

13th February 2023

Re: Berwick Catchment Consultation

Can we thank Sue Aviston and Deborah Anderson for attending the school on the 13th of February in order to consult with us on the reorganisation of the Berwick Partnership. It is this Governing Body's belief that it is not for us to comment upon the relative strengths and weaknesses of the reorganisation of another school's catchment area and then debate hypothetical advantages and disadvantages for our own school, as where one school gains students, ultimately another school loses students.

We do feel that we are in a position to make a comment on the effect of this reorganisation on the families of students that currently attend the Duchess's Community High School. At the moment there are 143 students in years 7-11 for whom Berwick is their official catchment school. Reorganising the catchment area of Berwick and assimilating Belford and Glendale into our catchment would be a positive move for these families. Moving Belford and Glendale into our catchment officially would mean free, county provided transport to and from school, and the end to families paying for private transport, bus passes and daily Arriva tickets. This can only be a good thing for these families within the current cost of living crisis.

Whilst it is clear in the consultation that regardless of the outcome, Belford is officially moved into our catchment, it is less clear what the future will hold for Glendale. Option A (Berwick staying 3-tier) involves Glendale closing to years 7-8 and moving into our catchment, Option B (Berwick moving to a 2 tier system) involves Glendale closing to years 7-8 and staying in Berwick's catchment. We feel strongly that Option A is the best option for the families who currently attend DCHS, as this will allow for the free provision of transport for our students. What frustrates us with the consultation is in having to choose between option A/B it may appear that we approve/disapprove of a particular structure. 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.

The Duchess's Community High School Governing Body