

Responding As	Responses
Parent	To whom it may concern I have a child currently in year 10 at Berwick Academy and a child in year 3 at St Cuthberts First School. I am in full support of the two tier system. I think this would be beneficial to children at the Academy as there was hardly any time for my daughter to get used to her teachers or the subjects before choosing her GCSE options that she found very difficult to do and quite stressful. With regards to my son at St Cuthberts First School. He is autistic and although academically he is fine, he struggles massively with any changes. I AM concerned how the change in system will affect him as he will move to middle school for a short space of time before having to transition again to the Academy. This will be very stressful for him. I wish that St Cuthberts was able to become a primary school before 2025. However I feel that St Cuthberts First School becoming a primary school will be of huge benefit as they are the only Catholic school in the area and their values and ethos are second to none and the opportunity for children to continue their education for an extra 2 years will benefit the children immensely. It will be a great opportunity for staff to support them fully through KS2 and prepare them for KS3.
Parent	I wish to submit an objection to the closure of Tweedmouth Middle school due to the proposed restructure to a 2 tier system. Tweedmouth Middle school provides the perfect stepping stone between primary and high school. It provides a safe space for children to build confidence in themselves, in social groups and in different subjects. A place where the children are valued before becoming lost in a bigger school setting. I have grown up in Berwick and the majority of people I have spoken to will say that looking back they loved and valued the time at the middle schools. Our children have had so much disruption due to COVID where restrictions in schools lasted far longer than the lockdowns. It has not only impacted thier learning but their social skills and mental health in a huge way. This restructure will only cause more disruption to a lot of children. Save our middle schools, for the sake of our children.
Unidentified	I am in support of the proposal.
Unidentified	Hi I'm in support of the 2 tier system thankyou
Staff	I am in favour of the 2 tier proposal for Berwick upon tweed.
Unidentified	I am enclosing an email to the objection of the middle school closures. I feel this will be very detrimental towards the children affected. The age the children will be going to the academy school I feel is far too young, the middle schools accommodate for this change and help the children to regulate into a secondary school before hitting the academy. The closure of the middle schools will impact a lot of children as they may not be ready for the academy and mixing with such older kids at such a young age!!
Parent	To whom it may concern I am a parent of two children who are in the first two tiers of their primary education in Berwick Upon Tweed. Our eldest child has progressed really well in the first two tiers of the three-tier system and is performing very well. Our youngest child will be due to attend Tweedmouth Middle School in 2025 and is set to stay on at Spittal Primary and then move to Secondary school, without going through middle school. Our three tier system works really well and the standard of education in the first two tiers is very high Unfortunately the third tier, Berwick Academy, is not as high in its achievements I feel it would be a detriment to our children if the proposed changes were to happen, without drastic changes to Berwick Academy The current system works well and could be better by supporting Berwick Academy better Changing to a two tier system will be a very bad choice for Northumberland Council I hereby give notice of my strong objection to the proposals and hope you consider the matter further and consult with parents and teachers in the affected areas
Unidentified	To whom this may concern, In regards to the closing of multiple schools in Berwick Upon Tweed. I'm 100% against it. I'm 100% against a two tier system. I'm 100% against the closing of fabulous schools in our local region. I'm 100% against fabulous teachers losing their jobs. This proposal will have a negative effect on the children in our community, I just can't understand why you would change something that's worked well for so many years. I can only guess it's to save the council ""money"". Money that will NOT be spent in our wonderful town and outskirts. Kind regards
Staff & Parent	As a parent and member of staff of TCMS I completely object to changing to the two tier system. How can we possibly send our children to the Academy from a younger age when it is not a 'Good' school or run by the LEA? By going ahead with this NCC are failing every single child in this area as there is no alternative to the Academy on this side of the border. You will lose many children to either private or Scottish schools by doing this. A HUGE MISTAKE!
Staff	Dear Sir Following the decision made by Northumberland County Council to re-organise education in the Berwick area from a three tier to a two tier system. I would like to offer my support for this for the following reasons. - With decreasing student numbers locally schools are finding themselves significantly below capacity. It was financially sensible to look at current resources and how they are spent. Lowering the amount of schools means resources can be used more effectively. - A reorganisation of the education structure allows for up to forty million pounds to be invested in facilities at the Berwick Academy site. It allows for a new special school to open at the Tweedmouth Middle School site. It allows for planning of more vocational learning and SEN teaching to take place. - Many students at Berwick Academy will not be interested in an academic career. A good post 16 vocational offer may keep students interested in attending education and also provide young people to the local workforce with skills they need. - More SEN teaching and special school places are important to students who have additional needs. I have personal experience of this, my nephew who has autism went to a special school and it changed his life. He went from being likely to be permanently excluded to a good student virtually overnight. - Having a Year 7 and 8 at Berwick Academy means students will complete all of Key Stage 3 in one school. They will settle in, get to know the staff and will be in a better position to make choices for what they want to study at GCSE. - Year 7 and 8 will also now be taught by secondary trained teachers who can show students what will be taught and how they can develop in a particular subject over the next three years. Despite being the correct decision in my opinion, I am aware that other people may disagree with this and therefore need support through the process.
Parent	To whom it may concern, Please take this email as me registering my objection to the proposed 2 tier education system in Berwick upon tweed. This will directly affect my daughter who is currently in year 3, looking at your proposal it seems she will go to middle school for 2 years then on to high school. This isn't enough time to even get settled in a school so to then move on again isn't fair. This is the exact group of children who missed out on vital schooling at a vital age due to the pandemic. They don't deserve more disruption.
Unidentified	Please note my objections to the proposed changes from the 3 Tier System in Northumberland to a 2 Tier System The Schools you are recommending to the change are all highly rated, and have happy, motivated and successful Staff and Pupils.  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Why do you feel the need to change a system which is obviously succeeding?</li> <li>2) After the disruption, so recently, of the Covid years, why do you feel the need to cause more pain and uncertainty?</li> <li>3) Could your motive possibly be to shoehorn more children, earlier, into the dilapidated, ill-equipped 1960's buildings which constitute Berwick Academy?</li> <li>4) Can you possibly envisage the expense of the changes, (which, if done to a high standard, will run into millions) being invested instead, into the Berwick Academy?</li> <li>5) Can you try to feel the disappointment Academy students feel when they look at their rundown buildings and look over the Border to their neighbours in Scotland (Kelso 10 miles, Eyemouth 4 miles) and see the wonderful expression of caring the Scottish Government have invested in their young people, with their beautiful schools?</li> <li>6) Given that all the schools you've shortlisted for these changes are at full capacity, with minimum playing fields, where do you imagine the extra years will be fitted in?</li> </ol>

	<p>7) Is there a lemming-like philosophy which makes it impossible for you to renounce this proposed destructive re-organisation? We are talking about children's lives here...</p> <p>In this Post-industrial town, with poor employment prospects, low investment and an over-worked Food Bank, can the children here be subjected to more crushing defeats? Answer this question honestly. Why destroy something which isn't broken? I am writing to the current Secretary of State for Education The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan, from whom this proposal possibly, initially, was sprung. I am also contacting the current Shadow Minister for Education Bridget Phillipson. I am also contacting my MP Anne-Marie Trevelyan."</p>
The Governing Body of Belford Primary School	<p>Please see below the response of Belford Primary School governors to the statutory notice you issued regarding proposals for the organisation of schools in and around Berwick.</p> <p>This stance is supported by all our governors.</p> <p>The form for submitting responses does not lend itself to a collective response from a governing body, so I trust you will accept this as a valid response, and would be grateful if you could confirm that.</p> <p>"The governors of Belford Primary School have maintained throughout the process of review of the organisation of schools in and around Berwick that it is for those schools and their communities to comment on and help to determine any changes. We are not going to change our stance on this, and are therefore submitting through this email a "neutral" response to the proposals contained in the statutory notice.</p>
Staff	I am a teacher at Berwick Academy and I am fully supportive of the proposed structural change to education within the Berwick Partnership.
Staff	I support the proposals on the following grounds: Changing age ranges of first schools to convert them to primary schools retains local education for younger children. It means that young children do not have to change schools during their primary education. Pupils will be able to complete Key Stage 2 in one school, instead of being split across 2 schools. Extending the age range of Berwick Academy from 13 to 18 to 11 to 18 means all of Key Stage 3 can be completed in one school. Moving from primary school to secondary school will be the only change of school for pupils, instead of the 2 required of students in the Berwick Partnership currently. It also means that Key Stage 3 will be taught by teachers who are skilled and experienced of the Key Stage 4 and 5 curriculum.
Parent	To whom it may concern, I am a mum of 2 boys currently in schooling at holy trinity first school and berwick middle school. My youngest is due to start berwick middle in September and can't wait he is ready and excited about the next move. I can't understand why change something that works in our town both middle schools are great stepping stones and all children thrive in their care in all aspects. The money should go where it is needed and that's the high school they need a better system, give them what they need, more teaching assistants and updated resources. Don't get rid of the middle schools that work and throw our children in a school which needs alot of work at a earlier age. Covid has already gave them a upheaval, children dont need so I feel it is the wrong time to do this, surely this should of been taken in to consideration but clearly not. Thanks for reading.
Unidentified	To whom it may concern What an utter disgrace! There is no consideration about the children in Berwick in this decision - it is nothing but a money saving ploy for the council. Why else would it make sense to close 2 good to outstanding rated (government funded) schools in favour of a failing academy? Money. What about the education of our young people? What about the future of Berwick? Already parents are moving their children across the border into the Scottish High Schools that have better outcomes than the Academy in Berwick. It is a well known fact that people choose houses to be closer to better education for their children. What will become of Berwick as a thriving town? I dread to think. The teachers and staff as well as the caring and dedicated management teams of both Tweedmouth Community Middle School and Berwick Middle School are going to be ripped apart alongside the passion and care that they have for the educational well-being of the students that they teach. All for the sake of saving money! Good money after bad - it is clearly the high school that needs reform and not the other schools in the area. Some might say that the definition of idiocy is not learning from mistakes - we have seen the demise of good outcomes in Alnwick since it moved to 2 tier. Where is the sense? Interestingly, Morpeth has remained 3 tier - an area of greater affluence than Berwick or Alnwick. There is also a 3 tier system in place in the areas of Monkseaton and Whitley Bay in North Tyneside - the most affluent of that area too. What does this tell us? I know it tells me that, to the council, wealthier kids are more important than those who are less well off! To close the two parts of the Berwick system that are definitely working in favour of the part that isn't seems like idiocy to me. If this was a business, (and the council seems to be treating it as such) would you scrap the parts that work and keep the non-functional part? Of course not! Improvement is necessary in Berwick but the council are looking in the wrong place to the jeopardy of children's futures. The three tier system should remain in place!
Parent	This makes me so angry as a parent to have to fight for our children's rights to an education that my children are entitled to. I have children in primary, middle,Academy and the grove school in Berwick. The middle school and the Academy are by far they best in our area. The middle schools have amazing staff they look after and nurture our children and prepare them for the next level of education. All of my children have loved Tweedmouth middle school they have given them life experiences that no other school have or even could. How about looking at why so many children are not at the academy? When do we have so many children from BERWICK at Eyemouth high school or even Alnwick? When do we have so many children suspended from school? Why do the teacher leave the academy after 6-9months? Our children are being FAILED by the Academy. Why not put all of this on HOLD Northumberland County council take back control of the Academy show the parents in the area that you do care about our children and the Amazing staff that we have in our middle schools and make our middle schools part of Berwick high schools. Parents have lost faith in the Academy for so many reasons and I do strongly believe that the Academy is failing our children. I am heartbroken at the fact that our community will lose our middle schools and that our amazing special needs school has been neglected by Northumberland County council. They are desperate for a new bigger school (not the middle school don't know who come up with that but you obviously have no idea about our amazing beautiful children and you don't understand sen) with lots of outdoor space for our children. This is actually heartbreaking for a lot of children,staff and parents in Berwick and I really don't understand how you can think of closing our middle schools and trusting the academy with a lot more children when they can't even support the children that they have now. I really hope that you actually listen to the parents in Berwick but as I have already been told your decision has been made and you clearly don't have any children in the academy. Even a country councillor has grandchildren in Berwick but her family sends them to Eyemouth and she is pushing for 2tire? Ridiculous. Please listen save our middle schools and give the grove school the money for the school that our children and staff deserve.
Parent	May I register my objection to the proposed closure of Tweedmouth Middle School and also the introduction to the 2 tier system. I cuurrently have a child at this school having had 7 children (this being the last) to go through the 3 tier system and have found it to be very good offering fantastic teaching at all levels. I feel 2 tiers would introduce bigger class sizes, teachers being made unemployed, more bullying as there is a much bigger range of ages and I feel some children would be left behind in the teaching. The old saying if it aint broke dont fix it, well in my opinion it aint broke so dont try to fix it.
Staff	To whom this may concern, I am in favour of the Cabinet's proposal to restructure education within the Berwick Partnership to a two-tier (primary/secondary) structure. I also fully support the opening of a SEMH, MLD, SLCN and ASD specialist provision within the secondary age range and based at Berwick Academy. There are three reasons as to why I support this: educational outcomes, positive relationships and sustainability.

Unidentified	Dear Sir I would like to strongly object to the proposal of a two tier system in Berwick upon Tweed. Closing two OFSTED graded GOOD Middle Schools is a ludicrous decision. Closing good schools will not improve the life chances of pupils. It has no educational benefit to the community. The amalgamation of the two Middle schools is both educationally and financially sound. The sharing of expertise, resources and high quality teaching is the way forward. NCC are not thinking of children at all ! Come on, put the needs of this unique rural community first. Retired Headteacher 34 years teaching experience of teaching in Berwick.
Parent	I am opposed to the changes to our school system . The three tier system has worked great for so many years in Berwick upon tweed . I don't see the benefit to our children. I have a 14 year old and a 7 year old so this will impact on both of my children.
Staff	I would like to express my disgust and concern about the closure of two good middle schools in Berwick Upon Tweed. I am struggling to see why the Local Authority is bailing out an Academy school. I am struggling to see why you would close two good schools. I am struggling to understand why you are going ahead with this even though parents are against it. Children are leaving the education system in the town at the moment to avoid being educated in the Academy. More children will leave the system if they have to attend the Academy at an earlier age. I could write so much more but feel this is just a tick box exercise and this was always going to be the outcome regardless of what parents or schools thought.
Staff	<p><u>Educational Outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Children should be taught the National Curriculum in complete Key Stages as they are in the majority of schools across the country.</li> <li>o The national picture is heavily in favour of Two-Tier education.</li> <li>o Teachers are trained to teach either primary or secondary education. A two-tier model allows for specialist secondary teachers with recent GCSE and A level teaching experience to teach their subject from Year 7, leading to improved outcomes for students.</li> </ul> <p><u>Relationships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Children and families benefit from developing a longer-term relationship with the school and familiarity with subjects before choosing their GCSE options during Year 9.</li> <li>o Children should move between schools less often, so that children, families and schools can build positive relationships and a clear understanding of expectations over time.</li> </ul> <p><u>Sustainability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Fewer schools within the partnership will lead to a more sustainable model for the future. Fluctuations in birth rate, and therefore the funding that a school receives, are inevitable in any area, but more pronounced in our rural and coastal situation. These annual fluctuations can be more easily weathered by schools which have a stronger funding base to begin with.</li> </ul>
Parent/Carer	I am writing to support the proposed changes to the Berwick schools as set out in the consultation. I am a parent of two children currently in the school system. This is a much overdue change that will make schools better able to improve overall results across all age ranges.
Staff	<p>I am firmly in favour of the Cabinet's proposal to restructure education within the Berwick Partnership to a two-tier (primary/secondary) structure. I also fully support the opening of a SEMH, MLD, SLCN and ASD specialist provision within the secondary age range and based at Berwick Academy. My three key reasons for this have not changed throughout the process, and are:</p> <p><u>Educational Outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Children should be taught the National Curriculum in complete Key Stages as they are in the majority of schools across the country.</li> <li>o The national picture is heavily in favour of Two-Tier education.</li> <li>o Teachers are trained to teach either primary or secondary education. A two-tier model allows for specialist secondary teachers with recent GCSE and A level teaching experience to teach their subject from Year 7, leading to improved outcomes for students.</li> </ul> <p><u>Relationships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Children and families benefit from developing a longer-term relationship with the school and familiarity with subjects before choosing their GCSE options during Year 9.</li> <li>o Children should move between schools less often, so that children, families and schools can build positive relationships and a clear understanding of expectations over time.</li> </ul> <p><u>Sustainability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Fewer schools within the partnership will lead to a more sustainable model for the future. Fluctuations in birth rate, and therefore the funding that a school receives, are inevitable in any area, but more pronounced in our rural and coastal situation. These annual fluctuations can be more easily weathered by schools which have a stronger funding base to begin with.</li> </ul>
The Governing Body of Berwick St Mary's CE First School	<p>The Governing Body of Berwick St Mary's CE First School supports the proposals from NCC for the implementation of a 2-tier structure and additional SEND provision within the Berwick School Partnership. The Governing Body believes that this structural change will provide the best opportunities for our community to meet the needs of our children in the future, enabling our communities to grow and prosper.</p> <p>In relation to the additional SEND provision to be based at St Mary's, the Governing Body wish to thank NCC for their trust and confidence in our school to meet this ever-increasing need within our school partnership. We also thank NCC for the initial allocation of funding to make the significant changes required to ensure we meet the complex needs of these students, who represent one of the most vulnerable groups in our entire partnership cohort. At this point in time, the Governing Body are not aware of the specific proposals being put forward for the development of the SEND provision within the school, (such as buildings, resourcing and staffing) therefore look forward to discussions as soon as possible with the respective NCC officials, to ensure that the offer we develop fully meets the needs of the partnership, whilst still enabling St Mary's to deliver its core offer as a primary school. The Governing Body are resolute in their commitment to meeting the needs of SEND children, as evidenced over the last 8 years. However, we will need the funding to create an appropriate SEMH base, that meets the needs of our partnership now and in the future. This structural change is a once in a generation opportunity, therefore the planning and implementation of the changes must be robust if we are to provide the basis for success, we all desire for our children.</p> <p>The Governing Body also supports the proposal for a hard federation of St Mary's with Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First School, acknowledging the additional benefits both schools will receive from Federation, which have already been evidenced since September 2022.</p> <p>Despite the Governing Body's excitement for the opportunities the proposal within the consultation potentially offers, we would like to formally request a change to the timetable for implementation. The Governing Body believes NCC should bring forward the timetable for implementation to September 2024 for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The discussions about a change to 2-tier education system have been on-going in Berwick for many years, well before this current consultation process began. Similarly, this consultation process due to reasons we are all aware of has been extremely lengthy, as such all stakeholders have experienced a significant period of anxiety and instability that has no doubt had an impact on the outcomes for the pupils, we all class as our prime concern. We believe if we move forward with a September 2024 start date, then all we are doing is simply</li> </ul>

	<p>extending the transition period, which will automatically extend the impact of change across all areas and for all stakeholders, this could lead to further issues in retention of families and staffing, as well as exasperating the anxiety related to change all have and will continue to experience, all this at a time when mental well-being is not only a local but national priority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Berwick partnership has substantial overcapacity within its school infra-structure; therefore we respectfully ask that the implementation date is brought forward to September 2024. Although not all the planned building work (such as the new Secondary School) will be completed, by bringing the date forward, we will enable children, staff and families to begin to form productive relationships and understand expectations for the new educational offer. We have a proven track record in Berwick of being able to adapt and pro-actively support our community, therefore we should utilise this strength, begin the change as soon as possible, so reducing the issues of change we will inevitably face in the short-term, not the medium to long term.</li> <li>• A quicker change will enable the schools to keep the excellent staff we have in the area and reduce the problems we may face in retention and recruitment. Not least because, by shortening the period of transition, we reduce the issues of anxiety linked to employment and well-being. In terms of staffing, we are all fully aware of the difficulties of recruiting in Berwick, which are not made any easier by the pay disparities north of the border, where Scottish Borders can pay up to £10,000 more to teachers for the same role. A speedier transition will therefore support our medium and long term aims more robustly, by allowing schools to create an efficient committed workforce dedicated to our principal vision of providing an outstanding education for all.</li> <li>• A lengthy transition period will be of no benefit to our most vulnerable children. SEND learners are a significant and growing part of the school population in Berwick, as such so are the resources required to support their needs. This has been evidenced for a long-time in all our schools, but increasingly in children accessing provision out of the area. Therefore Governors request a quicker transition, with a focus on providing the resources to support SEND pupils locally, both within our existing and new SEND provisions. Well planned and integrated SEND pathways with a local bias will have a hugely significant impact on the outcomes for those children and families in need, therefore a quicker transition timetable will allow us all to navigate the barriers of change we will undoubtedly face sooner, therefore achieve our desired outcomes quicker.</li> </ul> <p>In summary, the Governing Body of Berwick St Mary's CE First School fully supports the proposed move to 2-tier and the expansion of SEND provision. However, we do not agree with the proposed timetable. We believe a quicker transition will have a major impact on reducing the potential barriers we will face both in schools and the wider community through this period of transition. Within Berwick we have a strong workforce, experienced in working through change, as well as recognised over-capacity within the education stock, therefore we must use these factors to provide a robust, well planned and speedy transition into 2 tier education, so we can all realise our aspirations for the children and families we support.</p>
The Governing Body of Hugh Joicey C of E Aided First School	<p>In terms of the proposal, we the governing body are in favour of the two tier system.</p> <p>I hope that this helpful and if you need any further information then please let us know.</p>
Parent	<p>I am writing to raise my objection to your proposal of changing our fantastic schools in the Berwick Partnership to a 2-tier system. I am concerned that, under the proposal, we would lose three 'Good' schools in the area and would end up sending a number of pupils attending those schools to establishments that currently 'require improvement'. Our Middle Schools provide an excellent standard of education to our children and offer a caring and inclusive environment where children flourish through the numerous extra-curricular activities and additional opportunities arranged by a dedicated staff. Additionally, I am taken aback that 'Option C' has not been put forward for any further consultation. As far as I understand, the issues set out in the first consultation period were around retaining pupils in the partnership when they reached Year 9, as many pupils were leaving at this stage to be educated elsewhere. I can't see how moving to a 2-tier system will be of any benefit in relation to this. As a parent, I would be more likely (under the 2-tier system) to send my child elsewhere to be educated when they had completed their primary education in the Berwick Partnership. Finally, I can't see that the proposed costing stacks up and some of the building works required for this restructuring have not been factored in at all.</p>
Unidentified	<p>Please note my objections to the proposed changes from the 3 Tier System in Northumberland to a 2 Tier System The Schools you are recommending to the change are all highly rated, and have happy, motivated and successful Staff and Pupils. 1) Why do you feel the need to change a system which is obviously succeeding? 2) After the disruption, so recently, of the Covid years, why do you feel the need to cause more pain and uncertainty? 3) Could your motive possibly be to shoehorn more children, earlier, into the dilapidated, ill-equipped 1960's buildings which constitute Berwick Academy so you can use the lovely grounds that the middle school children enjoy to sell for housing 4) Can you possibly envisage the expense of the changes, (which, if done to a high standard, will run into millions) being invested instead, into the Berwick Academy? Why not invest in Berwick Academy as it is rather than destroying the excellent first and middle schools we have 5) Can you try to feel the disappointment Academy students feel when they look at their rundown buildings and look over the Border to their neighbours in Scotland (Kelso 10 miles, Eyemouth 4 miles) and see the wonderful expression of caring the Scottish Government have invested in their young people, with their beautiful schools without wrecking the younger kids schools 6) Given that all the schools you've shortlisted for these changes are at full capacity, with minimum playing fields, where do you imagine the extra years will be fitted in? 7) Is there a lemming-like philosophy which makes it impossible for you to renounce this proposed destructive re-organisation? We are talking about children's lives here... The children have just started enjoying being back at school and in the case of holy Trinity school have enjoyed doing their yearly show. This will not be possible with more children at the school. There is no way in the time scale you have given that a new school will be ready properly especially with the sports centre only just being finished after years and the hospital that was promised years ago not year built. It is proven that children are healthier with space to run and exercise yet you are proposing to give them less land. This is not a plan to care for the children it's a plan to put money in the pockets of those who will sell the land. Think of the children in the much loved middle and first schools with their own characters and activities and just give the Academy a much needed building without threats of closure, loss of space and job losses In this Post-industrial town, with poor employment prospects, low investment and an over-worked Food Bank, can the children here be subjected to more crushing defeats? Answer this question honestly. Why destroy something which isn't broken? I am writing to the current Secretary of State for Education The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan, from whom this proposal possibly, initially, was sprung. I am also contacting the current Shadow Minister for Education Bridget Phillipson I am also contacting my MP Anne-Marie Trevelyan.</p>
Berwick Academy Leadership and Staff	<p>We write as a response from Berwick Academy to the formal consultation on the reorganisation of education within the Berwick Partnership proposals as agreed by Northumberland County Council's Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023.</p> <p>Staff, leaders and trustees at Berwick Academy are committed to building a sustainable educational model in North Northumberland. We believe firmly that education is the passport to the future, and in that we have a solid sense of purpose. We, therefore, strongly support the proposals to reorganise education as outlined by Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023.</p> <p>Our rationale for supporting this reorganisation has remained consistent throughout the different phases of consultation, and are outlined below.</p> <p>At Berwick Academy our ambition is to provide our students with an educational experience that helps them to develop as young people who:</p>

- Are ready for employment and/or further education
- Have the skills, knowledge and qualifications that enable them to compete at a local, national and international level.
- Are good citizens, able to contribute positively to their local and wider communities.

Our core values of friendship, learning and respect are at the heart of our school and provide the foundation from which all else is built.

Everything that we do at Berwick Academy is shaped by this, our solid sense of purpose, and we hold all our plans up to scrutiny against this purpose.

The young people at Berwick Academy are the young people of this community and they deserve to be treated fairly and respectfully by all who make decisions for and about them. We believe that this is a moment when the adults need to step up and do what is right for the long-term prosperity of all.

Berwick Academy's recommendation that the partnership should now move to a primary-secondary structure is based on the strong educational case that has been made by the Headteacher, Senior Leadership Team and wider staff body, supported by evidence, advice and experience from schools in the region and nationally. The principle educational arguments for our resolution to pursue a Two-Tier future for the partnership have been shared with parents, staff and the wider community. The key reasons which support our view of a Two-Tier structure for the partnership can be summarised as follows:

*Educational outcomes:*

- Children should be taught the National Curriculum in complete Key Stages as they are in the majority of schools across the country.
- The national picture is heavily in favour of Two-Tier education, with only 102 three-tier middle schools out of 32,163 schools.
- Teachers are trained to teach either primary or secondary education. A Two-Tier model allows for specialist secondary teachers with recent GCSE and A Level teaching experience to teach their subject from year 7, leading to improved outcomes for students.
- Schools taking responsibility and accountability for whole key stages enables the delivery of a truly cohesive and progressive curriculum, the aim currently seen as the main driver in excellence within education, (DFE/OfSTED vision). It also reduces the need for testing and assessment within key stages, as teachers/schools have a more robust knowledge of the child, their achievements and their areas for development, simply because they have supported the child throughout their whole journey within a key stage. For instance, children would not have to go through unnecessary baseline assessments within Year 5, which are currently needed as a means to secure an element of 3 tier transition.

*Relationships:*

- Children and families benefit from developing a longer-term relationship (from year 7) with the school and familiarity with subjects, before choosing their GCSE options choices during year 9.
- Children should move between schools less often, so that children, families and schools can build positive relationships and a clear understanding of expectations over time, rather than these changing three times, sometimes in the middle of a Key Stage of the National Curriculum.

*Sustainability:*

- Fewer schools within the partnership will lead to a more sustainable model for the future. Fluctuations in birth rate, and therefore the funding a school receives, are inevitable in any area, but more pronounced in our rural and coastal situation. These annual fluctuations can be more easily weathered by schools which have a stronger funding base to begin with.
- Schools within the partnership are keen to maintain our sense of rural identity, and we feel that the best way to secure this for the future is to move to a stronger Two-Tier model.

**Mandate for change**

Northumberland County Council's Vision for Change in North Northumberland is based on the following:

- Improving education outcomes at each phase to ensure every child meets their potential.
- Sustainability of Education across the whole of the Berwick Partnership for the long term.
- Improving and extending SEND offer for children and young people in the Berwick partnership so that their needs are met locally and travel times are reduced significantly.
- Engaging the Berwick Community in the review process to build an understanding of all the issues and to grow support for any proposed changes within schools in order that the community engages, supports and thrives.
- Ensure schools work together to further develop the partnership and create a sustainable model for the future.
- Underpinning best value for NCC capital investment as well as any wider investment opportunities that may arise.

Berwick Academy believes that the Vision for Change can be best achieved through implementing a Two-Tier structure across the partnership.

**Improving education outcomes**

- We believe that a key element in improving educational outcomes for children is for children to move between schools less often. This, linked to the accountability framework aligning key stages with the Two-Tier structure, supports the view that Two-Tier provision will lead to children achieving their potential.
  - The misalignment of key stages with the three-tier system places significant pressure on the schools in the partnership. This, in combination with the contextual challenges faced by Berwick schools, can be seen particularly as the accountability stakes rise as students move through the key stages.
  - Students entering the school in Year 7 would mean that the starting point for all students would be their Year 6 SATs scores, not teacher assessments of three different curriculum models from three different schools.
  - A curriculum that is planned holistically to offer clear progression across KS3 and KS4 with no break between Year 8 and 9 would be experienced by all students, minimising variation in experience on entry.
- Teachers are trained to teach either secondary or primary age ranges, and there will be improved outcomes at Key Stage 4 when students in Year 7 and 8 benefit from specialist teachers with recent experience of GCSE and A level teaching.

- Students will be in the school for two years prior to considering GCSE choices, reducing the feeling of being rushed to make decisions in Y9, and enabling staff to better offer high quality advice regarding options choices.
- If children remained in a primary school from their Early Years to the end of Key Stage 2, before then moving to a secondary school for Key Stage 3, 4 and 5, children, families and schools can build positive relationships and a clear understanding of expectations over time, rather than these changing three times.
  - Currently, form tutors remain with students from Y9 to Y11. In a secondary setting this would be from Year 7 to Year 11, enabling them to develop strong relationships with students and their parents/carers. This will support the children more effectively as they move through the school.
  - The Pastoral team will remain with a year group from Year 7 to Year 11, enabling them to know their cohort very well.
- The expectations placed on Year 9 in the current system are very high, and the stakes even more so. This is the time when young people go through the most significant hormonal changes to date. They become teenagers and begin to grow into young adults. At this time of great change, we ask them to move schools, giving up what they know and feel comfortable with and move to an unfamiliar environment with new and different systems and processes, and ask them to build relationships with people neither they nor their parents/carers know well. Currently, three different middle schools feed into Year 9 at Berwick Academy, with three previous sets of expectations, systems and processes to unlearn and relearn. This takes the first term to embed, which can lead to learning being missed and the fall back that happens in the summer can be exacerbated. It is at this point that students are expected to make their choices for GCSE courses, and that staff are expected to advise on, all while attempting to give a positive Key Stage 3 experience, two-thirds of which are outside of the Academy's control and delivered in three different schools. The difficulties in this are clear, but it is the system and context that creates these difficulties, and which would be addressed through moving to a Two-Tier structure.
  - Year 7 and 8 would give the school time to really build meaningful and trusted relationships with families that mean when things become more challenging, we can work together to best support our young people.
- There are over 32,000 schools in the country, of which only 102 are three-tier middle schools. Of these 102 middle schools, only 23 exist outside of a single-accountability structure. Three of these exist within our partnership.
  - In the Berwick Partnership, for example, Berwick Academy is responsible for 100% of the outcomes at the end of the secondary phase of education but 40% of the secondary years teaching time is outside our influence and control.

#### **Sustainability**

- A study commissioned by Berwick Academy and undertaken by Northumbria University stated that the challenges faced by partnership schools "in terms of rural and coastal isolation" are exacerbated by the "proximity to what are frequently regarded as better two-tier options across the border in Scotland".
  - Aligning the Berwick Partnership to a primary-secondary model would reduce the numbers of children leaving the Berwick Partnership for a Two-Tier education in Scotland.
- The rural and coastal isolation is aggravated further by increasing educational isolation. Our nearest Northumberland neighbours in Alnwick are already within a Two-Tier system, and the Amble partnership are in the process of moving to a Two-Tier structure. Across the border to the north is also Two-Tier. Continuing to maintain a three-tier provision in such isolation continues to place barriers to the sustainability of schools within the partnership, and marks Berwick as out of kilter both nationally and locally.
  - Aligning the Berwick Partnership to a primary-secondary model would reduce the numbers of children leaving the Berwick Partnership to Two-Tier provision elsewhere in the county.
  - Aligning the Berwick Partnership with other Two-Tier partnerships nearby within the county will lead to improved sharing of expertise between partnerships.
- Many assumptions are being made around numbers of children from the Berwick Partnership who are currently educated outside of the partnership, particularly that these students move out of the partnership to avoid coming to Berwick Academy. Our understanding is that this is much more complex.
  - Berwick Academy has welcomed students from Alnwick and Scotland into the school as families have made the choice to move their children to Berwick Academy from other communities. We have also welcomed students back from private education into the Academy.
  - Families in Wooler who initially applied to, and were rejected from, the Alnwick Partnership have subsequently made first choice applications to Berwick Academy, and our anecdotal evidence from meetings in Wooler is that they are keen to remain part of the Berwick Partnership after building positive relationships with the Academy.
  - Data provided by Northumberland County Council would suggest that a total of 184 high school age children and 98 middle school children are educated outside of the partnership. Parent choice, including 67 in private education, will play a part in this, but we do not believe that it is coincidence that the 215 being educated in either the Alnwick Partnership or in Scotland are being educated in a Two Tier system.
- The numbers of students applying to Berwick Academy as their High School provision have grown year on year for the previous three years. However, we recognise that fluctuations in the birth rate mean that smaller cohorts within the partnership are already starting to cause concern for some First Schools.
  - Although it will be several years before the birth rate decline affects the Academy, we recognise that there are insufficient children within the community to support the current number of schools. Fewer, but larger, primary schools would benefit from the ability to withstand fluctuations to funding caused by reduced student numbers in given years. Very small schools can find this difficult to manage and can lead to decisions which are not in the best educational interests of the children in order to remain viable.
  - Adding year groups to each key stage leads to robust financial security, creating a more equal access to funding and enabling significant investment in all our young people.
  - The table below demonstrates Berwick Academy's census numbers, increasing year on year recently. In addition, the forecast for the next three years is based on numbers currently in feeder schools. Our forecasts are normally accurate within two to three students. The forecast from 2024 adding two year groups of 180 (our suggested PAN) demonstrates the financial viability of the school within a Two Tier system, which, when modelled, demonstrates an immediate income surplus which will allow for significant investment in our students and the opportunities available to them.
- As a partnership, we are keen to maintain our rural identity, and to maintain educational provision for our rural communities.

- Moving to a primary-secondary model is a way to protect this rural identity, albeit requiring some change to most effectively meet rural needs. The proposals to maintain the location of current First Schools to expand to become Primary Schools is a positive step in learning within the community.
- Financial stability and a coming-together of schools to share resources will protect the uniqueness of our rural location.
- Berwick Academy is committed to developing a Post 16 provision which ensures that young people in the Berwick area have access to a range of options for their education and training needs, currently often met by having to travel significant distances.
  - The Academy is committed to working in a complimentary, non-competitive partnership in order to ensure that the Northumberland Strategic Skills Plan can be fully implemented for young people in Berwick.
  - A MOU and joint committee are already in place with NCC and Academy Trustees to ensure this work is sustainable and both parties are accountable for its development.
  - This will develop the long-term financial sustainability of a Post 16 and Post 18 model for Berwick.
  - An evidence-based provision to address local skills demands in Key Priority Areas through:
    - Academic pathways (A Level, T Level and Higher Technical)
    - Vocational and Apprenticeship pathways
    - Professional and CPD development for the local economy
    - Pathways to support children and young people with SEND into sustainable careers.
- Berwick Academy has a full staff of specialist teachers, despite concerns around recruitment nationally and the effect of our location on recruitment. In addition to recruiting high quality staff, Berwick Academy has a clear rationale around growing our own high calibre staff and has systems in place to grow and nurture staff through their early careers and beyond.
  - Berwick Academy is the northern hub for the Three Rivers Trust Early Careers Teacher programme, delivering training for those in the early years of their teaching career in order to develop into excellent practitioners to benefit our students.
  - This means that Berwick Academy currently trains teachers from across schools in the Berwick Partnership.

### SEND Provision

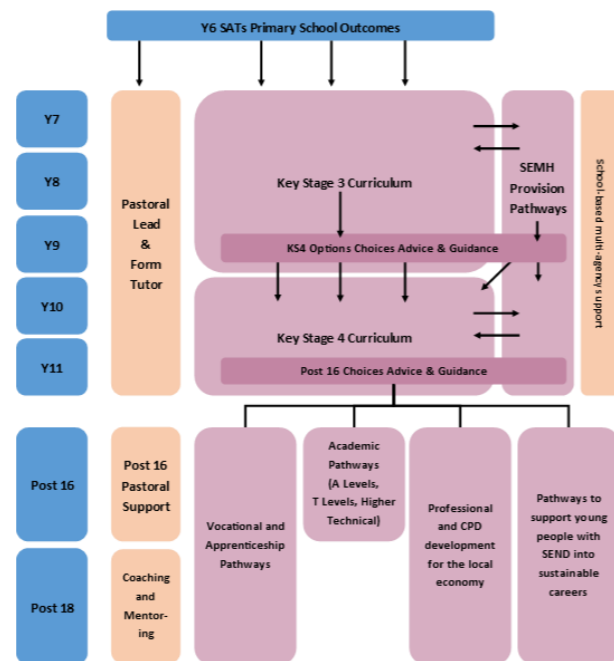
We recognise the need to support an increasing number of children and families dealing with issues relating to SEMH. Berwick Academy, in partnership with St Mary's First School, submitted a proposal regarding a provision to meet the needs of SEMH and other complex needs, within our locality which was considered as part of the previous consultation phase, and has now become part of the final consultation.

The impact of Covid on children's mental health, resilience, emotional presentation/development, early years' development is just emerging. This has also been recognised nationally. We believe our proposal is able to scale to provide the correct provision and resources both for now and in the long-term.

The proposal suggested by Berwick Academy and St Mary's is fully aligned to the Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Strategy:

- A mainstream offer which consists of school-based multi-agency intervention, prevention and support.
- Fair access and inclusion in order to ensure places within support bases and alternative provision style learning is fair.
- A quality assurance process which ensures best practice.
- Develops specialist settings with a local solution for children within the Berwick Partnership.

### Berwick Academy as a secondary school model



	<p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>In conclusion, Berwick Academy fully supports the proposals outlined by Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023 in moving to a structural change based on a Two-Tier primary-secondary future for the partnership. This is based on sound educational, relational and financial considerations, which we believe can only be delivered sustainably within a Two-Tier structure within the Berwick Partnership area.</p> <p>Change is uncomfortable, but inevitable, and we believe that the County Council's commitment to invest in the future in terms of the school estate needs to be matched with change that leads to, not only buildings that are fit for the next generation, but the educational structure that leads to the improvements that we all want to see for the young people of the Berwick Partnership. Berwick Academy remains committed to our clearly stated aims of ensuring that our school community is framed within a context of "friendship, learning and respect". We will ensure that transition arrangements are handled sensitively and efficiently to secure a positive experience for all students.</p> <p>There is a stark reality regarding sustainability and viability of schools due to falling birth rates across the Partnership. This is not a problem to be fixed in the future, but a problem that is being felt by First Schools currently, and which will be felt moving forwards through the school system within the partnership for the foreseeable future. It is, therefore, crucial that action is taken to put structural changes in place which allow schools to mitigate these fluctuations, and for the County Council investment of public finances in the Berwick Partnership to have the most impact on children and learning within the partnership, not on maintaining multiple sites, staffing structures and school infrastructures.</p> <p>The case for change is not related to individual schools, their status as maintained, voluntary aided, faith-based or academies. As an Academy school we understand that our academy status is permanent, and even if there was a change of government, academies will remain. 80% of secondary schools are now academies. We have, however, turned our school towards its community and positioned it to be a centre of positivity for young people of Berwick.</p>
Parent	<p>We are writing to you to express our objections to the proposal to move from a successful three-tier system to a two-tier system in Berwick-Upon-Tweed. This decision is going to detrimentally impact the educational opportunities and outcomes of our children, along with all other children currently in the first and middle school phase of their education. We have already expressed our opposition during the consultation phase. However, as the report stated that the majority of the opposition was only from Middle School age parents and Middle School staff it would appear that our concerns are not valued and are being ignored. There is clearly a determination to press ahead with closing good middle schools in order to financially support an under-performing academy rather than focusing on sustaining, supporting and improving the educational aspirations and opportunities of our children. Under the current three tier system, the town has several successful first and middle schools. The secondary provision at The Academy has been in a position of requiring improvement or worse for the last 13 years. The catchment is haemorrhaging pupils from the post-middle school age group as parents desperately seek to avoid the failing provision at the Academy. The proposal to change to a two tier system is not addressing this huge failing of the education system in Berwick. It is simply compounding it and condemning children into an inadequate educational setting for longer. It is short sighted and ill-conceived. Parents and children should not be facing this appalling situation. It is unacceptable that the sub-standard provision of our secondary school has been allowed to occur and even worse to have been allowed to manifest and fail to make any improvement in over a decade. The educational failure of the Academy is now being financially rewarded and deemed as an acceptable standard into which we are to be forced to send our children to be failed for a greater proportion of their education. Although a small rural, northern community our children should have access to the same good educational opportunities as all other children in the country. The fact that we have only one secondary school in the entire catchment makes it even more vital that it provides, as a bare minimum, an acceptable standard of education. This is certainly not the case currently and is highly unlikely to improve with the proposed tier change. At no stage of the consultation has anyone been able to explain to us how our children's educational outcomes will be improved by this change. To be told that children work better in new classrooms just does not wash. Moreover, these new settings are not even under construction yet so as our children move into the Academy they are more than likely to have their education disrupted further with temporary portable cabin classrooms, while the miraculous educational improving buildings are being constructed. Neither does the suggestion of increased money available for The Academy because of increased pupil numbers offer any reassurance that educational outcomes will improve. By the academic year of 2025/2026 our children are going to be attending a Middle School which will have been operating under impending closure for 3 years. What kind of education will the Middle Schools be able to offer by then? Will there even be any staff left? How will staff be retained and motivated to work under such conditions? If staff are not retained who is going to be teaching our children? Supply staff, a cover supervisor or a teaching assistant? That is certainly not acceptable either. Is Northumberland County Council going to guarantee that they can maintain the education of our children until 2026? Or will private tutoring be our only option? Any decision to close the Middle Schools under the current proposal and time frame is letting our children down. They have one chance at their education and it is certainly not something that this proposed change appears to be seriously taking into account. Furthermore, all of the children who will be impacted by these changes are the same children who have already had their education disrupted by COVID 19, school closures and home learning. The consultation process asked for an alternative educational proposal. There was a proposal of an alternative school system put forward by educational leaders within the consultation time frame, however it has been dismissed without further consultation on the basis that it was proposed too late. At the very least due consideration should be given to this proposal. From the information we have about it, it at least addressed the educational outcomes and outlined how things would be improved by involving the whole educational partnership working together and schools supporting each other to get the best educational outcomes for all children, across all age groups. The decision to change to a two-tier system will condemn local children to be educated in an inadequate school two years earlier than under the current system. The school in question has failed local children for the last 13 years, so this is not just a short term failure. It is incomprehensible that it is likely to be decided that our children will be better off in this setting than in the highly performing schools that they currently have access to. It is also unfathomable that the proposed closure of three good middle schools, with educational outcomes above national average at KS2, is being backed as the most positive way forward for our community. As parents, we must absolutely demand equality, accountability and guarantees for the educational future of our children in Berwick. This is not happening and has not happened in our community for a very long time. This latest decision does nothing to address the secondary educational deprivation our community has suffered, is currently suffering and will continue to suffer. It has only served to throw our community's children into an educational turmoil in which it would appear that educational outcomes are of no importance in the decision making process. The education of every child in Berwick-Upon-Tweed is hanging in the balance. We therefore hope that you note our extremely strong objections to the current proposal for change from a three-tier to a two-tier system and our sincere concerns and worries as parents for the future of our children's education in Berwick.</p>
The Governing Body of Tweedmouth West First School	<p>As a Governing Body, although we were not in favour of a two-tier system in Berwick, we are completely committed to supporting Tweedmouth West.</p> <p>Therefore, we will do all we can to ensure that the changes made will be with the full commitment of the Governors.</p> <p>Our aim is, as always, to make sure that we do the best for the children, staff and families of the school.</p>



<p>Berwick Academy Trustees</p>	<p>We write in response to the notification of proposals for the reorganisation of local authority maintained schools in the Berwick Partnership, as agreed by Cabinet on 9th May 2023.</p> <p>The Academy Trustees care passionately about the students, past, present and future and want them to be able to benefit from all of the opportunities that are available to those in other parts of the country. Furthermore, we believe that providing a well-balanced and educated workforce is vital for the growth and development of the wider Berwick area. This is critical for an area which suffers from the challenges of being both a coastal and rural community.</p> <p>For that reason, the Trustees of Berwick Academy strongly support the proposals outlined by Cabinet on 9th May 2023 for the reorganisation of education in the Berwick Partnership within a Two-Tier structure and the establishment of Special Educational Needs &amp; Disabilities (SEND) units. When considering the effects for the whole partnership and reviewing the proposal we believe a Two-Tier structure will produce the necessary improvements in outcomes for all our young people, that will enable the locality to be educationally sustainable and prosperous.</p> <p>Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children should be taught the National Curriculum in complete Key Stages as they are in the majority of schools across the country.</li> <li>• Children should move between schools less often, so that children, families and schools can build positive relationships and a clear understanding of expectations over time, rather than these changing three times, sometimes in the middle of a Key Stage of the National Curriculum.</li> <li>• Children and families benefit from developing a longer-term relationship (from year 7) with the school and familiarity with subjects, before choosing their GCSE options choices during year 9.</li> <li>• The national picture is heavily in favour of Two-Tier education, with only 102 three-tier middle schools out of 32,163 schools.</li> <li>• Teachers are trained to teach either primary or secondary education. A Two-Tier model allows for specialist secondary teachers to teach their subject from year 7, leading to improved outcomes for students.</li> <li>• Schools taking responsibility and accountability for whole key stages enables the delivery of a truly cohesive and progressive curriculum, the aim currently seen as the main driver in excellence within education, (DFE/OfSTED vision). It also reduces the need for testing and assessment within key stages, as teachers/schools have a more robust knowledge of the child, their achievements and their areas for development, simply because they have supported the child throughout their whole journey within a key stage. For instance, children would not have to go through unnecessary baseline assessments within Year 5, which are currently needed as a means to secure an element of 3 tier transition.</li> </ul> <p><b>Other points to consider</b></p> <p><u>SEND Provision</u></p> <p>Trustees have considered the issues around SEND within our local community and the wider context. As a Trustee board we fully support the development of additional provision for the existing and emerging SEND needs. We are aware of the excellent work of the Grove and support their work continuing in the future, we however also recognise the need to support an increasing number of children/ families dealing with issues related to Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH).</p> <p>With the above in mind, Berwick Academy's joint proposal with St Mary's First School to provide specialist facilities to meet the needs of SEMH and other complex needs, within our locality has now formed part of the consultation and we fully support this development.</p> <p>The Trustee board also recognises that the impact of Covid on children's mental health, resilience, emotional presentation/development, early years development is just emerging. This has also been recognised nationally. As such the Board believes that the proposed changes are able to scale to provide the correct provision and resources for now and in the long-term.</p> <p>There is the potential for this to include the need to further develop, within the locality, joint work in 'a family of schools' approach as currently being suggested between St Mary's and ourselves.</p> <p><u>Wooler and Belford</u></p> <p>As a Trustee Board we would like both schools to stay within the Berwick Partnership, as we believe they add strength in terms of the current and future potential of our joint educational offer. Additionally, we would like their students to benefit from some of the partnership work with local employers. However, the decision is for their community to make.</p> <p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>In conclusion, the Trustee Board remains unanimously behind the proposed change to 2-tier, having previously passed a resolution to pursue this. This is not only for all of the aforementioned reasons. We believe that with falling birth rates in the area, this is the only way to sustain a commercially viable, effective and scalable educational offering within the Berwick Partnership area.</p> <p>We acknowledge that many people are wary of change, which can make it a difficult process to go through. However, fear of change should not stop us from executing a strategy in Berwick which will offer the children of our area now, and in future generations, the best possible start to their lives. We have the people in place to make the change happen and the knowledge/expertise to help manage that change. We feel it is important to finally acknowledge that although the proposals are all about the educational offer, in truth they also will impact on the prosperity of Berwick at a wider context, as if we get the education offer correct, then that will attract new families and opportunities to our wonderful part of Northumberland.</p>
<p>Staff</p>	<p>I write as my response as Headteacher at Berwick Academy to the formal consultation on the reorganisation of education within the Berwick Partnership proposals as agreed by Northumberland County Council's Cabinet on 9th May 2023. As the Academy's Headteacher, I, along with the Senior Leadership Team, staff and trustees, strongly support the proposals to reorganise education as outlined by Cabinet on 9th May 2023. Our rationale for supporting reorganisation are outlined below. I support the Cabinet's recommendation that the partnership should now move to a primary-secondary structure, and base my view on strong educational and relational evidence from schools regionally and nationally that has been shared consistently throughout the consultation process. We have shared our arguments for our pursuit of a Two-Tier future for the partnership with parents, staff and the wider community. The key reasons which support this view of a Two-Tier structure for the partnership can be summarised as follows:</p>

Educational outcomes: ·

- Children should be taught the National Curriculum in complete Key Stages as they are in the majority of schools across the country. ·
- The national picture is heavily in favour of Two-Tier education, with only 102 three-tier middle schools out of 32,163 schools. ·
- Teachers are trained to teach either primary or secondary education. A Two-Tier model allows for specialist secondary teachers with recent GCSE and A Level teaching experience to teach their subject from year 7, leading to improved outcomes for students. ·
- Schools taking responsibility and accountability for whole key stages enables the delivery of a truly cohesive and progressive curriculum, the aim currently seen as the main driver in excellence within education, (DFE/OfSTED vision). It also reduces the need for testing and assessment within key stages, as teachers/schools have a more robust knowledge of the child, their achievements and their areas for development, simply because they have supported the child throughout their whole journey within a key stage. For instance, children would not have to go through unnecessary baseline assessments within Year 5, which are currently needed as a means to secure an element of 3 tier transition. ·
- As we currently operate in a 3 tier system we have no authority or influence over year 7 and 8 curriculum. Year 7 and 8 constitutes 40% of a child's secondary education but we have little or limited influence over its content of delivery. Year 7 and 8 are crucial years for a child's success as this is where the foundations of essential knowledge, attitudes and habits are built and positive working relationships are shaped. Staff at Berwick Academy therefore have only 60% of the allocated secondary curriculum and are yet accountable for 100% of outcomes. This would not seem to be fair or equitable.

Relationships: ·

- Children and families benefit from developing a longer-term relationship (from year 7) with the school and familiarity with subjects, before choosing their GCSE options choices during year 9.
- Children should move between schools less often, so that children, families and schools can build positive relationships and a clear understanding of expectations over time, rather than these changing three times, sometimes in the middle of a Key Stage of the National Curriculum.

Sustainability: ·

- Fewer schools within the partnership will lead to a more sustainable model for the future. Fluctuations in birth rate, and therefore the funding a school receives, are inevitable in any area, but more pronounced in our rural and coastal situation. These annual fluctuations can be more easily weathered by schools which have a stronger funding base to begin with. ·
- Schools within the partnership are keen to maintain our sense of rural identity, and we feel that the best way to secure this for the future is to move to a stronger Two-Tier model.

**SEND Provision:**

I am pleased that the partnership proposal with St Mary's First School for the provision of specialist SEMH and complex needs forms part of Cabinet's recommendations, and we are committed to making these proposals a success for the increasing number of children and families dealing with issues relating to SEMH. Our current planning in this area is scalable and we feel ready to embrace this development.

**Summary:**

In conclusion, I fully support the proposals outlined by Cabinet on 9th May 2023 in moving to a structural change based on a Two-Tier primary-secondary future for the partnership. This is based on sound educational, relational and financial considerations, which I believe can only be delivered sustainably within a Two-Tier structure within the Berwick Partnership area.

The Governors of Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First School fully support the proposals for the Berwick School's partnership, with a move to a 2-tier structure and additional provision for SEND locally. The Governing Body were pleased that NCC recognised the importance of small rural schools such as Norham to the future of communities in North Northumberland, and believe that this commitment to the future of village schools will encourage our communities to continue to flourish and grow.

Governors are also thankful for the funding allocation in the initial report to enable Norham to make the necessary changes to ensure we can provide a high quality of education to all our children within a primary setting.

The Governing Body also supports the proposal for a hard federation of Norham with Berwick St Mary's CE First School, acknowledging the additional benefits both schools will receive from Federation, which have already been evidenced since September 2022. However we respectfully request that the NCC consider changing the timeline for implementation from September 2025 to September 2024 due to the following reasons:

- The initial transition date in our opinion is too long for our communities, staff and children, who have already gone through an extended period of uncertainty over the future of Berwick Schools. We fear the longer the transition, the more likely we will lose further families, staff and children, who are concerned for their future due to the inevitable issues such change brings.
- The Berwick partnership has substantial overcapacity within its school infra-structure, therefore why can the transition date not be brought forward 12 months? We acknowledge that building work may not have been completed in terms of the final solution for Berwick, but at least we will have children and staff operating in the agreed 2-tier structure, with the process of change management commenced.
- In terms of staffing, we are all fully aware of the difficulties of recruiting in Berwick. This is not made any easier by the pay disparities north of the border, where Scottish Borders can pay up to £10,000 more to teachers for the same role. A quicker transition will reduce staff anxieties and hopefully mean we can keep excellent staff within the partnership to help us manage this period of change as best we can.
- A September 2025 transition will bring with it a period of extended uncertainty which is not good for any of our stakeholders, especially our more vulnerable. SEND learners are a significant and growing part of the school population in Berwick, as such so are the resources required to support their needs. Currently we have many children being transported out of the area to alternative provisions/schools, as well as children in our settings whose needs are not being fully met. Therefore we request a quicker transition, with a focus on providing the resources to support SEND pupils locally, which will have a significant positive impact in all areas, from the individual pupils and their families, to the staff who are currently working diligently to meet the needs of the child in their care, but unfortunately do not have the resources or skills presently to do so fully.

In summary, the Governing Body of Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First School fully supports all the structures and the aspirations of the proposal, however we strongly feel that there is unequivocal evidence to move the timetable for implementation forward 12 months to September 2024.

The Governing Body of Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First School.

<p>The Governing Body of St Cuthbert's Catholic First School</p>	<p>In response to the publication of the Statutory Proposals, we, the governors of St Cuthbert's Catholic First School unanimously confirm our support for the two-tier model of education and wish to become a primary school providing high quality education for children from Early Years to the end of Key Stage Two when they would transfer to Secondary School, which is the pattern for most of the rest of the country.</p> <p>As the education system in England is organized around key stages it follows that logically school organization should be too as this ensures that pupils can complete each entire key stage in one school, with only one point of transition. The two-tier system also ensures that pupils are taught by subject specialists from Year 7 onwards, providing them with a challenging curriculum and expertise in preparation for GCSE and beyond. We believe that this is conducive to the raising of standards, which is what we are all aiming for.</p> <p>Becoming a Primary School would allow us the continue to cherish and nurture our pupils right up to the age of 11 and to prepare them for secondary education ourselves. Having only one point of transition would lessen the danger of lost learning, especially as there would not be breaks in the middle of Key Stages.</p> <p>Obviously, we are also very keen to be able to provide two more years of education in a Catholic school allowing us to help our children to further develop their spiritual lives and understanding about their Catholic cultural heritage before they leave us for secondary school.</p>
<p>Staff</p>	<p>I remain firmly in favour of the Cabinet's proposal to restructure education within the Berwick Partnership to a two-tier (primary/secondary) structure. I also fully support the opening of a SEMH, MLD, SLCN and ASD specialist provision within the secondary age range and based at Berwick Academy. My three key reasons for this are:</p> <p><u>Educational Outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Children should be taught the National Curriculum in complete Key Stages as they are in the majority of schools across the country.</li> <li>o The national picture is heavily in favour of two-tier education.</li> <li>o Teachers are trained to teach either primary or secondary education. A two-tier model allows for specialist secondary teachers with recent GCSE and A level teaching experience to teach their subject from Year 7, leading to improved outcomes for students.</li> </ul> <p><u>Relationships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Children and families benefit from developing a longer-term relationship with the school and familiarity with subjects before choosing their GCSE options during Year 9.</li> <li>o Children should move between schools less often, so that children, families and schools can build positive relationships and a clear understanding of expectations over time.</li> </ul> <p><u>Sustainability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Fewer schools within the partnership will lead to a more sustainable model for the future. Fluctuations in birth rate, and therefore the funding that a school receives, are inevitable in any area, but more pronounced in our rural and coastal situation. These annual fluctuations can be more easily weathered by schools which have a stronger funding base to begin with.</li> </ul>
<p>Staff</p>	<p>I would like to express my view in favour of Berwick Academy becoming an 11-18 provider of education. My reasons are based on two aspects of education, these being outcomes and relationships between school and home:</p> <p><u>Outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Children should be taught the National Curriculum in complete Key Stages as they are in the majority of schools across the country.</li> <li>o The national picture is heavily in favour of Two-Tier education.</li> <li>o Teachers are trained to teach either primary or secondary education. A two-tier model allows for specialist secondary teachers with recent GCSE and A level teaching experience to teach their subject from Year 7, leading to improved outcomes for students.</li> </ul> <p><u>School/Home</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Children and families benefit from developing a longer-term relationship with the school and familiarity with subjects before choosing their GCSE options during Year 9.</li> <li>o Children should move between schools less often, so that children, families and schools can build positive relationships and a clear understanding of expectations over time.</li> </ul>
<p>Staff</p>	<p>I am firmly in favour of the Cabinet's proposal to restructure education within the Berwick Partnership to a two-tier (primary/secondary) structure. I also fully support the opening of a SEMH, MLD, SLCN and ASD specialist provision within the secondary age range and based at Berwick Academy. My three key reasons for this have not changed throughout the process, and are:</p> <p><u>Educational Outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Children should be taught the National Curriculum in complete Key Stages as they are in the majority of schools across the country.</li> <li>o The national picture is heavily in favour of Two-Tier education.</li> <li>o Teachers are trained to teach either primary or secondary education. A two-tier model allows for specialist secondary teachers with recent GCSE and A level teaching experience to teach their subject from Year 7, leading to improved outcomes for students.</li> </ul> <p><u>Relationships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Children and families benefit from developing a longer-term relationship with the school and familiarity with subjects before choosing their GCSE options during Year 9.</li> <li>o Children should move between schools less often, so that children, families and schools can build positive relationships and a clear understanding of expectations over time.</li> </ul> <p><u>Sustainability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Fewer schools within the partnership will lead to a more sustainable model for the future. Fluctuations in birth rate, and therefore the funding that a school receives, are inevitable in any area, but more pronounced in our rural and coastal situation. These annual fluctuations can be more easily weathered by schools which have a stronger funding base to begin with.</li> </ul>
<p>Unidentified</p>	<p>I would like to pass a few comments on NCC's desire and apparent intention to change from 3 tier to 2 tier education in the Berwick upon Tweed area. I speak as a lay person and without inside knowledge of the thoughts or workings of NCC, however this is now the second time I and my children have been through this process so I think I can speak with some experience and knowledge. Before moving to Berwick my family and I lived in Alnwick and experienced first-hand the consultation, decision and implementation of the change from 3 to 2 tier. I can only describe the process as a complete shamble predicated on lies and incompetence. It was obvious from the early consultation that the decision had already been made to go 2 tier and that the consultation staff were tasked with selling the idea to parents, unfortunately the plans completely ignored the Town Plan which had been voted on by residents the year previous. Consequently a brand new high school was built, which if it isn't already too small soon will be, only for it then to be expanded whilst our children were educated in unsuitable portacabins whilst two middle schools lay unused and empty. The level of education for the newly transitioned children in this building site was appalling, as was the safety and discipline. The feedback I'm still receiving in Alnwick is that the situation has not improved in the slightest, and the latest Ofsted Report backs this up. Congratulations NCC, in 10 years you've succeeded in turning DCHS from an "Outstanding" school in a truly terrible building into a "Requires Improvement" school in a state of the art building. That's quite some achievement. The situation in Berwick is</p>

similar in many ways but quite different in others. Like Alnwick the High School in Berwick requires considerable investment, if not a whole new campus, however unlike Alnwick it has been in "Requires Improvement" for many years without any signs that it will improve in the near future. In their proposal NCC state that a large number of Berwick area pupils tend to go to DCHS in Alnwick or go into the Scottish system as a basis to plan for the future. The report says that the governing bodies of most First Schools and the High School are in favour of two tier, whilst the governing bodies of the 3 Middle Schools are against it. This and suggests democratic support for the proposal; until you consider that the first and high school will benefit financially from the proposal whilst the middle schools will close under it. Their support is pure financial expediency and as such should be disregarded. Under the title "Viability and Sustainability of schools and surplus places" the consultation report states The above data equates to 28% of high school (Year 9 to Year 11) students living in the Berwick area choosing to attend other schools. Of students in the Berwick area of middle school age, 10% choose to attend these schools; at first school phase, just 4% of pupils living in the Berwick area attend these schools. In economic terms, at high school phase these student numbers equates to around £915k while at middle school phase this equates to £470k. If that statement doesn't tell you that the problem is squarely in the High School level then I have to question NCC's fitness to make these decisions, yet bizarrely the current proposal is to increase the failing High School and close three very well regarded Middle Schools. This is utter madness, the fact that nearly one third of parents choose to send their children away from Berwick High School should be a matter of embarrassment and shame for NCC education department not a convenient excuse to reduce the number of pupil places available. Nobody in their right mind would voluntarily move their child from a school rated "Good" to one rated "Requires Improvement" without a very good reason; yet NCC is proposing to force hundreds of parents to do just that against their wishes and better judgement. The likely outcome of this proposal is that parents will simply remove their children at year 7 instead of year 9 as they do now. Berwick High School undoubtedly requires improving physically and academically but until these improvements are achieved NCC will be forcing parents to act against the best interests of their own children, and that is a damning indictment for any Education Authority. I was against the move from 3 to 2 tier education in Alnwick and my fears have been well founded. I see no reason why a similar move will not result in a similar catastrophe for education in Berwick and therefore I absolutely oppose the change to 2 tier. I would however support the proposal to combine both Berwick Middle Schools on a single site.

The Governing Body of Holy Trinity  
CE First School

We remind the council that its key objective was "improving education outcomes at each phase."

For our part, we recognised that, although not the easier option for our school, the bigger picture indicated that only significant change across the system would achieve the desired improvement at all levels.

We set out our dilemma in our previous response (the loss of good schools, the disruption to current cohorts) but also accepted the inevitability of the move to two tier and the practicality of making this change "while the money was on the table." It was, therefore, hugely disappointing to see in the recommendations published on May 9, that Holy Trinity and a number of other first schools had not been allocated any funding to convert to primary.

This came as a surprise, given that we had been assured by officers on several occasions - and in direct response to questions from our governors - that all costs incurred would be met by the council and that the £40m allocation was a 'starting point.'

Our discussions with other stakeholders have further muddied the waters and there appears to be a great deal of confusion around how the costings were obtained. We have been told by councillors that the council must fit the bill, so the table on page 70 was not 'complete' or just a 'ball park' but the officers behind the recommendations tell us that, as a church school, we are not 'technically' eligible (although the same could apply to an academy).

In the absence of clarity, rumours abound and unofficial meetings take place but we have not been consulted on how our conversion to primary might be achieved. Rather, we have been told, indirectly, that officers have studied blueprints of our 120-year-old building and decided the five classrooms are above average size, so we should be able to squeeze in an extra 60 pupils. There has been no explanation as to how that would work in practice.

Our current assembly hall is too small to accommodate 180 pupils and knocking through to the adjacent room would require the demolition of an antiquated stage and result in the loss of a valuable intervention space.

Even minimal adjustments, removing and erecting internal walls, would require capital not available from our school budget and it would downgrade our provision, especially our open plan EYFS; our most modern environment, having undergone renovation in 2008 to reflect the broader, play focussed curriculum and enable inclusivity. Above all, it doesn't feel like "improvement" to us.

The council talks about 'best value' but it is not cost-effective to do a job badly.

All schools affected should be finished to a standard, in line with current guidelines for new-builds - not on the basis of what schools elsewhere have had to put up with.

Our buildings need to be fit for purpose, future-proof and reflect the demands of the modern curriculum. If not, how can any improvement, or even maintenance of current good outcomes, be assured?

We have been open and honest throughout this process, motivated only by our genuine will to do better for all the children in the Berwick partnership. We do not expect or want to rebuild our school and we have always supported a re-build of the Academy, but it should not be at the expense of the younger children. Primary education is not less important; it is where the foundation for future success is laid. If we fail to invest in it now, we store up problems for the long-term and we do not address the objectives we agreed at the beginning of this process. We just flip the current situation on the head - where the provision at primary level is the poor relation.

We also note that the re-siting and re-building of The Grove School has dropped off the agenda, despite a consensus that this was required, alongside improvements in mainstream SEND provision. Currently, our access to SEND support is seriously lacking and we need to be able to seek advice from specialists much more quickly and consistently. The arrangements laid out in the May document are vague and non-committal. In reference to the much sought after peripatetic service, it merely reads: "It is hoped that this type of support provision can be developed within the partnership going forward."

	<p>The consultation asked about post-16 offer and most respondents agreed that an overhaul was necessary to improve aspirations and the engagement of these young people. Many ideas for enhancement were put forward but they are largely ignored by the recommendations. Again, there is a tentative 'expectation' that the new facilities at Berwick Academy will be shared with the community. Yet, the council admits The Academy is not under its control so it follows that the school has no obligation to open up, or indeed run, clubs and activities out of hours.</p> <p>In essence, we reluctantly withhold our support until the issues raised are given more consideration and there is a clear commitment to fund the conversion of all the first schools to a level which will, at the very least, preserve their high quality provision. Pupils, parents and school staff who are about to have their lives disrupted, need to believe this reorganisation is for the greater good and that the result will be a significantly better offer for future generations, across the whole system.</p>
Staff & Parent	<p>I am disappointed with the decision to move forward with a two tier system within the Berwick partnership. As an ex-pupil of Tweedmouth Community Middle School, now as a teacher at the school but more importantly as a parent with two sons who will enter the partnership. I still feel answers and guarantees have not been given in terms of why a two tier system would provide a higher quality education than the current three tier system or Option C. I simply do not understand how this whole consultation has been moved forward when the Academy is performing more poorly compared to the middle schools and is now expected to accommodate more students. Why should we trust them with more year groups when they currently cannot manage and provide for their current students? There has been no solid explanation to guarantee how a two tier system will change the Academy. I strongly believe currently the Academy is slowly improving and can become a good school with the right support. However a new building solely will not do this as it is the staff and policies which will provide the quality teaching. A change to the two tier potentially will lose the excellent staff who are already providing good education within the middle schools. As these staff are not guaranteed to have jobs within The Academy. The consultation initially heavily presented evidence on the two tier system implemented in Alnwick. This has since not brought the results expected and resulted in poor Ofsted ratings, therefore brings doubts and worry whether the same would happen in Berwick. I understand there are financial gains to more students but I certainly do not see and feel that guarantees have been given to the quality of our children's education. The original plan by the council was to close the middle schools and some first schools. Now all the first schools will remain open? I do not understand how a plan can be changed during consultation without consulting the public again. Therefore I am very surprised that Option C has not been taken further into consideration. Looking at the consultation as a Physical Education teacher there was half a page which said sporting facilities and physical education would not be affected. I do not feel the consultation document has addressed the policies surrounding the disposals of playing fields and the effects this will in turn have on PE facilities, specialists and on our children's education, health and opportunities within the whole Berwick partnership. If we lose the middle schools we will lose 3 large playing fields, tennis courts, netball courts, football and rugby pitches, rounder pitches, a competitive trampoline, athletics tracks/facilities and specific sports gyms/halls. To my knowledge none of the first schools have a dedicated sports hall, the majority of them don't have fields or yards large enough to allow sporting matches and competitions for lessons. Let alone hold area competitions on the scale that the middle schools do for years 5 and 6. A lot of these schools will need to expand to accommodate for the new year groups which could potentially mean the loss of more outdoor space and PE facilities. In terms of The Academy the gym is out of action at times due to exams. The Astro currently needs extensive work to be used safely again. If the new academy is built at the top of the field this will possibly result in the loss of playing fields. As there are no detailed plans on the facilities that will be built with a new build. Therefore questions have to be raised again on where the guaranteed improvement is compared to what is already provided by middle schools. To my knowledge there are currently no specialist PE teachers in the primaries. How will this be addressed in the restructure ? As our current year 5 and 6 already have access to specialist teachers. Our year 7 and 8 students not only have access to more facilities in the middle schools but also opportunities to compete in inter and intra competitions compared to The Academy where exams sometimes take over. In turn I feel this is a massive decline in sporting facilities, access to PE specialists and opportunities for our students. Therefore affecting their involvement in sport and fitness and ultimately is detrimental to their health. I have not seen substantial evidence from the consultation that recognises this and addresses the laws around the disposal of school playing fields and the resulting implications for our children's access to a high quality PE curriculum. I welcome and encourage change and improvement, as a teacher this is our goal for every student and I understand that change needs to happen for the future of the partnership. However this means the closing of three good schools resulting in two poorer performing school's expanding. With little evidence to show how these schools will be supported in doing so, this concerns me. We only get one education and I am worried for my sons and the community's future opportunities and prospects within the Berwick Partnership.</p>
The Governing Body of Tweedmouth Prior Park First School	<p>I can confirm that Tweedmouth Prior Park First School support that proposals of moving to 2-tier as per the recommendations by Northumberland County Council, which means Tweedmouth Prior Park First School will become a Primary School.</p>
Parent	<p>I am writing to thank you for making the decision to move to a two-tier system for the Berwick Partnership schools. As my husband and I noted in our online response to the consultation, we are concerned that our eldest daughter XXXXXX, will have to go to Middle School for 2 years, whilst her younger sister XXXXXX, will be able to remain at her first school until the end of year 6. We believe this will be a detrimental move for XXXXXX. Lock down affected her self confidence and friendships and we do not think she will cope well with the move to middle school in just over a year's time. We would like to request that XXXXXX year group stays in their current first schools rather than go to a middle school, seemingly unnecessarily. Both our children attend St. Cuthbert's First School in Berwick, which already has a spare classroom available for years 5-6. We are writing today to ask that St Cuthbert's be given the freedom to educate XXXXX year group at the school until the end of year 6. This would allow XXXXXX to consolidate her friendships in her current environment without having a potentially disruptive move to adjust to. It would also allow her to continue to learn within the Catholic schools syllabus, which is important to us and to XXXXX herself. (XXXXXX wrote a comment on this in her online response to the consultation.) Thank you for your consideration in this matter and we hope to hear from you soon.</p>
Unidentified	<p>I am writing to say how disappointed and worried I am at the proposal put forward. I fail to understand why you are asking the parents of 200 - 300 children to send these pupils to a Requiring Improvement school rather than a Good school. How does giving Berwick Academy all these extra pupils improve their outcomes? As far as I can see, the only benefit is financial benefit for NCC. Furthermore, keeping all the small first schools open and transforming them into primaries simply means more mixed year group classes and less specialist teaching. How does this improve outcomes for these pupils? Children's music in Berwick is all but dead, any tuition has to be paid for privately (unless it's guitar, violin or drums) and there are no music groups for youngsters in town. Music Partnership North states this is because NCC won't provide the manpower for the necessary administration needed for expansion. Going two tier will mean no specialist music teaching before 11 years old - the final nail in the coffin of children's music in Berwick. Add to this the fact that both my children at the Academy have had to have private tuition to achieve the qualifications they need, means that a good education also needs private finance in Berwick. Education, be it two tier or three tier is only good when the schools are fit for purpose and at the moment, this is not the case at the Academy. As I said earlier, I fail to understand how giving them more pupils solves the existing problems. Finally, I would like an explanation as to how the report is proposing a model that has not been consulted on. It is neither model A nor model B that has been put forward as Scremerston First was to close in both models and suddenly, this is no longer the case.</p>
Unidentified	<p>I am not sure if there is a correct way of doing this or not, and if this is incorrect, I apologize. But I am writing to you to voice my strenuous objections to the proposed closure of Berwick, Glendale, and Tweedmouth Community Middle Schools. I am an aunt of eight, six of whom are going and will go through the Berwick Education System (one is at Tweedmouth Middle now), I and my three siblings all did so, and my sister-in-law teaches at Tweedmouth, so I feel I have some right to a say in this argument. First of all, although it may not be relevant to your final conclusions, I would like to say that the manner in which the decision to move from a 3- to a 2-tier system of education was announced by Northumberland County Council was shoddy - my</p>

	<p>sister-in-law found out she had lost her job in the playground of another school when she was picking up her child as it was released to the press before the heads of the schools involved were even notified. Berwick, Glendale, and Tweedmouth Middle Schools have all been rated as 'good' by Ofsted, and I know for a fact that Tweedmouth encourages its pupils to flourish as my niece is thriving there. Using an example, she attends the Lego Robotics classes - which are run by her mother - and they recently celebrated gaining a place at the national finals in Harrogate. These good ratings should have at least counted for something when it came to making this decision, but I can't remember them even getting a mention in the final draft proposal. No one has produced any genuine evidence to show 2-tier is better. The Council are slowly attaining their goal of closing every middle school in the county, but now throwing about the most modern of buzzwords like 'sustainability' to describe a policy that has been talked about since I was at school more than twenty years ago! And they started actually closing middle schools in 2006. The fact that this 'policy' has been going on for as long as it has smacks of an agenda to me. These closures are not about what's best for the education of our children and I think it should be made clear why they are really doing this. I have read the earlier report into the various proposals for reorganizing the school system in Berwick. In my opinion, not enough consideration was given to the Middle Schools' joint proposal which would have seen their schools remaining open. The part of the report which mentioned their suggestions read like a curt dismissal out of hand when, given what was at stake for the three schools in question, at least a modicum of care should have gone into the response. No one has adequately explained what is wrong with the 3-tier system. The status quo was good enough for me and all my siblings. Rural schools - or in my opinion what should be considered rural, i.e. regardless of area and not into the hundreds and thousands of pupils, this would include Berwick and Tweedmouth - are by definition small schools and they change their pupil numbers all the time. That has always been the case. It can't now be used as the 'evidence' needed to justify closing schools. Another, younger, niece of mine struggled very badly in her previous First School in Berwick because the class sizes (+30) were far too large, and she needed a little bit extra support but was unable to get it. She is now her vivacious self again and all of her academic areas have improved no end since she moved to a smaller school - in this case, Scremerston First. I would have grave worries about her - and any pupils like her - having to go back to a school where there were such excessive numbers in the future, but I fear that this proposal will bring those numbers about. While I am very glad that the First Schools that had their futures placed in doubt are going to remain open under this proposal, extending their age ranges by two years will be a huge burden to them, especially in so short a time. I have seen several of these schools at close hand - their buildings are far too small to accommodate two extra year groups, and I don't believe the £40 million promised by the Council is anywhere near enough to get them up to scratch to hold all the extra pupils they will be forced to take on. And I would frankly like to know how the Council - and I know they have various 'partners' in this scheme - have suddenly found £40 million for spending on schools when many of these old buildings and sites have been crying out for basic repairs for years, to no apparent avail. The apparent cheer of Northumberland County Council at this final proposal sticks in my throat, and I have seen how devastating it is for the staff and parents of these three schools that are going to shut. Whatever your opinion of which tier system is best, nobody should be celebrating the closure of good schools. This is perhaps an overly emotional e-mail, but it is an extremely emotive issue. To give another personal example of my bewilderment with this 'policy', my old Middle School in Belford - which consistently got a good rating from Ofsted - was shut a few years ago after a long campaign (which included becoming a Church of England School to try to stay open). The First School took on two years' worth of extra pupils and the remaining two years went to High School early. The Middle School is now a derelict building with what only amounts to a junkyard filling the grounds when they used to be filled with children playing on the basketball and tennis courts after school and during the holidays. Now large HGV's hog tiny village roads going in and out of the place. They even stopped children taking the short-cut through the Middle School grounds to the First (what is now the Primary) School - and they have to take the more dangerous route by a busy road. That was not an educational decision in any way shape or form. Simply the Diocese of Newcastle flogging off the land. And I believe the same can be said for this current proposal. Whatever the real reason for deciding to do this, it has precious little - if anything - to do with the educational needs of pupils. Closing any school should be a last resort - closing good ones should be outlawed without extremely good evidence it is in the best interests of pupils. That has not been provided in this case. And I hope you will reconsider. I thank you for your time.</p>
Staff	<p>My submission in respect of the consultation on the future of schooling in the Berwick Partnership: I am in favour of the Cabinet's proposal to restructure education within the Berwick Partnership to a two-tier (primary/secondary) structure. I also fully support the opening of a SEMH, MLD, SLCN and ASD specialist provision within the secondary age range and based at Berwick Academy. The three key reasons are:</p> <p><u>Educational Outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Children should be taught the National Curriculum in complete Key Stages as they are in the majority of schools across the country.</li> <li>o The national picture is heavily in favour of Two-Tier education.</li> <li>o Teachers are trained to teach either primary or secondary education. A two-tier model allows for specialist secondary teachers with recent GCSE and A level teaching experience to teach their subject from Year 7, leading to improved outcomes for students.</li> </ul> <p><u>Relationships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Children and families benefit from developing a longer-term relationship with the school and familiarity with subjects before choosing their GCSE options during Year 9.</li> <li>o Children should move between schools less often, so that children, families and schools can build positive relationships and a clear understanding of expectations over time.</li> </ul> <p><u>Sustainability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Fewer schools within the partnership will lead to a more sustainable model for the future. Fluctuations in birth rate, and therefore the funding that a school receives, are inevitable in any area, but more pronounced in our rural and coastal situation. These annual fluctuations can be more easily weathered by schools which have a stronger funding base to begin with.</li> </ul>
Staffing Body - St Cuthbert's Catholic First School	<p>St Cuthbert's first school are in support of the recommendation to reorganise the partnership into a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system of education. We want to be able to provide Catholic education to our children for longer. We know that our families cherish the deep spiritual side we provide in prayer, liturgy &amp; the catholic life of our school and that at present there is no provision for this after Year 4. We wish to align with the national picture of how the education system in England is set out;</p> <p>Primary;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Early Years; ages 3-5 years; nursery &amp; reception</li> <li>- Key Stage 1; ages 5-7 years; Years 1 &amp; 2</li> <li>- Key Stage 2; ages 7-11 years; Years 3 – 6</li> </ul> <p>Secondary;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Key Stage 3; ages 11-14 years; Years 7 - 9</li> <li>- Key Stage 4; ages 14-16 years; Years 10 &amp; 11</li> <li>- Sixth Form; ages 16-18 years; Years 12 &amp; 13</li> </ul>

	<p>We feel children should complete full key stages in the same school, with minimum points of transition during their school life. This would minimise any disruption to progress during a key stage and give teachers a greater opportunity to develop and nurture the children throughout the particular stage they are in from beginning to end, getting to know the children really well. This is also particularly important when it comes to preparing children for key assessments such as SATS which occur in a primary school at the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6 - it would be beneficial to children to have the same teaching team from the beginning to the end of these journeys without having to adjust to a new school mid-way through. Likewise for GCSE preparation from Year 7 onwards in secondary education with specialist teachers in each subject from Year 7 upwards, giving our children 2 extra years of GCSE preparation (Year 7 &amp; 8) with trained secondary teachers in the same school as they will sit their exams in.</p> <p>Teachers are trained to teach in either; the primary phase or the secondary phase of education. Becoming two-tier will give teaching staff the opportunities to teach across the age range they have trained to teach in and ensure at secondary school, children received specialist teaching across all subjects by teachers trained to teach their specialist subject.</p> <p>As a school we are ready for two-tier and have the space and capacity to accommodate a year 5/6 class.</p> <p>Transition to a secondary school at Year 7 would have to be well planned, as it is across most of the rest of the UK, but we are a dedicated team of staff who would ensure that this move would be carried out very carefully and work closely with Berwick Academy.</p> <p>The benefits of children beginning a new school at the start of key stage 3, supports; forming new relationships, getting to know new staff and having consistency throughout the following key stages in terms of teaching and learning.</p>
<p>Staffing Body - Tweedmouth Prior Park First School</p>	<p>The staff of Tweedmouth Prior Park First School support Northumberland County Council's recommendations for the Berwick Partnership. We support the proposed move to the 2 tier system and Tweedmouth Prior Park First School becoming a 3-11 Primary School.</p> <p>We believe that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 2 tier structure matches the National Curriculum and is in line with the majority of schools nationally.</li> <li>• The falling birth rate is impacting on First schools at present but will eventually impact upon Middle and High schools, making the 3 tier model no longer sustainable if we want the best outcomes for our children in the Berwick Partnership.</li> <li>• Allowing full Key Stages to remain in one school will ensure continuity and greater accountability. By reducing the number of transitions, we believe that there will be less disruption to children's education and therefore they will achieve better outcomes and reduce anxiety.</li> <li>• By becoming a full primary school, we would be able to build upon the immense progress children have made over the previous six years they have spent in our school.</li> <li>• Our teachers are trained to teach the full primary age range - they are primary specialist teachers.</li> <li>• Pupils are currently disadvantaged by only having one term at Berwick Academy before they make major decisions about GCSEs.</li> </ul> <p>However, we do feel that the current Grove School site is no longer big enough for the number of children who need to access it within the Partnership and this, alongside a much needed new building for Berwick Academy, should be looked at as part of this reorganisation.</p>
<p>The Governing Body of Scremerston First School</p>	<p>The Governors of Scremerston First School support the proposals for the reorganisation of local authority maintained schools in the Berwick partnership. As outlined in our comments submitted during the phase 2 consultation, we believe that a 2-tier model will provide the best learning outcomes for the children of Berwick.</p> <p>We were delighted to see that our school will remain open under the proposal and renew our commitment to working together with other rural schools in the area to offer both SEND and Early Years provision to the rural community of Berwick.</p> <p>We welcome the extension of SEND provision to include support for SEMH and hope that in the future, funding and accommodation can be found for more places to be made available at the Grove School for children with Severe Learning Difficulties, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties, Multi-Sensory Impairment and/or an Autistic Spectrum Condition thereby enabling children with this level of need to stay within the community for their education.</p> <p>We are sorry for the loss of the middle schools that have provided an excellent quality of education for children aged 9-13 in Berwick, but we recognise that a structural change is necessary to bring the Berwick partnership in line with the majority across the country. The investment in the high school along with increasing its capacity to teach Year 7 and 8 pupils will help ensure the long-term future of the school and facilitate improvement in education until the age of 18 and beyond.</p> <p>We look forward to being a part of what comes next for education in Berwick, the opportunity to support the plans for the reorganisation going forward and to cement Scremerston's position in them.</p>
<p>The Governing Body of Spittal First School</p>	<p>The governing body and staff of Spittal first school will work hard to implement whichever school structure is decided. We do feel however, a thorough further review of building structures and requirements both internal and external is required. This is needed to ensure both the capacity and suitability of our school environment for all children including those with SEND and additional year groups.</p> <p>Our building is very old and the funding for internal adjustments that we feel will be needed is not available from our current school budget. For example, modifications to increase the size of the EYFS classroom whilst maintaining intervention spaces to meet the needs of SEND learners will be needed. We were assured throughout the process that the £40 million allocation was just a start point and funds would be available to fund the building modifications needed to make the new structure, be it 2 or 3 tier, and buildings fit for purpose and sustainable for the future. We are concerned that without a carefully thought out and funded reorganisation the education standards within the primary sector will be put at risk with buildings not fit for purpose.</p> <p>It is also particularly disappointing, that the unanimous view from all schools in the partnership that a re-modelling of The Grove School was needed has been completely overlooked.</p>
<p>Unidentified</p>	<p>I object to the proposal of the two-tier system in Berwick. I feel that this is not what the children in Berwick need.</p>

Trustees of Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust	<p>Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust fully supports the statutory proposals for the reorganisation of schools in the Berwick partnership into a 2-tier system of education. BBCET is fully 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Newcastle Diocesan Education Board (NDEB)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This is a response to the statutory proposal dated 11th May. We submitted responses to the previous phase 1 and phase 2 consultations in July 2022 and January 2023 respectively and would repeat our commitment to the underlying principle of the continuance of a thriving Church of England school presence in the Berwick area, with parents/carers having the right and opportunity to choose a Church of England school as a viable option for their children.</li> <li>2. There are six C of E schools directly affected and the Diocesan Director of Education (DDE) has been closely involved with all consultation meetings and supporting the schools with listening to the views of parents, carers and all stakeholders. The NDEB maintains that it would wish to avoid the continuation of a "mixed economy" of both first and primary schools in nearby geographical areas.</li> <li>3. In line with our previous responses the NDEB continues to generally support the statutory proposal in principle in the Berwick area, however this support is expressly subject to paragraph 4 below.</li> <li>4. The statutory proposal does not include any contribution to the costs of the Church of England schools in respect of the proposed reorganisation except in the specific case of St Mary's, Berwick in order to establish an entirely new SEN unit. This is a particular concern for Holy Trinity CE First School, Ford Hugh Joicey, Norham C of E First School and also Lowick CE First School as all buildings will require capital works in order to be fit for purpose and thrive as successful primary schools. These schools do not have any other access to capital funding for the purposes of partnership wide re-organisation and changes to buildings to accommodate this. Whilst the Diocese receives a limited allocation of capital funding (LCVAP funding) each year this is for planned or urgent capital projects across all of its VA schools and is not intended or sufficient for partnership wide restructures. Indeed this is committed for at least the next three year. The NDEB is disappointed that there is no reference to project costs for these schools in the proposal but must be clear that they can only support the proposal if there is fair funding for the reorganisation and that this is allocated to church schools which need changes to their buildings in the same way it is being allocated to community schools and academies.</li> <li>5. The NDEB hope we can now work with the Council going forwards to establish fair funding to facilitate the reorganisation as previously assured. We need to ensure the church schools across the partnership are as well-equipped and supported to manage the transition to a two tier system as all other affected schools.</li> <li>6. The NDEB looks forward to seeing the costed plans in order to support schools, children and families with the transition from First to Primary in light of lessons learned from previous partnership changes.</li> </ol>
The Governing Body of Lowick and Holy Island CE First Schools	<p>Our current views mirror our previous response to the informal consultation where we believe that we can deliver an excellent curriculum and nurturing pastoral care for the children in our schools as primary schools. We note the benefits to our children accordingly.</p> <p>We note also that first schools will need appropriate support, including financial support, to become excellent primary schools. This includes necessary building work to divide a classroom at our Lowick site so that we have suitable working spaces to accommodate the changes in the future including an additional upper key stage 2 classroom. It is our hope that this will be part of the final agreement as the aim of this reorganisation process is to improve the educational offer in the Berwick Partnership area and to make it sustainable for the long term.</p>
Parent	<p>We object to the move to two tier from three tier. My child is currently at Glendale Middle School and thriving within the supportive and dedicated teaching he is receiving. Moving to two tier means he loses that in years 5 and 6. He will also have a significant portion of his day travelling to and from Berwick in years 7 and 8 from his home in Wooler. The statutory proposal makes no comment on the increased journey time for Glendale Middle School pupils.</p>
Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle	<p>Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle is submitting this response to the Berwick Statutory Proposal that was published on 11 May 2023. Responses were submitted to the previous consultations and the Diocese has been represented at consultation events.</p> <p>The Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle has one Catholic first school within the Berwick partnership area. St Cuthbert's School successfully provides a faith-based education for pupils in North Northumberland. We are committed to ensuring that parents can access Catholic education for their children in this area and that the provision is of the highest quality.</p>



	<p>The Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle is fully supportive of the proposal of the move to two tier system. As with any reorganisation, there will be people who are adversely affected and this is regrettable. However, the change will better support transition, SEND provision, staff development and partnership working. In our specific context, it will enable parents to access a Catholic education for their children for two more years.</p> <p>Over recent years, the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle has anticipated the possibility of moving to a two tier system and therefore has invested a significant of capital money to build a new kitchen, thereby creating a new classroom. The safety of pupils has been prioritised with a new school office and secure entrance, and additional perimeter fencing.</p> <p>As St Cuthbert's School has a PAN of 15, the proposal to extend the age group by two years will potentially increase the number on role by 30 children. The proposal includes the following:</p> <p><i>The Council has allocated £39.9m towards school buildings in the Berwick Partnership, including for the replacement/refurbishment of the Berwick Academy buildings</i></p> <p>The list of works does not include any funding for any changes in St Cuthbert's School. The capital investment by the Diocese has enabled a classroom that was previous used as a kitchen to be used as a classroom once more However, I would ask that the council considers other facilities that may be needed to accommodate 30 extra children and especially toilet facilities. I would like to request that the council works with Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust to fund any necessary alterations.</p> <p>The Diocese is grateful for the opportunity to submit this response.</p>
Staff	<p>I would like to submit my support with the proposals for changing education in Berwick to a two tier system. Having personally experienced the three tier system within Berwick during my formative years, I was of the opinion that it was a superior system to two-tier. I continued to believe this whilst working as a secondary teacher in a two tier system. It only took a few days upon returning to Berwick and teaching students at the Academy to realise the negative impact of three tier education on the young people of the town. I am pleased to know that two-tier education is on the horizon, and that students will benefit from fewer transitions, and getting to know their secondary teachers in y7, enabling improved relationships and teaching by subject specialists from this time.</p> <p>I have objections over two aspects of the proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Converting so many first schools into primary schools, rather than consolidating these schools into one or two 'new' primary schools in the town. The continued funding of such a large number of small primary schools can only mean that young people in Berwick are not receiving the most benefit from their education funding. A single large primary could support use of specialist music, languages and PE teachers for KS2 students, rather than students being taught by non-specialists in the plethora of primary schools that are planned for Berwick. I do assume that there are efficiencies to be made by operating a single site for a primary school. Note that I am not proposing that small rural first/primary schools are closed – only that those in the town of Berwick itself are reviewed.</li> <li>• I object to students from Belford being added to the Alnwick catchment area. I feel that this decision undermines the use of leisure and retail facilities in Berwick by families in Belford in preference for Alnwick where their children would be educated.</li> </ul>
Joint Tweedmouth Middle and Berwick Middle School Governing Bodies	<p>Now we are nearing approval of the statutory proposals for a change to two tier system of education in the Berwick partnership, we must confirm once again our continuing unanimous support for Model A - Revised 3-tier System of Schools in Berwick, and disappointment that Option C – An Inclusive Model has not been given further consideration.</p> <p>What all involved in this process agree on is that this is a once-in-a-lifetime change for Berwick, and that it is crucial it is carried out properly, ensuring sustainability and best return on investment. All involved are also agreed that this process should be driven by what is best for pupils in Berwick and their educational outcomes. So it is only right that any questions and doubts continue to be raised while the process is still in the approval stage.</p> <p>There have been direct questions asked and concerns raised, some from Northumberland County Councillors, which still need addressed. These are listed below. As it is only right and proper that Cabinet have been given enough information to make an informed decision, we ask that this document is submitted for their consideration alongside the statutory proposals, as well as by NCC during the coming structure changes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We believe that the very best outcomes are from children that feel both safe and content. There is no mention in the proposals for personal and pastoral support of pupils. As KS3 pupils go through times of personal change, this is of even more importance.</li> <li>• No detail on support packages to support schools through the transition. There is real concern the figures quoted on the proposal are not realistic now all First schools are to remain open and be converted to Primary schools.</li> <li>• Affordability for new teachers in Primary schools with more, smaller classes.</li> <li>• Importance of minimum group numbers to help with pupil engagement</li> <li>• Pupil drift to schools in neighbouring Partnerships. We have been told that a change to two tier will help stem this, as they are two tier we still cannot see the logic in this. We have also been told a new school will encourage parents in that decision, with no associated detail on what this new school will look like or when it will be delivered.</li> </ul> <p>The meeting of the Northumberland Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny committee of 4th May 2023 saw some of the above concerns and direct questions remain unanswered. The Chair, Councillor Wayne Daley, considered the Consultation process robust with a wide-ranging discussion that had developed into a real opportunity for Berwick, with full community backing alongside full NCC backup. And that there was momentum within the Partnership to do things differently and to do them differently for a reason. He then concluded the Committee were happy to carry forward the proposals.</p> <p>The Chair also mentioned the excellent teaching and support staff in the Berwick Partnership. This echoes Sue Aviston, NCC's Head of School Organisation and Resources. Sue during the meeting wanted to introduce the 'Human Element' to the proceedings, declaring that Good and Outstanding schools have Good and Outstanding staff. That those staff should be protected, to support a smooth transition of children through the system.</p> <p>With this in mind and failing all else, we would like to end this submission by reinforcing our concern that skills and staff/pupil/family/pastoral familiarity is retained and continued. So the middle school ethos and pastoral support will live on, just not in the current middle school setup. And that this would be a unified process, marrying up staff to needs.</p>

<p>Parent</p>	<p>We are writing to raise our objections to the recent decision / proposal regarding the Berwick Schools Consultation - to move to a two tier system in Berwick. Firstly, it concerns us greatly that options for parents and their children's education have been significantly cut short - taking away quality provision in Middle Schools - where they are rated 'Good', teaching is good, outcomes are good and they are able to offer specialist teaching from Year 5 through to Year 8. But instead, you are asking the parents of these children to send them to a Requiring Improvement school , which it has been for some time - without question or any intervention rather than a Good school - We are some of those parents! How does this improve the outcomes for these children - we are doing them a disservice if nothing else by taking away the option of Middle Schools. How does giving Berwick Academy all these extra pupils improve pupil outcomes? As far as we can see, the only benefit is a financial benefit for NCC and a cost cutting exercise at the expense of the young people of Berwick - our children. Furthermore, we are extremely concerned that the actual proposal being put forward is not in line with what was originally consulted on. The report is proposing a model that has not actually been consulted on. It is neither model A nor model B that has been put forward ( 'Model C' put forward by the Middle Schools was never really even considered - making it appear an already done deal). Firstly, in the original consultation there were proposed changes and closures to some First Schools - but in the model being put forward this is no longer the case - for example Scremerston First school has now been saved from closure and Prior Park First School is now no longer being 'taken over' by Tweedmouth West. In addition, keeping all the small first schools open and expanding them into primaries simply means more mixed year group classes and less specialist teaching and does not solve the issue of surplus places. How does this improve outcomes for these pupils? Finally, as parents of two children, who this change will impact first hand, it is extremely worrying to think their education and future will be impacted upon yet again. Has our children's education not suffered enough after two years of COVID and homeschooling only for it to be thrown into disruption yet again. Explain how there is going to be a 'fit for purpose' secondary school built in time for when the dramatic changes are expected - certainly not if the speed of building the new hospital or Sports Centre is anything to go by! What will this look like for our children who are going to be caught up in the middle of it all ? In conclusion, we are against the model being put forward and gravely object to the closure of the middle schools - as we have already said and previously responded and commented in the initial consultation - through the extremely lengthy and leading questionnaire! Ask yourself - Why would you want to take away 'good educational provision' provided by the Middle Schools in the Berwick Partnership in favour of a 'requiring improvement' option? Pupil outcomes are clearly not the driving factor in this proposal being put though.</p>
<p>The Governing Body of Glendale Middle and Wooler First Schools</p>	<p>In response to the statutory consultation our governing body maintains its stated position as outline below. Following the publication of the statutory proposals for Berwick the governing body would like to make the following additional comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• we would like to know the rationale for keeping our schools aligned with the Berwick partnership given the case made for Alnwick in the earlier Gov Board submission</li> <li>• ensuring that our staff are as protected and supported as possible</li> <li>• we have concerns that the sum allocated for repurposing the buildings for primary and “community hub” use appears to be low - should the recommendations be implemented ensuring that we end up with a building that has low running costs and is sustainable as well as providing our children with a positive learning environment in which to thrive - general support for the overall move from a three-tier to two-tier structure</li> <li>• that the final decisions are made with as little further delay as possible.</li> </ul> <p><u>Previous consultation submission:</u></p> <p>Governing body preference: considering all aspects of the consultation and the situation of our two schools here in Wooler it is the preference of the governing body that we become a one form entry primary school with a new build school that is fit for purpose and affordable to operate.</p> <p>Governors of Wooler First School/Glendale Middle School support the realignment of both schools to the Alnwick Partnership.</p> <p>Rationale:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Over time most parents have opted to send their children to Alnwick High School</li> <li>2. Currently around a third of pupils leave Glendale Middle School at the end of Yr 6 to ensure a place at Alnwick High School.</li> <li>3. Survey of current parents/ carers indicate over 50% would make Alnwick their first choice, 18% expressed no preference, 27% indicated Berwick as their preferred option.</li> </ol> <p>Context: Wooler First School (WFS) Glendale Middle School (GMS)</p> <p>We are deeply passionate about and also very proud of the pupils, staff and provision here in Wooler First School and Glendale Community Middle School. Our schools sit outside the town of Berwick upon Tweed and serve a large geographic rural community. WFS and GMS are two separate schools, not federated and operate as 2 schools on one site. WFS and GMS have a federated governing body and Glendale Middle School has consistently transitioned pupils to Berwick Academy and Alnwick Duchess’s High School at the end of Year 8. Since the Alnwick partnership went to a two-tier system a number of pupils leave Glendale Middle School at the end of Year 6 to guarantee a place there in Year 9. This outward mobility fluctuates annually impacting on class sizes and staff deployment at Glendale. Year 8 pupils are unable to select DCHS as their next school through the LA transition processes adding further confusion, difficulty and anxiety to the process. Pupil numbers at Glendale continue to fall and future numbers indicate further reduction over time. This continues to impact on our capacity to sustain effective and high quality curriculum coverage at Key Stage 3. Governors face an almost impossible task in making strategic decisions for the future of educational provision in our community.</p> <p>Governors Position</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governors took the decision pre-consultation to look towards reorganisation to become a one form entry Primary School. This in response to changes in demographics including falling roles, uncertain pupil mobility following the reorganisation of The Alnwick Partnership and further lower birth rates in future years which had already identified.</li> <li>• Drift in pupil numbers at end of Year 6 as some parents/carers opt to send their child(ren) to Duchess's High School (around 30% per year).</li> <li>• Difficult to know the numbers of pupils who will attend KS3 and this leads to difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff to ensure KS3 curriculum is covered.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further difficulties in next few years as the numbers in WFS continue to fall. WFS is now the only feeder first school to GMS. In the past there were 6 feeder first schools to GMS (2 schools are now Primary and feed Duchess's High School; 3 schools have closed).</li> <li>• Less than 20 pupils in most year groups at WFS. The current two class structure in Year 5 and 6 would be unsustainable moving forwards.</li> <li>• Falling pupil numbers has a considerable impact on funding. Governors face great difficulty in making strategic decisions with uncertainties in terms of funding, numbers, staffing and building resources.</li> <li>• If we do nothing our budget would not sustain GMS to meet the needs of pupils at KS3 and would therefore disadvantage their future learning. Similarly, a fall in pupil numbers at WFS may necessitate a reduction in the number of classes and how these classes are organised.</li> <li>• Our building was built as a secondary school in the 1950s and has many building issues commensurate with its age. Independent surveys suggest there are a number of issues that require a great deal of attention and finance.</li> </ul> <p>Options to address this could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ new primary school building on our existing site of the correct size and configuration to be fit for purpose and affordable to operate and maintain in the long term (the preferred outcome of the governing body).</li> <li>○ significant changes and modifications to our existing facilities to make them fit for purpose and affordable as a primary school &amp; Early Years setting.</li> <li>○ currently we have extensive grounds reflecting GMS historic status as an agricultural secondary school. This is a further financial drain on resources and would need to be addressed to ensure the educational model moving forward was affordable and sustainable.</li> <li>○ significant change and modifications to our existing facilities to enable effective education for our pupils while also sharing the site/facilities with other elements of Local Authority service delivery for the wider Glendale community (safeguarding/affordability to be addressed).</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The governing body give full support to the need to review and expand the SEND education offer in the north of the county. At present demand outstrips provision and many children are not able to access the provision they need and deserve close to home. This places our most vulnerable pupils in inappropriate provision locally or having to travel significant distances in and out of county to access suitable provision.</li> </ul> <p>Way forward</p> <p>As governors we understand the challenges facing our local schools in the Berwick partnership. We are committed to working with all stakeholders to ensure the best outcome for our children and young people in our community. We would love to be able to maintain the provision for children in the Wooler and Glendale area from 2 years old to 13 years of age that we have built. However, factors out of our control have led our governing body to the following conclusions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Transition to a Primary model would safeguard our future viability and the viability of educational provision for our rural community.</li> <li>2. The need to support all staff as we go through the process with: - clear guidance and timescales for change. - clear staff protocol that identifies how at risk staff will be supported through the process.</li> <li>3. A designated new school build or comprehensive redesign and refurbishment of current facility.</li> <li>4. Early Years provision: maintain existing provision with possibility to extend provision for the under two year olds. Pre-school provision is very limited in this part of the authority.</li> <li>5. A possible development of SEND provision to meet needs within the wider area.</li> <li>6. Possibility of maintaining current swimming provision on site including sharing this facility with local partners.</li> </ol> <p>We are most anxious to move as quickly as we can to resolve the future viability and sustainability of educational provision in the Wooler and Glendale area.</p>
Parent	<p>I wish to put forward my concern and objection to the proposal of a 2 tier system in Berwick. I am a mother of 3 children currently ages are 9(year5), 6(year1) and 3 so have a deep interest on education in the town across board. The whole process of this consultation has been flawed from the very beginning. The very first consultation questionnaire was so leading and bias it seems to have paved the way forward for the rest of the process. My concerns are mainly with regards to the current pass rates of the Academy, which were never made available during this whole consultation process, and the timescale in which the process is scheduled to be implemented. I would never choose to move my child from a good school to one which requires improvement, you are taking away that choice. My eldest child will be in year 8 in 2026, the last to finish the middle school system, what type of school/facilitie is he going to be left with? What teacher/support Staff are going to hang around a sinking ship, and who can blame them! What type of facility will he be going in to? You plan to, plan, build, implement this whole system in 3years? Absolutely absurd, we just need to look at the time it has taken for the hospital/sports centre in berwick to realise our kids are going to be leaving on a building site for god knows how long! Parents are travelling and paying for there kids to attend settings away from berwick due to the poor results at the academy, all this is going to do is drive them away sooner unfortunately for some the academy is the only choice. I understand there needs to be a change, but this is not it. The middles school put forward a very reasonable proposal themselves, option C I believe it was called? Why has this not been considered? As for the first schools, it seems a lot are just having to squeeze another couple of year groups in? No funding? Thinking of the setting my children attend, issues with hall sizes are they main concern. Removing the opertunity for active learning situations is a real problem as I believe this is one thing that makes our first schools as good as they are in the area. I really feel for all your teachers, their moral must be at an all time low! You will be lucky if any accept any jobs offered at the academy the way they have been treated through this that is if they don't pursue different careers altogether. I fear all that this will achieve is the loss of some fantastic teacher rather than the creation of more.</p>