide a local service and so on.



Detailed buildings costs for each model will be worked up during this consultation process and presented to the Council together with the feedback from consultation. Your views on how any capital investment made available to Berwick Partnership should be invested are also welcomed as part of this consultation. Particularly how any investment in schools could also have a positive impact on the wider Berwick community, through enhanced community use.

## OTHER FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION



## EARLY YEARS

During Phase 1 Consultation we asked schools, parents, Council Officers in the Early Years team and other stakeholders for the views on the amount and quality of Early Years provision in the Berwick area.

Feedback indicated that while there is sufficient Early Years provision in the Berwick area, there may be some issues in relation to the viability of some Early Years Providers. As the issue of viability may be addressed through the implementation of the changes proposed as part of the revised 3-tier structure or a reorganisation to 2-tier (primary/secondary, no specific proposed changes to Early Years provision within the Berwick Area are being put forward as part of this consultation. However, in responding to consultation on the proposals, you may also wish to comment on Early Years provision if you believe there may be a positive or negative impact as a consequence of the implementation of either model.

## TRANSPORT

Eligibility for home to school transport for pupils in Northumberland is assessed in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.

In relation to journey length, some pupils on roll in schools proposed to close under either model would potentially have longer journeys to school, but all would be far below the DfE's suggested best practice of primary pupils undertaking journeys of no more than 45 minutes each way.

However, should the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure be implemented, pupils would stay in the primary schools (as they would become) for an additional 2 years and would therefore have shorter journeys to school for that period. As the middle schools in Berwick and Berwick Academy are within a short distance of each other, there would be a negligible impact on the length of journey pupils would have to take to Berwick Academy in Years 7 and 8.

As the area covered by the schools in the Berwick Partnership is one of the largest in Northumberland and mostly rural in nature, many pupils are eligible for home to school transport and therefore the costs are high. The current approximate total cost for transporting eligible pupils who live in the Berwick Partnership to school every day over an academic year (excluding pupils travelling to specialist provision) is just over £1m. This includes transporting pupils to schools in Scotland or other neighbouring partnerships such as Alnwick as a result of those schools being closer to the pupil's home address or on religious preference grounds. However, in relation to the impact of the revised 3-tier structure or the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure on home to school transport, there is likely to be very little difference in relation to cost.

## SPORT AND RECREATION

There would be no impact on the current sport and recreation facilities at the first schools proposed to continue under either the revised 3-tier or the 2-tier(primary/secondary) models. If any schools were approved to close or amalgamate, 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 would be hoped under these circumstances that there would be an opportunity for community groups to put forward proposals to take on playing fields for continuing use by the local community – any ideas or proposals in relation to the use of playing fields are welcomed as part of this consultation.

With the re-provision and enhancement of the buildings at Berwick Academy, there is an expectation that this will provide an opportunity for improved sport and recreation facilities at the site under either model and include wider use for the local community.



# HOW WILL VIEWS FROM CONSULTATION BE GATHERED?

## Alternative Proposals

While this consultation has presented Model A (Revised 3-tier system of schools in Berwick) and Model B (Proposed model for a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system of schools) you may have an alternative suggestion for addressing the issues set out in this document. If you have an alternative suggestion, please set this out in the questionnaire and response form that accompanies this document.

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

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

### Public Drop-in events

**Date: Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2023, 7.30 to 9.30 p.m.**

**Venue: Wooler First School, 15 Brewery Lane, Wooler, NE71 6QF**

**Date: Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023, 6.30 to 8.30 p.m.**

**Venue: Belford Primary School, West Street, Belford, NE70 7QD**

**Date: Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2023, 10.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m.**

**Venue: Berwick Academy, Adams Drive, Spittal, Berwick, TD15 2JF**

**Date: Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023, 6.30 to 8.30 p.m.**

**Venue: Berwick Berwick Middle School, Lovaine Terrace, Berwick, TD15 1LA**

*(please note change to venue from that previously advertised)*

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

There will also be separate meetings held in schools with staff working in schools in the Berwick Partnership and their representatives, and with Governing Bodies during the consultation period. Staff and Governors will be contacted directly with the date and time of these meetings.

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 15-week consultation (school weeks) on the proposals set out in this consultation document began on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022 **and will end at midnight on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2023.**

The Council is very keen to hear your views on the models of school organisation 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-consultation-phase-2/consultation/edit> (*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 Education in the 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**

## **What happens to feedback and next steps?**

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**

# Education in the Berwick Partnership - Phase 2 Consultation

## Overview

Welcome to Phase 2 Consultation on the future of schools in the Berwick Partnership.

During Phase 1 Consultation we asked parents, staff and the wider community in Berwick whether they believed a reorganised 3-tier structure (the current structure) or a reorganisation to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure would be better able to secure a viable, sustainable and successful education system across all phases from nursery to sixth form.

This Phase 2 Consultation sets out possible models of school organisation within both the current 3-tier system and within a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system. The consultation document sets out the issues facing schools in the Berwick Partnership and why there have to be changes to the way schools are organised in the area, including possible school closures, in whatever system it is decided to be in place.

Please note that while this consultation is not a referendum, all views submitted will be carefully considered by the Council's Cabinet before deciding on next steps.

## You

### 1 What is your name? (Optional)

Name

### 2 What is your email address? (Optional)

Email

### 3 What is your postcode?

Post Code (eg. TD15 2JF) *(Required)*



4 In what capacity are you responding to the consultation?

Please select option from the dropdown list **(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 Glendale 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 Caelwulf's 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 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 Caelwulf's 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 Glendale 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 Caelwulf's 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 The Grove
- Student/Pupil of Berwick Academy
- Student/Pupil of Berwick Middle
- Student/Pupil of Gendale Middle
- Student/Pupil of Tweedmouth Middle
- Student/Pupil of Belford Primary
- Student/Pupil of Holy Trinity CE First
- Student/Pupil of Hugh Jolroy CE First
- Student/Pupil of Lowick
- Student/Pupil of Holy Island First
- Student/Pupil of Norham St Cuthbert's CE First
- Student/Pupil of Scremerston First
- Student/Pupil of Spital 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 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 Bowden Parish Council
- Councillor of Brampton Parish Council
- Councillor of Chalton 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 Kylee 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
- Resident/member of the community living in the Wooler/Glendale catchment area
- Resident/member of the community living in the Belford catchment area

- Representative of a Group or Forum e.g. – please state  
 Other – please state

5 If you selected 'Representative of a Group or Forum' or 'Other' above, please state

Please state

#### Consultation Document

6 Copy of Consultation Document

More information



#### Consultation Questions

7 Having read the consultation document thoroughly, I believe that the revised 3-tier structure (Model A) represents the best option for securing sustainable and viable education across the Berwick Partnership of schools and for achieving the objectives of the 'Vision for Berwick' (refer to page 5 of Consultation Document). This model includes the following proposals: • Closure of Scremerston First School • Closure of Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First School • Amalgamation of Tweedmouth West and Tweedmouth Prior Park First Schools • Closure of Glendale Middle School

Please select option (Required)  
Please select only one item

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't Know

**8** Please give the reasons for your answer below or state 'None'.

Comment (Required)

**9** If you answered 'Yes' to Q.6, but you believe there are changes to some aspects of the Model, such as the proposals for certain schools or changes that would improve it, please outline them below

Please outline changes here or state 'None'. (Required)

**10** As part of the proposal for a revised 3-tier structure, I support the extension of the age range of Wooler First School to become a primary and for the Wooler and Belford Primaries to join the Alnwick Partnership, with pupils feeding to Alnwick The Duchess High School.

Please select option (Required)

Please select only one item

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't Know

**11** Please give the reasons for your answer or state 'None'.

Comment (Required)

**12** As part of the proposal for a revised 3-tier structure, I support the proposed changes to school catchment areas arising from the closure of Scremerston and Norham St Ceolwulf's First Schools, the amalgamation of Tweedmouth West and Tweedmouth Prior Park First Schools, and the move of Belford Primary to the Alnwick Partnership.

Please select option (Required)

Please select only one item

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't Know

**13** Please give the reasons for your answer or state 'None'.

Comment (Required)

**14** Having read the consultation document thoroughly, I believe that the reorganisation of the Berwick Partnership to a 2-tier(primary/secondary) structure represents the best option for securing sustainable and viable education across the Berwick Partnership of schools and for achieving the objectives of the 'Vision for Berwick' (refer to page 5 of Consultation Document). This model includes the following proposals: • Closure of Scremerston First School • Closure of Glendale Middle School • Closure of Berwick Middle School • Closure of Tweedmouth Middle School

Please select option *(Required)*

Please select only one item

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't Know

**15** Please give the reasons for your answer or state 'None'.

Comment *(Required)*

**16** If you answered 'Yes' to Q.13, but you believe there are changes to some aspects of the Model, such as the proposals for certain schools or changes that would improve it, please outline them below:

Please outline changes here or state 'None'.

**17** As part of the proposal for a 2-tier (primary/secondary structure), I support the inclusion of Belford Primary in the Alnwick Partnership, with pupils feeding to Alnwick The Duchess High School.

Please select option *(Required)*

Please select only one item

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't Know

**18** Please give the reasons for your answer or state 'None'.

Comment *(Required)*

**19** As part of the proposal for a reorganisation to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure, I support the proposed changes to school catchment areas arising from the closure of Scremerston First School and the move of Belford Primary to the Alnwick Partnership

Please select option *(Required)*

Please select only one item

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't Know

20 Please give the reasons for your answer or state 'None'.

Comment (Required)

21 If you have any alternative suggestions to either model for a proposed revised 3-tier structure or reorganisation to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) model, or you have an idea that would combine elements of both models, then please set out your views below:

Please provide your alternative option(s) here or state 'None'.

22 Having read the consultation document thoroughly, I support the proposed model for additional Special Educational Needs provision within the revised 3-tier structure of schools in the Berwick Partnership through the addition of specialist provision within St Mary's CE First, Berwick Middle School and Berwick Academy, with The Grove Special School continuing with its current provision at its current site. This model includes a proposal for all schools in the partnership to have additional SEND support through a peripatetic service to be explored.

Please select option (Required)

Please select only one item

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

23 Please give the reasons for your answer or state 'None'.

Comment (Required)

24 Having read the consultation document thoroughly, I support the proposed model for additional Special Educational Needs provision within the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure of schools in the Berwick Partnership through the extension of The Grove's specialist provision to include SEMH and its relocation to the current Tweedmouth Middle School site, and for a proposal for all schools in the partnership to have additional SEND support through a peripatetic service to be explored.

Please select option (Required)

Please select only one item

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

25 Please give the reasons for your answer or state 'None'.

Comment (Required)

**26** As part of this consultation we would like to take this opportunity to ask you if you have any thoughts or ideas on how to improve the Post-16 and Post-18 provision in the Berwick area? Please provide any ideas you have or state 'None'.

Please provide comments or state 'None'.

**27** The Council believes that currently there is sufficient quantity of Early Years provision in the Berwick area. If you have any comments on the quantity or quality of Early Years provision in schools or other providers, please provide them here or state 'None'.

Please provide comments here or state 'None'.

**28** Finally, do you have any further comments you would like to express in relation to this Phase 2 Consultation?

Please provide comments or state 'None'.

**Phase 2 - Consultation about Education in the Berwick Partnership  
31 October 2022 until Midnight on 3 March 2023**

**Consultation Register – NCC**

<b>Consultees</b>
<p>Schools in Berwick Partnership directly affected by proposals – Staff, Governors and Parents/Carers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Berwick Academy</li> <li>• Berwick Middle</li> <li>• Glendale Middle</li> <li>• Tweedmouth Middle</li> <li>• Belford Primary</li> <li>• St Mary's CE First</li> <li>• Holy Trinity CE First</li> <li>• Hugh Joicey CE First</li> <li>• Lowick CE First</li> <li>• Holy Island CE First</li> <li>• Norham St Ceolwulfs CE First</li> <li>• Scremerston First</li> <li>• Spittal First</li> <li>• St Cuthbert's Catholic First</li> <li>• Tweedmouth Prior Park First</li> <li>• Tweedmouth West First</li> <li>• Wooler First</li> <li>• The Grove</li> <li>• Alnwick Duchess High</li> </ul>
<p>Other Northumberland Schools in local area possibly affected – Staff, Governors and Parents/Carers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Branton Community Primary</li> <li>• Ellingham C of E Aided Primary</li> <li>• Embleton Vincent Edwards C of E Primary</li> <li>• Felton C of E Primary</li> <li>• Hipsburn Primary</li> <li>• Longhoughton C of E Primary</li> <li>• Seahouses Primary</li> <li>• Shilbottle Primary</li> <li>• St Michaels C of E Primary</li> <li>• St. Paul's RC Voluntary Aided Primary</li> <li>• Swansfield Park Primary</li> </ul>



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

#### **Early Years Providers**

- Berwick Rascals Day Care
- Ford Preschool
- Kiln Hill Preschool
- Lucky Ducks Preschool
- Red Balloon
- Hadston Children's Centre

#### **Public**

- NCC Website
- Libraries – Berwick and Wooler

#### **Diocesan representatives**

- CE, Paul Rikeard
- 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
- Tillside

- Wooler

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

- Annemarie Trevelyan 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**

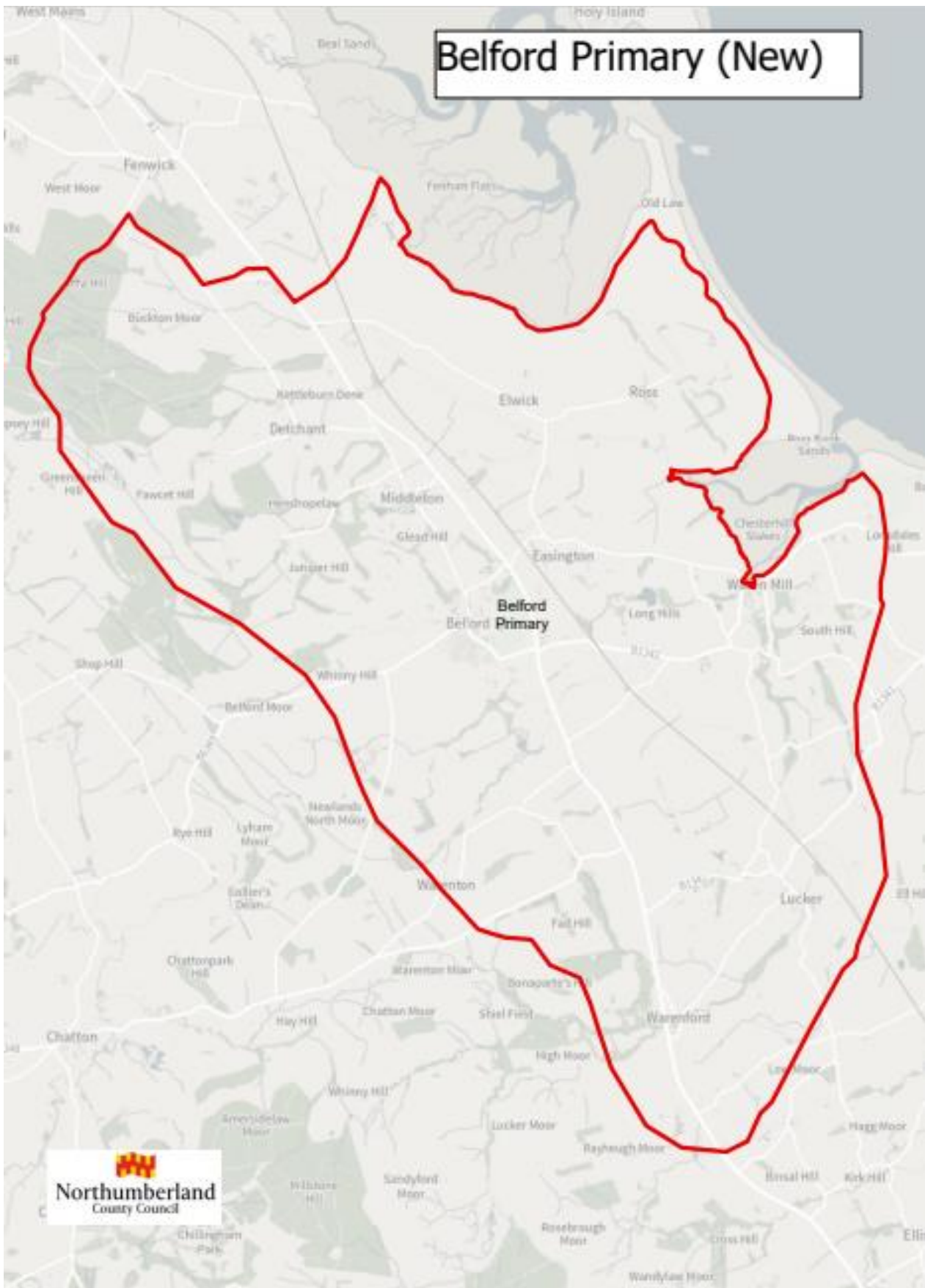
- Scottish Borders Council

**Other Organisations**

- Parent Carer Forum
- NAS North Northumberland Branch

**Unions**

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



# Alnwick Duchess's High V4 - incl Belford



## POTENTIAL MODELS

### Option C (as part of Model A – revised 3-tier System of Schools in Berwick)

Creation of one large Middle School on the current Tweedmouth Community Middle School / Campus site.

A summary of this proposal is reproduced below. The presentation which was delivered to Audrey Kingham and Sue Aviston on 9<sup>th</sup> February by Gien Bird (Headteacher, Berwick Middle) and Ben Hulbert (Headteacher, Tweedmouth Community Middle School) is attached as slides in Appendix 1.

## An inclusive model



**An inclusive and transformative model to support all schools and all pupils locally**

**Berwick Middle School and Tweedmouth Community Middle School will undergo a major restructure and will merge to form a single Middle School.**

Analysis of past school improvement partner visits to both schools demonstrate that leaders are already moving each school towards Ofsted 'outstanding' ratings, with an emerging picture that there are already areas of outstanding (Personal development/behaviour and attitudes) in both schools.

We will continue this impetus in the short-medium term to create one Middle School in the Berwick Partnership, and achieve Ofsted 'outstanding', while Berwick Academy continues to grow and their outcomes improve.

Furthermore, we will seek Teaching School status to potentially support all North Northumberland schools.

*"With the creation of one large Middle School comes significant responsibility" ...*

**With the significant savings that restructuring all departments will bring, we will act as a Teaching/Learning and Support Hub for other Partnership schools:**

- An all inclusive site/Campus will host a new/refurbished Academy and merged Middle School on the current TMS site and potentially a newly built Grove School to allow partial-integration within all phases.
- Middle School will adopt a peripatetic approach, providing specialist teacher provision to all First Schools in Art, Computing, Languages, Technology, Science, Music and P.E. allowing all schools to broaden curriculum, access specialist support and enable them to focus on their own specialisms without employing extra staff.
- Middle School will retain capacity in our financial management team to be available to support all First Schools with managing their budgets and cost saving.
- Middle School will retain leadership and have capacity to support First Schools when and where necessary - absence, illness, job moves.
- Local specialised services for the whole community to access - parent support hub, officers office (Community Connector), adult learning classes - a significant opportunity for up-skilling and community education.
- All stakeholders represented on the multi-agency board which oversee the running of the campus.



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## An inclusive model



**Engaging the Community**

Use the trusted reputation of the Middle schools to engage the community in the process and drive forward the change in Berwick. There has been a concerted push from the community for Middle Schools to come up with a solution.

More new specialist buildings for the town - alongside Sports Centre and new Hospital. Berwick a 'jewel in the crown' for Northumberland in terms of public facilities and upgrades.

Significant interest already after preliminary conversations from large local employers around offering additional vocational options and even sponsored funding for degrees etc and further education.

**Sustainability long term**

A strong model which will retain pupil numbers across all key stages.

Model in place for long term planning potentially around acadomisation with other excellent 3-tier trusts in Northumberland or a purpose created Berwick MAT.

**Ensure schools work together**

A real chance to move things forward and progress. A prime opportunity to create long lasting working relationships at close quarters and hold a vast array of expert knowledge - in a campus environment but to be utilised in individual settings.

Multi-agency board will be able to hold schools to account to ensure they are working together for the best interests of all pupils.

**Underpin best value for capital investment**

3 new school buildings instead of 3 - ensuring these school buildings for many years to come.

A new LA maintained Grove School - a primary need for the Berwick partnership.

A new Academy building - much needed.

A new LA maintained Middle school building - much needed.

Specialist SLMH provision - a significant County & local need and especially in Berwick due to travel.



## POTENTIAL MODELS

### Option C (as part of Model A – revised 3-tier System of Schools in Berwick)

#### SCHOOL INFORMATION

Berwick Academy remains as an age 13 – 18 High School with a reduced PAN of 180 with 6 forms of entry (FE).

Grove Special School receives a new build and opens with increased capacity. Site tbc. Partnership SEMH provision offered by St. Marys First, new large Middle and Berwick Academy.

Berwick Middle and Tweedmouth Middle Schools restructure to form a single large Middle School on the Tweedmouth Campus with Berwick Academy.

Glendale Middle School remains on current site with a reduced PAN of 30 (1FE)

Belford Primary already exists as a Primary School. It would move to the Alnwick Partnership.

Berwick St. Mary's CofE First school remains on current site with a reduced PAN of 15 (0.5 FE). Specialist SEMH provision on-site to support all First Schools in Partnership.

Holy Island First School unchanged.

Holy Trinity CofE First School unchanged

Hugh Joicey CofE First School unchanged.

Lowick CofE First School unchanged.

Norham St Ceowulf's CE First School would close and its catchment areas shared with Scremerston First School.

Scremerston First School remains open sharing a catchment area with Norham First. Remains 0.6FE.

Spittal Community First School unchanged.

St Cuthbert's RC First unchanged

Tweedmouth Prior Park First School will remain on current site with a reduced PAN of 15 (0.5 FE)

Tweedmouth West First School unchanged

Wooler First School unchanged

## POTENTIAL MODELS

### Option C (as part of Model A – revised 3-tier System of Schools in Berwick)

School	Current				Model A – Option C		
	Sept '22 roll	FE	PAN	Ofsted grade	Capacity	FE	PAN
Berwick Academy	552	7.5	225	Requires improvement	740	6	180
Grove Special School	49	n/a	50	Outstanding	70	n/a	n/a
Berwick Middle School	338	3.8	114	Good	600	5 – with capacity to increase	150
Tweedmouth Community Middle School	362	3.1	93	Good			
Glendale Middle School	104	1.4	42	Good	256	1	30
Belford Primary	84	1	30	Good	187	1	30
Berwick St Mary's CofE First	64	1	30	Good	75	0.5	15
Holy Island CofE First	3	0.2	5	Outstanding	Unchanged		
Holy Trinity CofE First	141	1	30	Good	Unchanged		
Hugh Joicey CofE First	47	0.5	15	Good	Unchanged		
Lowick CofE First	16	0.3	10	Good	Unchanged		
Norham St Coswulf's CofE First	28	0.3	10	Requires improvement	School closes and catchment shared with Scremerston First School		
Scremerston First	54	0.6	18	Good	Unchanged, but with increased catchment		
Spittal Community First	122	1.3	40	Good	Unchanged		
St Cuthbert's RC First	72	0.5	15	Good (pre Academisation)	Unchanged		
Tweedmouth Prior Park First	114	1	30	Requires improvement	75	0.5	15
Tweedmouth West First	114	1	30	Good	Unchanged		
Wooler First	91	1	30	Good	Unchanged		

# APPENDIX – Local Authority presentation 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023

## An inclusive model

An inclusive and transformative model to support all schools and all pupils locally.

### The Big Picture (continued)

With the significant savings that restructuring all departments will bring, we will act as a Teaching, Learning and Support Hub for other Partnership schools:

- As an inclusive school campus within a new/renovated Academy and merged 3-form entry Middle School and potentially a newly built Church School to allow partial integration with all phases.
- Middle School will adopt a specialist approach, providing specialist teacher provision to all First Schools in Art, Computing, Languages, Technology, Drama, Music and P.E., allowing all schools to broaden curriculum, access specialist support and enable them to focus on their own specialisms without employing extra staff.
- Middle School will have capacity to use financial management team to be available to support all First Schools with managing their budgets and cost-cutting.
- Middle School will have Leadership capacity to support First Schools where and where necessary - shared, shared, all involve.

### Improving Educational Outcomes

Specialist teachers available across entire Partnership.  
 Expertise and success in KS2 mastery tests guaranteed by retaining Middle Schools.  
 Specialist approach to curriculum allows First Schools to play to their strengths whilst benefiting from Specialist Teacher provision in the Middle School.  
 Middle School will adopt a specialist approach, providing specialist teacher provision to all schools in Art, Computing, Languages, Technology, Drama, Music and P.E., allowing all schools in the Partnership to broaden curriculum, access specialist support and enable all schools to focus on their own specialisms without employing extra staff.  
 Focus on improving school curriculum for all schools.

### Sustainability long term

A strong model which will retain pupil numbers to use all key stages.  
 Incorporate the values of the other Headteachers - no conflicts of interest. For example First Park (PMA) school, St Barns and St Mary's to be able to be dissolved and shared at Partnership level by the 3 Headteachers involved and a new Great School building built off-site without GMA1 provision to get the value of that school.  
 Specialist to remain open with staffing support from the Middle School and the Partnership.  
 One Middle School ensuring substantial cost savings across staffing which could be used elsewhere to employ broader support staff for all schools to secure broader budget situations led by N&S and SPS.  
 Model in place for long term planning potentially around collaboration with other existing 3-form trusts in Northumberland or a purpose created Barwick Hall.

### Underpin best value for capital investment

Significant materials, labour and land savings to using the campus model - a proven model used throughout Northumberland and beyond.  
 3 new school buildings instead of 2 - securing three schools buildings for many years to come.  
 A new LA maintained Great School - a primary need for the Barwick partnership.  
 A new Academy building - much needed.  
 A new LA maintained Middle School building - much needed.  
 Specialist SEN provision - a significant County & local need and especially in Barwick due to travel.

### The Big Picture

Barwick Middle School and Tweedmouth Community Middle School will undergo a major restructure and will merge to form a single 3-form entry Middle School on the current Tweedmouth Middle School site.  
 Analysis of post school improvement partner visits to both schools demonstrates that leaders are already moving each school towards Ofsted 'outstanding' ratings, with an emerging picture that there are already areas of outstanding (Personal development/Behaviour and ethos) in both schools.  
 We will continue this impetus in the short-medium term to create the largest school in the Barwick Partnership, and achieve Ofsted 'outstanding', while Barwick Academy continues to grow and the outcomes improve.  
 Furthermore, we will seek Teaching School status to potentially support all North Northumberland schools.  
**"With the creation of one large Middle School comes significant responsibility"**

### The vision for change

When Partnership Heads meet to contribute, they agree on a set of criteria to guide the process. These are the 'Vision for change' principles:

- Ensuring educational outcomes in each school to become truly outstanding (100%)
- Sustainability of education across the whole of the Barwick Partnership
- Ensuring that secondary SEN offer to children are appropriate (reach our own goals)
- Engaging the broader community in the wider vision to ensure a supported workforce through the long term
- Schools work together to create, share and create sustainability
- Real value for ROC capital investment - creating wide employment opportunities

There is a notable wide consensus among stakeholders that both Phase 2 options (2-6 or 3-6) led most of meeting terms in all of these criteria.  
 Therefore, we have selected the Option 2 (6-6) as our first port of call.

### Engaging the Community

Considered this for support in the last round of consultation - over 3000 members of the Barwick Middle School SENSG Facebook group and over 100 members of the community attending the Barwick SENSG event 2021 signified an exceptional support of the Middle School system.  
 Use the focused expertise of the Middle School to engage the community in the process and drive forward the change in Barwick. There has been a considerable flow from the community for Middle Schools to come up with a solution.  
 Increase specialist buildings for the town - alongside Sports Centre and new Hospital. Develop a 'level in the cover' for Northumberland in terms of public facilities and services.  
 Local government provider for the whole community to access - shared support hub. Citizens advice (Countryside Council), adult learning centres - a significant opportunity for up-skilling and community education.  
 Significant interest already after preliminary consultations from large local employers around offering additional recruitment options and even sponsored funding for degrees and further education.  
 All stakeholders appreciate the multi-agency approach which covers the running of the system.

### Ensure schools work together

No conflicts of interest, arguments or obstacles with a real chance to move things forward and progress.  
 No saving schools for saving overheads sake - sustainability is key.  
 Considerable school transport savings.  
 A prime opportunity to create long lasting working relationships at close quarters and hold a vast array of expert knowledge - in a campus environment but to be utilised in individual settings.  
 Multi-agency board will be able to hold schools to account to ensure they are working together for the best interests of all pupils.





## Equality Impact Assessment

***To be completed for all key changes, decisions and proposals. Cite specific data and consultation evidence wherever possible. Further guidance is available at:***

***<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3281>***

### ***Duties which need to be considered:***

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

### **PART 1 – Overview of the change, decision or proposal**

1) Title of the change, decision or proposal:

Consultation on Proposals for the Berwick Partnership – 2) Brief description of the change, decision or proposal:

Consultation (pre-statutory) on proposals for schools and academies in the Berwick Partnership has taken place on proposals for a revised 3-tier structure and a 2-tier (primary/secondary) which would require school reorganisation. The consultation included all relevant stakeholders, including parents and pupils on roll at schools in the partnership, staff of those schools, Governors of the schools, relevant parish/town council and members of the wider community.

Although all schools in the Berwick Partnership were consulted, including The Grove Special School, the following schools that would be impacted by any proposals approved for implementation should they be approved at a later date would be:

- Belford Primary School
- Berwick St Mary's Church of England First School
- Holy Trinity Church of England First School
- Holy Island C of E First School
- Hugh Joicey Church of England First School
- Lowick C of E First School
- Norham St Ceolwulfs C of E First School
- Scremerston First School
- Spittal First School
- St Cuthbert's Catholic First School
- Tweedmouth Prior Park First School
- Tweedmouth West First School
- Wooler First School
- Berwick Middle School
- Glendale Middle School
- Tweedmouth Community Middle School

- Berwick Academy

Both the revised 3-tier model and the 2-tier model also included proposals for school closures in light of the falling pupil numbers in the Berwick area in order to support sustainable and viable schools in the future.

Consultation with these stakeholders has also taken place on two proposals to provide additional specialist SEND places to meet the growing need for places for children and young people diagnosed with a primary need of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH) within the Berwick Partnership area, as well as seeking views on current Early Years and Post-16 and Post-18 provision.

Cabinet approved consultation in the light of the need to ensure that the proposed capital investment of £39.9m in school buildings in the Berwick Partnership set out in the Council's medium term plan would be invested in an educational system that would improve outcomes for children and young people in the Berwick area across all phases and that would support sustainable and viable schools for the foreseeable future.

Regulations require that some of the proposed prescribed alterations for some schools would fall to be required to be published in a statutory proposal, while some are non-statutory. The proposals in relation to the two academies in the partnership would require approval from their respective Trustees, with final approval being required from the Regional DfE Director North East. Cabinet would need to make a final decision on the proposals set out within the statutory notice within two months of the end of the representation period.

3) If you judge that this proposal is **not** relevant to some protected characteristics, tick these below (and explain underneath how you have reached this judgement).

Disability   Sex   Age   ~~Race~~   ~~Religion~~   Sexual orientation

~~People who have changed gender~~   Women who are pregnant or have babies

Employees who are married/in civil partnerships

4) The characteristics checked above are not relevant because:

In the medium to long-term and in relation to both the reorganisation of the mainstream schools within the statutory and non-statutory proposals including proposed specialist provision units at St Mary's Church of England Primary School (as it would be) and Berwick Academy for pupils with primary needs of SEMH, ASD, MLD and SLCN, there is no reason to believe that these proposals would affect more positively or negatively than their peers any group of children, parents or staff linked with these schools defined by their religion, race or gender-reassignment status. Should the Council decide to implement the proposed statutory and non-statutory proposals in relation to schools for which it is the Decision Maker, and should the Trustees of St Mary's and Berwick Academy and the Regional Director DfE North East decide to approve the proposal for those academies at a future date, during the immediate process of transition, families would be invited to inform the Council and/or the relevant Trustees that they are concerned about the impact that the change may have on the support networks for any individual children who may be at particular risk of harassment or discrimination. Reasonable adjustments would be made to support individual students where appropriate.

The statutory and non-statutory proposals include school closure proposals and therefore staff in schools proposed for closure would be placed at risk of redundancy. Existing HR policies covering organisational change and redundancy would apply to staff employed at any of the maintained schools affected. These are designed to ensure that the equalities duties of the Council and the schools are fully met.

Reasonable adjustments would be made for disabled members of staff. The Council operates a guaranteed interview scheme for disabled members of staff.

## **PART 2 – Relevance to different Protected Characteristics**

*Answer these questions both in relation to people who use services and employees*

### **Disability**

**Note:** *“disabled people” includes people with physical, learning and sensory disabilities, people with a long-term illness, and people with mental health problems. You should consider potential impacts on all of these groups.*

5) What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by disabled people, about disabled people’s experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

There are 29 pupils on roll at the first schools with an EHCP, 12 students on roll in middle schools with an EHCP and 13 students on roll in Berwick Academy with an EHCP (partnership total 54). It is therefore expected that a number of these students will still be on roll at these schools, by the time the proposal is planned to be implemented from September 2025. Should the proposals be approved, individual transition plans would be developed to ensure that any impact on pupils with EHCPs that are displaced by school is minimal and planned for effectively.

Any students who were offered a place at the proposed SEN units at St Mary’s and Berwick Academy would similarly have suitable transition plans in place in accordance with their needs.

Any member of staff, or parent or a carer of a student at one of the schools or academies in the Berwick Partnership who has a disability would not be affected disproportionately by the proposal as any reasonable adjustments or arrangements would be put in place at buildings where required and in any new buildings (e.g. for Berwick Academy) as part of the design process.

6) Could disabled people be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

Refer to para. 5

7) Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of disabled people to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

No evidence has arisen during Phase 1 or Phase 2 consultation that the implementation of the proposed statutory and non-statutory proposals would affect any current arrangements for disabled people to participate in public life. However, in relation to residents living in the areas around the location of the school sites in particular, should any impact in this regard come to light, ameliorating and proportionate measures would be investigated to address any negative impact.

8) Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards disabled people? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community).

No evidence has arisen during Phase 1 or Phase 2 consultation to suggest that the implementation of the proposed statutory proposals would affect public attitudes to disabled people. However, should any impact in this regard come to light, ameliorating and proportionate measures would be investigated to address any negative impact.

9) Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that disabled people will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

No evidence has arisen during Phase 1 or Phase 2 consultation to suggest that the implementation of the proposed statutory and non-statutory proposals would affect public attitudes to disabled people. However, should any impact in this regard come to light, ameliorating and proportionate measures would be investigated to address any negative impact.

10) If there are risks that disabled people could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

The premise of these proposals in relation to the reorganisation of the mainstream schools and academies is that educational outcomes for all students in their schools would improve across all phases of education and that schools and academies would be sustainable and viable for the medium to long term. Therefore, it is envisaged there would be disproportionate advantage of the proposal to all students on roll at the relevant mainstream schools within the partnership.

In relation to the development of a SEN units at St Mary's and Berwick Academy, while it is also envisaged that their educational outcomes would improve, they would also be able to receive their education closer to their home communities thus reducing travelling times to school and also enabling them to develop friendships with pupils in their local area. It is therefore envisaged that these students would be disproportionately advantaged both educationally and socially.

11) Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for disabled people linked to this change, decision or proposal?

Should this proposal be implemented, there would potentially be opportunities for positive impacts for disabled people within the design of the new buildings that are not currently in place in existing buildings. See also para. 10.

## Sex (Gender)

12) What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal in relation to people of a certain gender, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

Schools and academies in the Berwick Partnership are co-educational.

13) Could people of a certain gender be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

No evidence has arisen during Phase 1 or Phase 2 consultation to suggest that either boys or girls would be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the statutory and non-statutory proposals. However, should these proposals be approved to go to statutory consultation, this EIA would be updated with any evidence where it suggested that there could be any gender based disproportionate advantage or disadvantage.

14) Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of people of a certain gender to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

There is currently no evidence from Phase 1 or Phase 2 consultation to suggest that the ability of people of a certain gender to participate in public life would be affected by the implementation of the statutory and non-statutory proposals. However, should any impact in this regard come to light, ameliorating and proportionate measures would be investigated to address any negative impact.

15) Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards people of a certain gender (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

To date, there has been no evidence to suggest that public attitudes to people with people of a certain gender. However, ameliorating actions would be implemented in the event that issues were identified.

16) Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that people of a certain gender will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

Should the statutory and non-statutory proposals be implemented, the risk of harassment or victimisation of people of a certain gender, such as bullying, would be monitored. Should evidence be identified that risk of harassment had increased, relevant actions stated would be undertaken to address the reasons for harassment or victimisation, including awareness programmes.

17) If there are risks that people of a certain gender could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

No evidence has so far been identified during Phase 1 or Phase 2 to suggest that people of a certain gender could be disproportionately disadvantaged through the

implementation of the proposal. However, ameliorating actions would be implemented in the event that issues were identified.

18) Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for people with different sexual orientations linked to this change, decision or proposal?

It is envisaged that the positive impacts of the statutory and non-statutory proposals would affect a people of different sexual orientations equally. However, while none have been so far identified, any opportunities to create positive impacts for people with different genders would be identified.

## **Age**

19) What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by people of different age groups, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

First schools in the Berwick Partnership provide education to young people from the age of 2,3 or 4 to age 9, the middle schools provide education to young people aged 9 to 13, and Berwick Academy provides education to young people between the ages of 13 and 18. Students on roll at these schools at the proposed date of implementation would be impacted. It is proposed that the new SEN unit at St Mary's would provide education for pupils aged 4 to 11, while the SEN unit at Berwick Academy would educate children and young people aged 11 to 18.

Staff at the schools proposed for closure within the proposed statutory proposal are employed equitably in accordance with the relevant school and council's employment policies. All appropriate HR processes and procedures would be adhered to throughout any staff consultation and redundancy process (if any were necessary) in line with NCC policies.

20) Could people of different age groups be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

While the premise of the proposal is that pupils would be advantaged educationally, there may be other impacts such as shorter journeys to school e.g. for children attending first schools, if the schools are approved to become primaries, they would receive their Year 5 and 6 education at their local school, while children who may be allocated a place at either the St Mary's or Berwick Academy SEN Units would be likely to have a shorter journey to school than may have been the case if they attended an alternative specialist provision. Therefore, shorter journeys would be seen as advantageous to those pupils.

21) Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of people of different age groups to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

There is no evidence to suggest from Phase 1 or Phase 2 consultation that the proposed statutory and non-statutory proposals would have any effect on the ability of different age groups to participate in public life.

22) Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards people of different age groups? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

There is no evidence to suggest from Phase 1 or Phase 2 consultation that the proposed statutory proposals would affect public attitudes to different age groups.

24) If there are risks that people of different age groups could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

Should the proposals be approved to go to statutory consultation and evidence come to light that there are risks that people of different age groups could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the proposal, this EIA would be updated and reasonable steps approved to be implemented to address such risk.

25) Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for people of different age groups linked to this change, decision or proposal?

The premise of the proposal is to create a positive impact for all students on roll in schools in the Berwick Partnership and for those students who would be allocated a place at the St Mary's and Berwick Academy SEN units in relation to improved educational outcomes.

## **Pregnancy and Maternity**

*Note: the law covers pregnant women or those who have given birth within the last 26 weeks, and those who are breast feeding.*

26) What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by pregnant women and those who have children under 26 weeks, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal would create any barriers to students accessing at any of the schools that would be included in the statutory proposals as all students eligible for Home to School Transport would receive it.

In relation to the proposed reorganisation of the Berwick Partnership mainstream schools, any parent of a student in a school in the partnership who may be pregnant or who has other children under 26 weeks old would not be disadvantaged as children in the first schools would stay at their school as it became primary up to the end of Year 6. This could therefore be advantageous to this protected group.

Any staff of schools named in the statutory or non-statutory proposals who may be pregnant would have the same rights extended to them under reorganisation, or in the case of the proposed primary and secondary SEN units, if such staff took up a post at the proposed SEN units.

27) Could pregnant women and those with children under 26 weeks be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

See para.26.

28) Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

There is no evidence to suggest that the statutory and non-statutory proposals would have any effect on the ability of pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks participate in public life under the proposals.

29) Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

There is no evidence to suggest that the statutory and non-statutory proposals would have any effect on public attitudes to this protected group under the proposals.

30) Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

No evidence has arisen during Phase 1 or Phase 2 consultation to suggest that the statutory and non-statutory proposals would make it more or less likely that this protected group would be at risk of harassment or victimisation under the proposals.

31) If there are risks that pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

No, for the reasons set out at para. 26.

32) Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks linked to this change, decision or proposal?

See para. 26.

## **Sexual Orientation**

*Note: The Act protects bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian people.*

33) What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by people with different sexual orientations, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

There is currently no evidence to suggest that any student on roll in a school named in the statutory and non-statutory proposals or a member of staff who identifies as LGBT employed by these schools would be disproportionately impacted positively or negatively should approval be given to implement the proposals at a later date.

However, should any pupil or member of staff who identifies with this group be identified as requiring support, the authority would encourage staff of schools and academies named in the statutory and non-statutory proposals to use the Stonewall Education champion's resources and to increase awareness of any potential issues such as increased risk of bullying.



Should a member of staff identifying as LGBT in a school in the schools named in the statutory and non-statutory proposals feel that their support networks have been disrupted, staff would be made aware of the support available through the Council's LGBT staff group and managers will be made aware of the guide to supporting LGBT staff on the Council Equality and Diversity webpage. HR policies aim to promote equality and inclusion. Staff working in the academies within the partnership would also be able to access these support groups.

34) Could people with different sexual orientations be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

There is currently no evidence from Phase 1 or Phase 2 consultation to suggest that different sexual orientations would be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the implementation of the statutory and non-statutory proposals. However, ameliorating actions stated in para. 33 would be implemented in the event that issues were identified.

35) Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of people with different sexual orientations to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

There is currently no evidence from Phase 1 or Phase 2 consultation to suggest that the ability of people with different sexual orientations to participate in public life would be affected by the implementation of the statutory proposal. However, ameliorating actions stated in para. 33 would be implemented in the event that issues were identified.

36) Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards people with different sexual orientations? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

To date, there has been no evidence to suggest that public attitudes to people with different sexual orientations would be affected by the proposed statutory and non-statutory proposals. However, ameliorating actions stated in para. 33 would be implemented in the event that issues were identified.

37) Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that people with different sexual orientations will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

Should the proposals be approved for implementation at a later date, the risk of harassment or victimisation of people with different sexual orientations would be monitored. Should evidence be identified that risk of harassment had increased, the relevant actions stated in para. 33 would be implemented.

There is currently no evidence to suggest that any member of the public, pupil in one of the schools or academies named in the statutory and non-statutory proposals, parent of a pupils on roll in the schools or academies named in the statutory and non-statutory proposals or member of staff employed in one of the schools or academies named in the statutory and non-statutory proposals who identifies as LGBT would be more or less likely to be at risk of harassment or victimisation. should the approval be given to implement the proposals at a later date. However, should any of this group of

people who identifies within this protected group be identified as at risk as a result of the implementation of this proposal, the authority and trustees of the academies would encourage the staff of the relevant schools to use the Stonewall Education champion's resources and to increase awareness of any potential issues such as increased risk of bullying.

38) If there are risks that people with different sexual orientations could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

No evidence has so far been identified from Phase 1 or Phase 2 consultation to suggest that people with different sexual orientations could be disproportionately disadvantaged through the implementation of the statutory proposal. However, ameliorating actions stated in para. 33 would be implemented in the event that issues were identified.

39) Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for people with different sexual orientations linked to this change, decision or proposal?

While none have been so far identified, any opportunities to create positive impacts for people with different sexual orientations would be implemented, possibly through the implementation of the actions set out in para. 33.

## Human Rights

40) Could the change, decision or proposal impact on human rights? (e.g. the right to respect for private and family life, the right to a fair hearing and the right to education)

While there is no specific evidence to suggest that the implementation of the statutory and non-statutory proposals would impact positively on human rights, the rationale for this proposal as originally consulted on is to provide improved educational outcomes for all students on roll in schools in the Berwick Partnership and to support the sustainability and viability of schools and academies. For all pupils, including those who would be allocated places at the proposed SEN units at St Mary's and Berwick Academy, the aim would be to improve their life chances.

## PART 3 - Course of Action

Based on a consideration of all the potential impacts, indicate one of the following as an overall summary of the outcome of this assessment:

<b>X</b>	The equality analysis has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken.
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	The equality analysis has identified risks or opportunities to promote better equality; the change, decision or proposal would be adjusted to avoid risks and ensure that opportunities are taken should they be required.
	The equality analysis has identified risks to equality which will not be eliminated, and/or opportunities to promote better equality which will not be taken. Acceptance of these is reasonable and proportionate, given the objectives of the change, decision or proposal, and its overall financial and policy context.
	The equality analysis shows that the change, decision or proposal would lead to actual or potential unlawful discrimination, or would conflict with the Council's positive duties to an extent which is disproportionate to its objectives. It should not be adopted in its current form.

41) Explain how you have reached the judgement ticked above, and summarise any steps which will be taken to reduce negative or enhance positive impacts on equality.

From the initial analysis of the possible negative or positive impacts of the statutory and non-statutory proposals on the groups with protected characteristics, the premise of the proposal as originally consulted on suggests that pupils on roll at schools and academies in the Berwick Partnership and those who would be allocated a place the SEN units at St Mary's or Berwick Academy would be disproportionately advantaged. Should a decision be made by the Council's Cabinet to approve the publication of the statutory proposals, any evidence arising from the statutory consultations, including evidence linked to the non-statutory proposals that would be approved later by Cabinet and by the Bishop Bewick Trust in relation to St Cuthbert's Catholic First School and Trustees of Berwick Academy in relation to those academy which suggests that there could be possible negative impacts, identified risks would be analysed to establish whether or not there were certain risks to any or all of those groups. Steps to reduce negative impacts or enhance positive impacts would then be defined.

#### **PART 4 - Ongoing Monitoring**

42) What are your plans to monitor the actual impact of the implementation of the change, decision or proposal on equality of opportunity? (include action points and timescales)

This EIA has assessed in the light of feedback from the Phase 1 or Phase 2 consultation periods set out earlier in this report. Should the proposals be approved by the relevant bodies (and in the case of the Council's Cabinet, approve the publication of the statutory proposals), the EIA would be further updated at the end of the statutory period when being brought forward for final

approval. Appropriate action would be identified in the light of the statutory consultation and where necessary, an action plan with timescales developed.

## **PART 5 - Authorisation**

Name of Head of Service and Date Approved

*Once completed, send your full EIA to: [Irene.Fisher@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Irene.Fisher@northumberland.gov.uk). A summary will then be generated corporately and published to the Council's website.*