



DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

Sue Aviston
Head of School Organisation and Resources
Northumberland County Council
County Hall
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08 February 2023

Re: Berwick Partnership Reorganisation

Dear Sue

Thank you for consulting the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle on the proposal for reorganisation of the Berwick Partnership. I am mindful of the complexity of the issue but fully agree that the council needs to take action to address surplus places, to improve SEND provision, and to better serve the children and families in the Berwick Partnership.

The view of the Diocese is that we are supportive of a move to a two-tier system. Educationally this would be better for the children of Berwick. We would like to offer families a Catholic education up to the end of Key Stage 2 at St Cuthbert's School. Over the past few years the Diocese as responsible body has invested LCVAP and SCA funding in St Cuthbert's School in anticipation of a potential for an expansion of the age group to Year 6. A kitchen was built onto the hall, thereby freeing up a classroom. Investment has been made in a new entrance and also in new fencing and external areas, thereby making it safe and suitable environment.

Our preference would be that if the proposal goes ahead, that the children in Year 4 in the academic year of 2023-24 stay at St Cuthbert's as Year 5 pupils in the academic year of 2024-25 so as to minimise the disruption to the children's education. I know that there will need to be coordination across the partnership but I would encourage the council to consider bringing the date forward.

I am aware that the Diocese has only one school in the partnership. However, we are fully committed to working closely together with other schools and trusts to support an improved system for all families.

Yours sincerely
Deborah

Deborah Fox
Director of Education