

Future of Education in Berwick

St Cuthbert's Catholic first School

Response from the Trustees of Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust

Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust is committed to supporting St Cuthbert's Catholic First school in its desire to offer full primary provision to the families of Berwick. There are three main reasons behind this decision.

Firstly, our Trust believes that the educational opportunities provided for children are better within a two-tier system, where there is expert curriculum delivery from Year 7 and only one point of transition between the curricula provided at primary school and moving onto secondary provision. Subject specialist teachers are able to ensure that all children have access to a challenging and exciting curriculum, where the expert subject knowledge of teachers will enthuse and stretch the learning of students, preparing them more readily for GCSE and Post 16 qualifications. Put simply, children can be taught by experts in languages, Science, Maths and Humanities. High quality facilities in the Arts, Music and P.E. are more readily available from a younger age. In a three-tier system, there is more chance of lost learning where there is less access to subject expertise or experience of delivering GCSE qualifications. There may not be secure knowledge of curriculum sequencing between KS3 and KS4 and so opportunities to make these vital links may be impacted. Teachers in 11-18 education are more likely to understand the composite elements of curriculum from Year 7 through to Year 13 and seize opportunities to build on learning rapidly and ensure maximum progress across a wide suite of subject areas. As a Trust, we recognise that our children from St Cuthbert's are likely to move to Berwick Academy. We will work closely with the High School to share our KS2 curriculum provision to support their teachers to build upon the curriculum provision from Year 6.

Secondly, our Trust believes that moving to a two-tier system will provide students with a more seamless social transition to High School. It is clear from our experience across our five high schools that Year 7 students benefit from the role models provided by Years 11-13. The maturity and aspiration shown for learning, sets a great example for younger students of what can be achieved through working hard at school and aspiring for their futures. Prefect and mentor systems can be used effectively to support younger learners, helping them navigate through some of the most common aspects of the teenage years and early adolescence.

For children with SEND, we know that transition points can also be high risk for children with additional vulnerabilities. Therefore, reducing these moves will lessen the issues faced by these children. They will have more time to forge relationships with key adults in their primary school along with their peers. The process of transition to secondary will be more effective as a result of the deeper knowledge acquired of specific needs, the child's progress through KS1 and KS2 and what has worked best to support them.

Finally, as a faith Trust, we are clear that extra years within a Catholic school will help our children to develop their own sense of spirituality and a sense of their uniqueness and importance to the world around them. We will work with the High school in Berwick to ensure there are opportunities for further development in this area as the children leave for their secondary education.

Anita Bath

Chief Executive - Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust