



# Northumberland County Council

## Phase 2 Consultation – Education in the Berwick Partnership

### Notes of Meeting

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**Meeting:** Hugh Joicey CE First School – Governors’ Meeting  
**Location:** Hugh Joicey CE First School, Ford, TD15 2QA

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**Date & Time:** Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023 at 5.00 pm

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**Present:**

NCC

Sue Aviston (SA) (Head of School Organisation and Resources)  
Lorraine Fife (LF) (School Place Planning and Organisation Manager) (*online*)  
Deborah Anderson (DA) (Project Support Officer)

Diocese

Paul Rickeard (PR) (Diocesan Director of Education, Durham and Newcastle)

School

Headteacher  
4 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 Hugh Joicey CE First School.</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><li>• Noted that the presentation used in the meeting is the same one that was used at the staff meeting held prior to this meeting.</li></ul>
<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, school leaders 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.</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. More recent 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 were in a very different place to what they are now.</li> </ul>
<b>6.</b>	<b><u>Proposals for this School</u></b>
	<p>Proposals for Hugh Joicey CE First 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>○ Remain a 0.5 form entry (PAN 15) first school.</li> <li>○ Catchment area would expand slightly due to the proposed closure of Norham CE First School.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <u>Under Model B (primary/secondary) structure</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Re-organise to become a 0.5 form entry primary school.</li> <li>○ PAN would remain at 15 but capacity expanded to 105 places.</li> <li>○ Catchment would remain the same under this model as Norham is proposed to remain open.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>7.</b>	<b><u>Rationale for the Proposals</u></b>
	<p>The rationale for proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Driven by the number of pupils in the catchment area.</li> <li>• According to December 2021 data 93% of pupils living in the catchment attend Hugh Joicey.</li> <li>• Of the pupils on roll 54% reside in other schools' catchment areas which means the school is popular within and outside its catchment area.</li> <li>• The school has 19% surplus places.</li> <li>• Distance to the next nearest school is 4.8 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 the 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 and 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> <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> </li> <li><u>Model B</u> <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 and 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> </li> </ul> </li> <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>• The proposals for Hugh Joicey will not have any impact on school transport.</li> <li>• There may be some impact for pupils in Belford and Wooler under the proposals.</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>• Concerns that with the falling birth rate the provisions remain 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. Governors can respond as an individual as well as a collective governing body.</li> <li>• Not a referendum. Decisions and recommendations made on the quality/rationale of the response, not in the number of responses 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>
<b>13.</b>	<b><u>Questions</u></b>
	<p><i>Q – If stays three-tier would staff at Norham be the only staff at risk?</i></p> <p>If the decision was to remain three tier the staff at any closing school would be deemed to be at risk and be part of the staffing pool.</p> <p><i>Q – Can the Academy revert back to become a local authority school?</i></p> <p>No.</p>

*Q – In respect of building new premises, would the Academy remain as an academy in that building?*

Yes, they are all Northumberland children, and we need to do the best we can for them. Our Administration continues to invest in academies and grow capacity where there are needs.

*Q - Why can't a new school be opened?*

Local authorities can't open new schools. Any new school would need to be either a free school or an academy.

*Q – In respect of the staffing protocol is Hugh Joicey First School in a position to employ someone who came in with protected service/salary?*

In the past any salary protection has been covered by the closing school for the three years of the protection. We are not expecting the receiving school to pick up costs. There is also contingency in the DSG for these circumstances, but this would require a decision from Schools' Forum.

*Q – What if a governing body doesn't sign up to the protocol?*

In previous school organisation we haven't not had everyone sign up to the staff protocol in some form.

*Q – The Grove is an all-age school therefore it is not impacted by the two-tier or three-tier proposal. However, its destiny is reliant on the Tweedmouth site becoming available?*

Not necessarily, there is a proposal to use the Tweedmouth site, but it could be an alternative site which is identified. Site option appraisals would be undertaken to determine the best site.

*Q – Will Cabinet concur with officer recommendations?*

Elected members have three options. They can (a) agree with officer recommendations, (b) look at the feedback and ask officers to look at an alternative option put forward. In this instance we would have to run another round of informal consultation or (c) review the feedback and if there is no appetite for change stop the process and leave the partnership as it is.

*Q – What would be the timescale for any change if happening?*

The first year of change would be September 2025.

*Q – What happens if there is no change to the £39.9 million?*

It could go back into the Council's funding pot or Elected Members could just decide to build a replacement high school.

*Q – As a primary school would Hugh Joicey CE First School remain a church school?*

Yes.

*Q – Would there be additional space/remodelling for this school?*

Potentially, once a decision is made work would be undertaken to look at what individual schools needed.

*Q – How do we put additional resources/funding into the process to smooth the transition for those pupils imminently impacted?*

If this is something that you feel would be beneficial then include it in your response.

*Q – How many members of Cabinet are there?*

There are eight members on Cabinet.

SA finished the meeting by thanking the governors for attending and the meeting closed at 6.05 pm.