



Northumberland County Council

Phase 2 Consultation – Education in the Berwick Partnership

Notes of Meeting

Meeting:	St Mary's CE First School – Governors' Meeting
Location:	St Mary's CE First School, Newfields, Berwick upon Tweed, TD15 1SP
Date & Time:	Monday 6 th February 2023 at 5.00 pm
Present:	
<u>NCC</u>	Sue Aviston (SA) (Head of School Organisation and Resources) Lorraine Fife (LF) (School Place Planning and Organisation Manager) (<i>online</i>) Deborah Anderson (DA) (Project Support Officer)
<u>Diocese</u>	Jo Warner (JW) (Assistant Director of Education, School Effectiveness, Durham and Newcastle)
<u>School</u>	Headteacher 6 Members of the Governing Body

1.	<u>Welcome and Purpose of Meeting</u>
	<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">• Explain the proposals for the Berwick Partnership and specifically St Mary's CE First School.• Provide the opportunity for governors to ask questions.• Brief, but not verbatim, notes would be published as part of the report to the Council's Cabinet Committee. <p>Noted that the presentation used in this meeting is the same one that was used at the staff meeting held prior to this meeting.</p>
2.	<u>Context and Rationale for the Proposals</u>
	<p>SA set out the context and rationale for the proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council has allocated investment for the partnership.• Investment needs to be in a school system that will deliver improved outcomes, be viable and sustainable for future generations.• The community in Berwick needs to support whichever school system is decided to ensure schools thrive.

3.	<u>Vision for Change</u>
	<p>Headteachers agreed a Vision for Change for the Berwick partnership, and this was approved by governors. The vision covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving Educational Outcomes. • Sustainability of Education. • Improving and extending the SEND offer. • Engaging the Berwick Community. • Ensure schools work together. • Underpinning best value for NCC capital investment.
4.	<u>Factors facing the Berwick Partnership</u>
	<p>Factors facing the Berwick Partnership include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falling pupil numbers. • The need to tackle surplus places. In January 2022 there were 1074 surplus places in the partnership. DfE holds local authorities to account over these surplus places. • The number of pupils attending schools outside the Berwick partnership. Currently 352 pupils attend schools outside of the partnership which equates to a loss of approximately £1.5 million from the partnership. • Financial challenges facing schools due to falling rolls and surplus places. • 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. • The growing number of children and young people with special educational needs and the need to provide appropriate specialist provision close to home.
5.	<u>Education Outcomes</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berwick is a strong partnership of schools with 14 out of 17 schools rated either 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. • Two schools rated as 'Requiring Improvement' are taking effective action according to Ofsted and the third school has only recently been inspected. • The last validated data we have is from 2019. 2022 data will be available towards the end of 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.
6.	<u>Proposals for this School</u>
	<p>Proposals for St Mary's CE First School:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Under Model A (revised 3-tier structure)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ St Mary's would remain a first school on the current site. ○ The current PAN of 30 would be reduced to 15 and the school would become a 0.5 Form of Entry first school. ○ Under proposals to increase SEN provision in the partnership within the three-tier model it is proposed to create on-site specialist SEN provision at the school for ASD, SEMH, SLCN and MLD pupils. • <u>Under Model B (primary/secondary) structure</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ St Mary's would change its age range and become a primary school on the current site. ○ The PAN of 30 would be reduced to 15 and it would become a 0.5 Form of Entry primary school. ○ The Primary Support Base would continue.

7.	<u>Rationale for the Proposals</u>
	<p>The rationale for proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driven by the number of pupils in the catchment area. GP data shows a declining birth rate across the partnership. • The number of pupils living in the catchment area of St Mary's is well below the school's PAN of 30 and falling. • December 2021 data shows that 52% of pupils living in the catchment attend St Mary's CE First with 46% choosing other schools. • Of the pupils on roll 30% reside in other schools' catchment areas. • The school has 45% surplus places. • Distance to the next nearest school is one mile.
8.	<u>Implications of the Proposals for Staff in the Berwick Partnership</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under both models the staff working in schools proposed for closure or amalgamation would be at risk. • The ambition is to retain as many staff as possible within the Berwick partnership of schools. • 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. • The protocol looks at drawing a ring-fence around the partnership regarding any newly created posts through changes or posts created through resignations/retirements. • Headteachers would be asked to consider those staff at risk in the first instance for any vacant posts.
9.	<u>Special Educational Needs in Berwick Partnership</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council investment presents opportunity to join up with SEND capacity needs in the area. • Held workshops with Berwick headteachers, the Parent Carer Forum, and the North Northumberland Branch of the Autistic Society. • 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. • 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. • 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"> <u>Model A</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Grove continues with its existing provision for PMLD and SLD pupils on its current site. ○ Specialist SEMH and ASD provisions created at St Mary's CE First, Berwick Middle and Berwick Academy. ○ Create opportunity for peripatetic provision which all schools in the partnership can access. <u>Model B</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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. ○ Shared site with Berwick Academy would provide opportunities for some pupils to access mainstream lessons/qualifications. ○ Primary support base at St Mary's First would continue. • Welcome other ideas or suggestions for increasing SEND provision in Berwick.

10.	<u>Other Implications</u>
	<p><u>School Buildings and Capital Allocation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council has allocated £39.9m towards investment in school buildings within the Berwick Partnership but the final figure could be less or more. • 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. • Indicative costs for SEND proposals will also be developed. • All indicative costs will be presented to Cabinet for consideration. <p><u>Transport</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is not proposing any changes to the Council's Home to School Transport Policy. • There may be some impact for pupils living in Belford and Wooler under the proposals for their schools.
11.	<u>Other Factors to consider</u>
	<p><u>Post-16/Post-18</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p><u>Early Years</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from previous consultation is sufficient early years provision in the partnership and that the provision was good. • There are concerns that with the falling birth rate that this provision remains viable.
12.	<u>Next Steps</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advised that the consultation runs until midnight on 3rd March 2023. • Governors encouraged to submit a collective response but can also respond as an individual. • It is not a referendum. Decisions and recommendations will be made on the quality/rationale of the response. As educational professionals your views are held in high regard by Elected Members. • 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. • Cabinet Committee could decide either to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stop the process and do nothing. ○ Approve any recommendation(s) and move to formal statutory consultation. Statutory consultation would last four weeks. ○ Approve further consultation if a sufficiently different proposal was put forward. • Final decision potentially made late summer/early autumn term 2023.
13.	<u>Questions</u>
	<p><i>Q – In relation to the children who are educated outside the partnership do we know the reason why?</i></p> <p>Ultimately the decision is down to parental choice, but there can be several different factors which influence this – eg. childcare or individual family circumstances.</p> <p><i>Q – Is data available to see where and who these pupils are?</i></p> <p>Yes, we can look at postcodes of pupils on roll etc.</p>

Q – You stated a number of pupils went into Scotland for their education. Do you know how many?

Yes, in 2021 there were 83 pupils educated in schools in Scotland.

Q – Has the number attending Scottish schools increased in recent years? Have heard via parents that they are struggling to get places now in Scottish schools.

We currently don't have that data available, but we could go back and compare.

Q – There are almost as many pupils attending private schools as are attending schools in Scotland.

Yes, the numbers are very interesting. It will be interesting to see what the 2022 data looks like and whether there have been any impacts following covid or the current cost of living crisis.

Q – In relation to the SEN models, is there any indication of the numbers expected under each model?

The overall demand will be the same. The difference will be under Model B the pupils would be under the leadership of The Grove, but under Model A pupils would be either be in a first, middle and high school phase and would move through accordingly.

Q – If the partnership goes two-tier does The Grove have to relocate?

Not necessarily. We have suggested two proposals for SEN and both options can be interchangeable under either model, or you might have a different suggestion.

Q – Does the £39.9 million include funding for the re-training of teachers?

No. The £39.9 million is capital funding and can only be used for buildings etc. Opportunities for re-training etc will need to be met from separate revenue funding. This will be looked at as part of the staffing protocol and perhaps developed from resources in schools as well as the Council's School Improvement Team.

Q – Does the funding allow for redundancies and voluntary redundancies?

There will not be any voluntary redundancies. The ambition will be to retain staff within the partnership of schools and that will be the aim of the staff protocol that we will ask governing bodies to sign up to.

Staff in closing schools who have a higher salary or TLRs will receive pay protection for an agreed period. Funding for this protection will be provided to the receiving school during that period so they aren't liable for these costs.

Q – Although it has been stated that there is sufficient early years provision in the Berwick area there are issues with the locality of the provision and families being able to access it. Parents from Holy Trinity CE First and St Mary's CE First catchments need to travel to the other side of the town which they can't afford to do.

This needs to be included in any response to the consultation.

SA finished the meeting by thanking the governors for attending. The meeting closed at 6.10 pm.