

Atkinson House School: Support Staff Response to Local Authority Consultation 1 December 2021

Support Staff Feedback

- Support Staff are colleagues who support the Teaching and Learning, alongside the Pastoral Care of the students.
- This includes Assistant Head Teacher: Inclusion, Safeguarding Manager, Family Liaison Manager, Thrive Manager, KS3 & 4 Learning Community Managers (HLTS) and Learning Community Support (LSA). Office Staff, Site Manager, Cook and cleaners
- Support staff generally welcome the proposed move to Ponteland and the consideration of co-education. Primary reasons given to date are linked to the opportunity to create a building that is more fit for purpose; and that there is no current LA provision for girls in Northumberland with SEMH.
- Staff have welcomed the opportunity thus far to give ideas for school design etc and are keen for this to continue.
- Support staff have asked some clarifying questions –
 - How does the Local Authority see Atkinson House School fitting into the wider vision for SEND in Northumberland?
 - Will this be a phased project, and if so:
 - What will each of the proposed phases look like?
 - How will we as a school be able to prepare for each phase/stage as well as run the provision to a high standard?
 - Support staff are concerned that if the move goes ahead, is the timescale too ambitious, and what contingency plans will there be to support the students if the building is not ready for September 2022. Bearing in mind that these students have SEMH and therefore a planned transition is essential.
 - What will student numbers be? How will that new cohort of students be split? Male/female/year group etc.
 - How soon would we find out who the students are so that transition can be put in place for new admits, as well as existing students
 - Will this increase in student number mean we will need more support staff? What will the timeline be for appointing staff and completing an appropriate induction with them so they can support the planned transition for Sept 2022
 - What additional training and support can be provided given that the presentation of SEMH is often different between girls and boys? Will staff be able to access that training in a timely manner given the tight turnaround?
 - If the move goes ahead, when will we be able to start packing up moving resources, bearing in mind the summer holidays etc and how disruption creates stress and anxiety for students with SEMH?
 - Will there be increased opportunities for multi-disciplinary working? e.g. EP, SALT, OT
 - Is there an option to have both Atkinson House School and the new Ponteland site operating at least for the first term so a planned, smooth transition can be made, and also as a backup plan for if the new build is not ready?

- Will students be able to access the vocational facilities at Atkinson House School once we move to Ponteland?
- Concerns were raised about the close proximity of the primary school, and what measures could be put in place to support Atkinson House School, the primary school and the nursery in terms of arrival, breaks and sharing of facilities?
- Is this an opportunity to develop an aspect of respite/emergency residential care on site?
- Support staff have expressed concerns around the appropriateness of current Post 16 provision available in Northumberland and query whether a Post 16 option could/should be explored for September 2022 at Ponteland. Some parents and students have expressed these views strongly through support staff and annual review processes.