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1<sup>st</sup> March 2023

Dear Sirs,

The Governors of Scremerston First School would like to take this opportunity to put forward a supporting statement in relation to the Phase 2 consultation on the reorganisation of education within the Berwick Partnership.

We believe that a 2-tier model will provide the best learning outcomes for the children of Berwick because it would provide a consistent approach in the delivery of the curriculum with less upheaval for children transitioning to Middle school. A 2-tier model would also provide more accountability for teaching leading up to SATS. We envisage Scremerston First School as an integral part of this future structure.

Our strategy for Scremerston school over the next 5 years is to amalgamate with Lucky Ducks pre-school to provide education for children from the ages of 2-11 on our rural site. We have the space to expand and are able to provide a good quality of education for more children in the partnership by expanding our early years provision in our community building.

With Lucky Ducks pre-school we will be able to offer additional places in Teacher led early years provision on site, ensuring early interventions where necessary, easy transition from nursery to primary school and no need to move again until children are aged 11. We pride ourselves on being able to offer a 'homely' environment suited to the individual children we welcome and look forward to being able to offer this for longer and prepare them for their transition to secondary school. We plan to continue our work with the rural schools to introduce children ahead of the transition to secondary school engaging in sports and recreational activities including a residential to cement friendships ahead of a move to a much larger classroom environment.

All of our teachers are primary curriculum trained and in providing teaching up to the age of 11 they will hold accountability for SATS results from the beginning of KS2. We would provide 3 mixed year classrooms in our main school to include Years 5 & 6 and would plan to extend the SEND provision we have on offer to be a 'hub' for the rural schools in the partnership.

We have an outstanding reputation locally with almost 60% of our pupils coming from out of catchment through choice and a fantastic reputation for being a school that will go out of its way to accommodate those children who need specialist teaching, but at the lower end of the spectrum that does not attract the additional funding. This is a much sought-after provision and is demonstrated by the number of children who have moved from other local schools to come to ours in search of this.

We have 20 children on our SEN register and 50% of those children attend Scremerston through parental choice, choosing Scremerston First School over their catchment school. We have had 25 children in the last 5 years move to Scremerston from other local schools, mid-school year, because of the standard of education that we offer. We have invested in the training of our staff and provide excellent speech and language support and therapeutic support with both ELSA and THRIVE practitioners on site.

We understand the need for outdoor space here at Scremerston securing funding for our play equipment and outdoor classroom and we are looking to introduce both forest schools and beach schools to increase our outdoor learning opportunities. Few schools in Berwick are able to offer such versatile teaching environments with very little change to their infrastructure.

Scremerston is ideally placed to be a feeder school for the new and improved Berwick secondary school. Being situated directly off the A1 it is an excellent commuter school. Parents of children living between Berwick and Beal may prefer to send their children to a primary school that is both rural and within easy reach by public transport or car. Scremerston is likely to benefit from a potential split of Belford children following any closure of their first school, with children living North of Belford choosing to come to the Berwick partnership. The A1 is a major traffic route that is likely to be kept open in extreme weather and may be preferable to parents over a rural school only accessible by minor roads.

We have identified that 27 of our current children would need to travel further to attend school in Prior Park or Spittal and any children living in Scremerston who do not have access to private transport would need to walk from the village alongside a 60mph road to attend school. Local bus services do not provide sufficient reliability or frequency and the use of private transport is likely to lead to an increase in congestion in town schools, where traffic is already an existing problem.

We are the only rural, non-church affiliated primary school with direct links to the A1 just 3 miles outside of Berwick. The 2021 census reveals that only 46% of the population identify as Christian and we know that the choice of a non-church affiliated school is important based on feedback we have received from our parents. If the 2-tier option is adopted, and Scremerston First School closed, the Berwick partnership will have 2 times as many Church schools as non-Church schools which does not reflect the needs of the future demographic of our town.

Our school is the heart of the Scremerston community, a community that is distinct and separate from Berwick and one which is likely to grow over the coming years with the proposed development of the surrounding area. We currently serve our local and wider community holding community events hosted by our PTFA in school and opening the grounds and playpark area for community use. The community building is used by the knit and natter group and the school hall is used for community groups including Scremerston Carpet Bowling Club and a community Baby Group. As part of our commitment to supporting our local community we have provided daily hot meals to Armstrong Court (senior residential housing in Scremerston) and the children often provide entertainment or help with community events such as the Pensioners Scremerston Christmas meal.

We are both interested and excited to see the outcome of the consultation on the future of education for Berwick as we believe that this will demonstrate where Scremerston fits into any future model. We believe in the future of our school and in its value in any outcome and we have made some difficult, necessary, decisions in the last 18 months to ensure the schools financial viability and position in the future of education in Berwick. We have successfully absorbed the recent Teacher pay

awards and huge rise in energy costs and are still on track to have a surplus budget by April 2023 and going forward for at least 3 years.

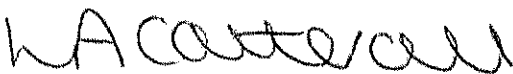
Our local MP has recently visited our school and written a letter in support of the school as has our Parish Council. We also have numerous testimonies from parents of pupils both past and present and members of our Scremerston community that demonstrate how well loved and valued our school is. We appreciate 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.

A recently rated 'good' by Ofsted school with 54 children we would welcome the opportunity to demonstrate how we can grow our pupil roll with the threat of closure lifted. It makes no sense to close the only non-affiliated rural school in the partnership that can fill some of the gaps outlined in your conclusions from Phase 1 in relation to early years and SEND provision for rural schools. We welcome the opportunity to support the plans for the reorganisation going forward and to cementing Scremerston's position in them.

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.

Kind Regards,

Scremerston First School Governing Body



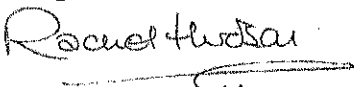
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