

Wooler First School Consultation – Staff Views and Questions

If we become a primary school and remain in the same building there are lots of concerns regarding the financial implications and the suitability/condition of the building. Recent DfE surveys of the school building have deemed much of it to be in a 'poor' state of repair. If we remain in this building due to its age and condition it will require a significant investment. How long in its current state would it be able to serve as a primary school? What is the long term plan for this, given it is the intention of the consultation to create a sustainable education system?

What happens if we become a primary school, remain in the current building and become unviable financially because of it?

The current building is too big for a primary school and has facilities, such as the swimming pool which we will be unable to fund. Has there been any consideration of sharing the building with another, perhaps alternative provision?

As we understand it there may be adaptations made to the current building to make it suitable. What would these be? How would they impact on the quality of education provided for children and what would the timeframe be for alterations to be made?

Would there be any benefit in investigating the possibility of moving the primary school back up to the old Wooler First School site? Would adaptations of this site prove easier and would the building itself be more sustainable?

Our Early Years provision, Nursery and Reception need better facilities, the outdoor play equipment is end of life and the outdoor area needs to be redesigned. Also facilities for breakfast and after school clubs are limited and would need to be improved to accommodate the older primary aged children.

Looking to the future of our Early Years Provision we also think it is important to investigate the possibility of providing under 2's childcare. We know that we've not been able to consider this in the past and understand that it is separate Ofsted registration etc., but we believe that this would greatly strengthen numbers coming into Reception. We currently only know of 3 child minders in the area and think if we gave the opportunity for parents to send their under 2's to us, then hopefully they would continue their educational journey in the setting. We do think there will be a demand for it in Wooler as we often see posts on social media of people asking about childcare from babies.

Following the consultation meeting there is much confusion regarding staffing and what would happen to staff in each school should we become a primary school? Whose jobs will be at risk? What is the timeline for staffing changes? Would it be possible to get written information of what would happen in the staffing restructure, when it would happen and how?

There is a feeling that by assigning the school to one secondary school and requiring parents to pay for transport to the other at the end of Year 6 would lead to some of our pupils being disadvantaged due to their geographical location. It also may mean parents would not choose to send their children to our primary school. If Berwick also goes two tier would it be possible for our parents to have a choice at the end of Year 6 whether they went to Alnwick or Berwick for secondary school? This did used to be the case at the end of Year 8.

The consultation says Wooler First School will be a one form entry primary school. Is it the intention that it will always be one form entry and not have mixed age classes? If we do have mixed age classes due to numbers and this happens at the point of restructure, what will happen to jobs then?