



# Northumberland County Council

## Phase 2 Consultation – Education in the Berwick Partnership

### Notes of Meeting

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<b>Meeting:</b>	Glendale Middle and Wooler First Schools – Federated Governors Meeting
<b>Location:</b>	Glendale Middle School, 15 Brewery Road, Wooler, NE71 6QF

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<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup> January 2023 at 6.35 pm
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<b>Present:</b>	
<u>NCC</u>	Sue Aviston (Head of School Organisation and Resources) Audrey Kingham (AK) (Joint Interim Director of Children’s Services/Director of Education and Skills) Lorraine Fife (School Place Planning and Organisation Manager) ( <i>online</i> ) Deborah Anderson (Project Support Officer) Annie Leaver (HR Lead, Special Education Projects)
<u>School</u>	Headteacher 9 Members of the Governing Body

<b>1.</b>	<b><u>Welcome and Purpose of Meeting</u></b>
	<p>SA welcomed everyone to the meeting and those in attendance were noted above. Purpose of the meeting outlined as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explain the proposals for the Berwick Partnership and specifically for Glendale Middle and Wooler First Schools.</li><li>• Provide the opportunity for governors to ask questions.</li><li>• Brief, but not verbatim, notes would be published as part of the report to the Council’s Cabinet Committee.</li></ul> <p>Governors were advised that this is the same presentation that was shared with both staffing bodies prior to this meeting.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<b><u>Context and Rationale for the Proposals</u></b>
	<p>SA set out the context and rationale for the proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Council has allocated investment for the partnership.</li><li>• Investment needs to be in a school system that will deliver improved outcomes, be viable and sustainable for future generations.</li><li>• The community in Berwick needs to support whichever school system is decided to ensure schools thrive.</li></ul>

<b>3.</b>	<b><u>Vision for Change</u></b>
	<p>During preliminary work, headteachers and governing bodies agreed a Vision for Change in the Berwick partnership. The vision covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving Educational Outcomes.</li> <li>• Sustainability of Education.</li> <li>• Improving and extending the SEND offer.</li> <li>• Engaging the Berwick Community.</li> <li>• Ensure schools work together.</li> <li>• Underpinning best value for NCC capital investment.</li> </ul>
<b>4.</b>	<b><u>Factors facing the Berwick Partnership</u></b>
	<p>Factors facing the Berwick Partnership include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Falling pupil numbers.</li> <li>• Need to tackle surplus places. DfE holds local authorities to account for surplus places.</li> <li>• Pupils attending schools outside the Berwick partnership. Equates to a loss of approximately £1.5 million from the partnership.</li> <li>• Financial challenges facing schools as budgets are based on per pupil funding.</li> <li>• By 2025/2026 over half of the local authority-maintained schools in Berwick will be in deficit. This doesn't take account of recent pay rises and the cost-of-living crisis.</li> <li>• The growing number of children and young people with special educational needs and the need to provide appropriate specialist provision close to home.</li> </ul>
<b>5.</b>	<b><u>Education Outcomes</u></b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Berwick is a strong partnership of schools with 14 out of 17 schools rated either 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.</li> <li>• Two of the schools rated as 'requiring improvement' are taking effective action according to Ofsted. The other 'requires improvement' school has only recently been inspected.</li> <li>• The last validated data we have is from 2019. 2022 data will be available late January, and this will be included in the report to Cabinet. However, caveat by DfE is not to draw comparisons with previous years as schools are in a very different place to where they were in 2019.</li> </ul>
<b>6.</b>	<b><u>Proposals for this School</u></b>
	<p>Proposals for Wooler First and Glendale Middle School:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Under Model A (revised 3-tier structure)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Wooler would change its age range and become a one form entry primary school on the current site.</li> <li>○ Wooler and Glendale catchment would move to become part of the Alnwick partnership. Pupils would feed into Duchess High School at Year 7 from September 2025.</li> <li>○ Glendale Middle would not receive a year 5 intake in September 2024 (operating with Years 6, 7 and 8)</li> <li>○ Glendale Middle would close on 31 August 2025. Pupils on roll in August 2025 would transfer to Duchess High School (or another school of parents' choice) as Years 7, 8 and 9 in September 2025.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Under Model B (primary/secondary) structure</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Wooler/Glendale catchment would remain in the Berwick partnership.</li> <li>○ Wooler First School would change its age range and become a one form entry primary school on the current site.</li> <li>○ Glendale Middle would not receive a Year 5 intake in September 2025 (operating with Years 6, 7 and 8)</li> <li>○ Glendale Middle would close on 31 August 2026. Pupils on roll in August 2025 would transfer to Duchess High School (or another school of parents' choice) as Years 7, 8 and 9 in September 2026.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>7.</b>	<b><u>Rationale for the Proposals</u></b>
	<p>The rationale for proposals is driven by the number of pupils in the catchment area. GP data shows that a PAN of 30 would be appropriate for Wooler as a first or primary school.</p> <p><u>Wooler First School</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• December 2021 data shows that 74% of pupils living in the catchment area attend Wooler First with 24% choosing other schools.</li> <li>• Of the pupils on roll 8% reside in other schools' catchment areas.</li> <li>• Wooler First School has 31% surplus places.</li> <li>• The distance to the next nearest school is 8.7 miles.</li> </ul> <p><u>Glendale Middle School</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• December 2021 data shows 68% of pupils living in the catchment attend Glendale Middle School with 28% of pupils attending other schools.</li> <li>• Of the pupils on roll 22% reside in other schools' catchment areas.</li> <li>• The school has 30% surplus places.</li> <li>• Distance to the next middle school is 16.2 miles.</li> </ul>
<b>8.</b>	<b><u>Implications of the Proposals for Staff in the Berwick Partnership</u></b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under both models the staff working in schools proposed for closure or amalgamation would be at risk.</li> <li>• The ambition is to retain as many staff as possible within the Berwick partnership of schools.</li> <li>• Officers will work with schools and the academy to develop a Staffing Protocol. It is hoped that all governing bodies will sign up to protocol.</li> <li>• The protocol looks at drawing a ring-fence around the partnership regarding any newly created posts through changes or posts created through resignations/retirements.</li> <li>• Headteachers would be asked to consider those staff at risk in the first instance for any vacant posts.</li> </ul>
<b>9.</b>	<b><u>Special Educational Needs in Berwick Partnership</u></b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council investment presents opportunity to join up with SEND capacity needs in the area.</li> <li>• Held workshops with Berwick headteachers, the Parent Carer Forum, and the North Northumberland Branch of the Autistic Society.</li> <li>• The Grove is the only specialist provision in Berwick, but it is not designated for students with SEMH/ASD. Diagnosis of pupils with SEMH and ASD is increasing significantly.</li> <li>• 2021/22 data shows that 22 pupils living in Berwick with SEND have to travel outside of the partnership to access education on a daily basis.</li> <li>• Two proposed models for additional SEND provision have been suggested. Either model can be established under a two-tier or three-tier school structure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Model A</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Grove continues with its existing provision for PMLD and SLD pupils on its current site.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Specialist SEMH and ASD provisions created at St Mary's CE First, Berwick Middle and Berwick Academy.</li> <li>○ Create opportunity for peripatetic provision which all schools in the partnership can access.</li> </ul> <p><u>Model B</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Grove relocates to the site of Tweedmouth Middle (or another identified site), increases its planned pupil number and extends its designation to include SEMH/ASD pupils.</li> <li>○ Shared site with Berwick Academy would provide opportunities for some pupils to access mainstream lessons/qualifications.</li> <li>○ Primary support base at St Mary's First would continue.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Welcome other ideas for increasing SEND provision in Berwick.</li> </ul>
<b>10.</b>	<b><u>Other Implications</u></b>
	<p><u>School Buildings and Capital Allocation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Council has allocated £39.9m towards investment in school buildings within the Berwick Partnership but the final figure could be less or more.</li> <li>● Officers will be undertaking desk top exercises to establish what the potential budgets could be for carrying out any potential building works required under both models.</li> <li>● Indicative costs for SEND proposals will also be developed.</li> <li>● All indicative costs will be presented to Cabinet for consideration.</li> </ul> <p><u>Transport</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Council is not proposing any changes to the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.</li> <li>● Under Model A pupils living in Wooler/Glendale catchment would become eligible for transport to Duchess High School.</li> </ul>
<b>11.</b>	<b><u>Other Factors to consider</u></b>
	<p><u>Post-16/Post-18</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Investment presents an opportunity to extend and improve the Post-16/Post-18 offer for pupils and the wider community and are seeking views and ideas.</li> </ul> <p><u>Early Years</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Feedback from previous consultation is sufficient early years provision in the partnership and that the provision was good.</li> <li>● There are concerns that with the falling birth rate that this provision remains viable.</li> </ul>
<b>12.</b>	<b><u>Next Steps</u></b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advised that the consultation runs until midnight on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2023.</li> <li>● Governors encouraged to submit a response. Can respond as an individual but also as a staff group.</li> <li>● Not a referendum. Decisions and recommendations made on the quality/rationale of the response, not in the number received. As educational professionals your views are held in high regard by Elected Members.</li> <li>● Outcomes and feedback would be considered by the Council's Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet Committee in April/May 2023.</li> <li>● Cabinet Committee could decide either to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Stop the process and do nothing.</li> <li>○ Approve any recommendation(s) and move to formal statutory consultation. Statutory consultation would last four weeks.</li> <li>○ Approve further consultation if a sufficiently different proposal was put forward.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Final decision potentially made late summer/early autumn term 2023.</li> </ul>

13.	<b><u>Questions and Comments from Staff</u></b>
	<p><i>Q – As Governors we decided to consider a primary model before the other schools in Berwick. Under both models it is proposed that Wooler First becomes a primary school. Are you saying that we will become a primary school?</i></p> <p>No, Members could reject all proposals.</p> <p><i>Q – Could we go out independently?</i></p> <p>Make sure you respond as a governing body citing the reasons and issues why you think primary is the best option for these schools and that you had already approached the local authority prior to this consultation.</p> <p><i>Q - If it's decided that Wooler becomes a primary school would the first school stay the same but extend its age range and would the middle school staff be redeployed into additional staff positions?</i></p> <p>The first school would be the continuing school with the same URN. However, how the primary school is staffed is a discussion for the headteacher and governing body to have. They would then work with the HR adviser to develop a staffing structure and job descriptions. Ultimately it is down to the responsibilities of the role and not the person.</p> <p><i>Q – When will the staff protocol be agreed?</i></p> <p>Hopefully by the end of the Academic year.</p> <p><i>Comment - If Cabinet's decision is to maintain the current arrangement Wooler and Glendale would need to restructure as the schools are overstaffed. Concerned about the financial viability and exodus of staff due to a lack of clarity. We need detailed clarity as soon as possible so that it can be shared with staff regarding who is at risk.</i></p> <p><i>Q - When will we know the outcome of the consultation – will it be in March 2023?</i></p> <p>No. Hopefully a final decision will be known by the end of the Academy year, but it depends on the outcome of the consultation and whether we need to go back out to consult on alternative models. There is also the risk that if there is no clear direction Cabinet may decide not to go forward with the investment.</p> <p><i>Q – The timeline could present us with problems as difficult decisions are needed now in relation to staffing models for next year.</i></p> <p>Please make this clear in any response you have to the consultation.</p> <p><i>Q - If school joins the Alnwick partnership would we lose out on any funding as part of the development of education in Berwick?</i></p> <p>No.</p> <p><i>Q - If Wooler becomes part of the Alnwick partnership and the proposed SEN provision is established in Berwick would Wooler be able to access the provision for our pupils?</i></p> <p>Yes.</p>

*Q – Doesn't seem fair that we are having to follow a process and be "lumped together" with the other schools in Berwick, even though Wooler and Glendale Schools are in a unique situation regarding viability.*

Wooler and Glendale Schools are not the only schools in a unique position

SA finished the meeting by thanking the governors for attending. The meeting closed at 7:50 pm.