



Northumberland County Council

Phase 2 Consultation – Education in the Berwick Partnership

Notes of Meeting

Meeting:	Duchess High School – Governors Meeting
Location:	Duchess High School, Taylor Drive, Alnwick, NE66 2DH

Date & Time:	Monday 13 th February 2023 at 5.00 pm
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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>School</u>	Headteacher Nine 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. The purpose of the meeting was outlined as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide an overview of the proposals for the Berwick Partnership and their rationale.• Explain how the proposals would impact Duchess High School and the Alnwick catchment area.• Provide the opportunity for governors ask any questions.• Brief, but not verbatim, notes would be published as part of the report to the Council's Cabinet Committee.
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 £39m investment in school buildings in the Berwick Partnership.• This is a one-off opportunity to investment in a school system that will deliver improved outcomes, be viable and sustainable for future generations.• Feedback from the consultation will assist the Council in their decision-making process.
3.	<u>Vision for Change</u>
	<p>During preliminary work Headteachers agreed a Vision for Change for the Berwick partnership and this was approved by governing bodies. The vision covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improving Educational Outcomes.• Sustainability of Education.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 which impacts on the viability of schools. • 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 £1.5m from the partnership. This has an impact on curriculum and teachers. • Financial challenges facing schools due to falling rolls and surplus places. Schools' budgets are based on per pupil funding. Previously a premises factor helped those schools with surplus places but now budgets are set using a national funding formula. • 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 in terms of performance. 14 out of 17 schools rated either 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. • Two of the 'Requires Improvement' schools are taking effective action according to Ofsted. The other school has only recently been judged as 'Requires Improvement'. • The last validated data we have is from 2019. Data for 2022 will be available shortly 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 and students' experiences were very different.
6.	<u>Impact of Proposals on Alnwick</u>
	<p><u>Proposals for Belford Primary School</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model A – revised three-tier structure in Berwick <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Would continue as a primary school. ○ The catchment would move to become part of the Alnwick Partnership with pupils feeding into Duchess High School at Year 7 from September 2025. ○ Pupils living in the catchment would be eligible for school transport to Duchess High School. ○ Catchment area for Belford Primary would be reduced. • Model B – reorganisation to two-tier (primary/secondary) structure in Berwick <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Would continue as a primary school. ○ The catchment would move to become part of the Alnwick Partnership with pupils feeding into Duchess High School at Year 7 from September 2025. ○ Pupils living in the catchment would be eligible for school transport to Duchess High School. ○ Catchment area for Belford Primary would be reduced.

	<p><u>Proposals for Wooler First and Glendale Middle Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model A – revised three-tier structure in Berwick <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wooler First would change its age range and become a one form entry primary school in a phased way on its current site from September 2024. ○ The catchment would become part of the Alnwick Partnership, with pupils feeding into Duchess High School at Year 7 from September 2025. ○ Pupils living in the catchment would be eligible for school transport to Duchess High School. ○ Glendale Middle School would close on 31 August 2025. ○ Pupils on roll in Years 6, 7 and 8 on 31 August 2025 would transfer to the Duchess High School (or another school according to parental preference) as Years 7, 8 and 9 in September 2025. • Model B - reorganisation to two-tier (primary/secondary) structure in Berwick <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wooler becomes primary from September 2025 but remains in Berwick Partnership. ○ Glendale Middle School would close on 31 August 2026.
<p>7.</p>	<p><u>Rationale for the Proposals</u></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rationale for proposals is driven by the number of pupils in the catchment area. • December 2021 GP data shows that the number of pupils living in the Alnwick catchment is falling. • Alnwick’s catchment could be expanded to include Belford and Wooler pupils without impacting on the students living within the current Alnwick catchment. • December 2021 data shows that 85% of pupils living in the catchment area attends Duchess High. • A significant number of students living in Berwick catchments already attend Duchess High. • The re-organisation in Coquet Partnership may result in reduced pupil numbers from that catchment area attending Duchess High in the future. • In September 2024 Duchess High School’s PAN will move from 250 to 240.
<p>8.</p>	<p><u>Special Educational Needs in Berwick Partnership</u></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council investment presents opportunity to join up with SEND capacity needs in the area. • 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.

9.	<u>Implications on Transport</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligibility for school transport is arranged in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy and there is no proposal to change this. • Under Model A, pupils living in the Wooler and Belford Primary School catchment/Transport Eligibility Areas would become eligible for transport to The Duchess's High School. • Under Model B, only pupils in Belford Primary catchment/Transport Eligibility Area would become eligible for transport to The Duchess's High School.
10.	<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, not in the number received. 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.
11.	<u>Questions</u>
	<p><i>Q – Which schools are Requires Improvement?</i></p> <p>Tweedmouth Prior Park First, Berwick Academy and Norham C of E First School.</p> <p><i>Q – What would the advantages be for students?</i></p> <p>Students would be eligible to free county provided home to school transport. Currently parents have to pay, and students use public transport which, according to the co-headteachers, can sometimes be an issue with pupils arriving late to school.</p> <p>For students to attend Duchess they are reliant on there being space at Duchess.</p> <p><i>Q – Where are the middle schools in Berwick located?</i></p> <p>They are located either side of the river. One opposite the station with the other on the site of Berwick Academy.</p> <p><i>Q – Where do Wooler pupils currently go?</i></p> <p>Majority come to Duchess High School.</p> <p><i>Q – Have Wooler Governors expressed a preference?</i></p> <p>They have been asked to express their preference as part of their response to the consultation.</p>

Q – What are the benefits, pros and cons, and where is the evidence?

The local authority remains neutral regarding models. It is up to individuals to come to their own view.

Q – Queried what the planned admission number of Duchess?

If you believe the transition model should be different, please provide feedback to the consultation and this would then address your planned admission number.

Q – How many pupils from Wooler transfer in Year 9?

Each year it is different, but majority transfer in Year 7.

Q – Has Warkworth been considered at any point?

Yes, and Warkworth would like to remain in the Coquet partnership. That would need to be addressed by a reduction in the planned admission number.

Q – What is the timetable for Berwick Academy?

The school can convert to become a secondary school prior to any new build.

Q – In the various models, what size school will Berwick Academy be?

It will have a PAN of 180.

Q – Will the new build for Berwick Academy be on the current site?

Authority will need to do a business case and site appraisal to identify the best possible location.

Q – Are there plans for the Academy to be part of a wider MAT?

Not that the authority is aware of.

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