

**THE COUNTY COUNCIL IS CARRYING OUT CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO REORGANISE PART OF THE BEDLINGTON PARTNERSHIP OF SCHOOLS FROM 1 SEPTEMBER 2012. THIS PROPOSAL WOULD INVOLVE CHANGES TO THE ORGANISATION OF BEDLINGTONSHIRE HIGH SCHOOL AND BEDLINGTON STEAD LANE, BEDLINGTON STATION AND CAMBOIS FIRST SCHOOLS, AND ALSO THE CLOSURE OF BEDLINGTONSHIRE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL.**

**WE NEED TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT THIS PROPOSAL AND ALSO TO FIND OUT WHETHER YOU HAVE ANY ALTERNATIVE IDEAS ABOUT HOW THE ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED IN THIS CONSULTATION DOCUMENT COULD BE ADDRESSED.**

## **WHAT ARE THE REASONS BEHIND THE PROPOSAL?**

### **Background - Bedlingtonshire Junior High School**

As some of you will know, Bedlingtonshire Junior High School is currently federated with Bedlingtonshire High School, which means that the two schools share a single Governing Body and a single headteacher. However, each school retains its own school budget and receives separate inspections from OfSTED, the Government's schools inspectorate.

Bedlingtonshire Junior High School was formerly called West Sleekburn Middle School and was originally located in West Sleekburn. When OfSTED inspected the school in 2003, it was placed in special measures. This means OfSTED had judged West Sleekburn Middle School to be inadequate and it was allocated additional help and support. OfSTED also carried out more frequent inspections of the school. West Sleekburn Middle School federated with Bedlingtonshire High School in 2005 and it was also taken out of special measures in that year. However, the school was placed in special measures again in 2007 by OfSTED.

A decision was made by the County Council in 2008 to move West Sleekburn Middle School to the Bedlingtonshire High School site in order to address the weaknesses identified by OfSTED through enabling closer working between the two federated schools. It was believed that this would help to improve standards at West Sleekburn Middle School.

In 2009, West Sleekburn Middle School was judged to be satisfactory by OfSTED and was taken out of special measures. In September 2010, the school was renamed Bedlingtonshire Junior High School. The school educates pupils from years 5 to 8, but pupils in Years 7 and 8 are taught in the Bedlingtonshire High School buildings and their lessons are timetabled as part of the high school curriculum. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are taught in a separate primary unit on the shared site. The most recent OfSTED inspection of the school took place in

June 2011 and the school was judged again to have remained satisfactory overall with potential to improve.

### **Standards at Bedlingtonshire Junior High School**

The National Curriculum in England is divided into four key stages over the period of a pupil's schooling as follows;

- KS1 – Year 1 to Year 2 (age 5-7)
- KS2 - Year 3 to Year 6 (age 7-11)
- KS3 - Year 7 to Year 9 (age 11-14)
- KS4 - Year 10 to Year 11 (14-16).

There are assessments at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 4. The quality of each local authority's Children's Services in England is assessed every year by OfSTED; this is called the Annual Performance Assessment (APA). Northumberland's APA in 2011 again identified that standards at the end of KS2 were weak when compared to standards in other similar local authorities. A report commissioned by the Department for Education in 1999 (*The impact of school transitions and transfers on pupil progress and attainment, DfE Research Report 131*) stated that transfers between schools lead to a dip in achievement and a fall in pupil motivation in some subjects. The report also stated that this is a direct result of the time taken by pupils to settle into their new surroundings and routines; in other words, transfers generally from one school to another are disruptive for pupils.

More recent research carried out by Suffolk County Council in April 2006 into the differences in the performance of pupils in taught in primary/secondary schools (two tier) and first, middle and high schools (three tier) concluded that poor performance at the end of KS2 may be linked to the number of transfers within the three-tier education system. This report highlighted that a further difficulty with the three-tier system was that these transfers happen when pupils are half-way through a Key Stage.

In Northumberland, pupils educated within those school partnerships that remain organised within the three-tier system transfer from first school to middle school at the end of Year 4, halfway through KS2, and transfer from middle school to high school at the end of Year 8, more than halfway through Key Stage 3 (KS3). This means that pupils who are educated in schools within the three-tier system undergo two transfers over the period of their schooling, compared to one transfer for pupils educated in schools within the primary/secondary system. Furthermore, these transfers take place when the pupils are either half-way through KS2 or more than halfway through KS3. The reorganisation to a primary/secondary system of

education has seen standards improve in Cramlington and Blyth Partnerships, with Blyth achieving its best results to date in 2011.

The federation with Bedlingtonshire High School and move of site have been partially successful in that student's performance in Years 7 and 8 assessed by Bedlington Junior High School is now in line with expected results. However, standards at the end of Year 6 (at the end of KS2) remain a concern at the school; for the last six years, standards at the end of KS2 in Bedlingtonshire Junior High School have been below the Government's minimum requirements for pupils at this age.

Data on Bedlington Junior High School shows pupils by the end of Year 6 achieving well below national average in all subjects and progress from Year 2 to Year 6 is also below the level expected when compared to national data. This has been the case for at least the past three years and at least the previous 6 years overall.

Year 6 assessments for 2010/2011 show that, on average pupils are 1.5 years below the national average in English, and 2.5 terms below the national average in maths. The averages over a three year period in both English and maths show that achievement is roughly 1 year below the national averages.

## **THE PROPOSED SOLUTION FOR IMPROVING STANDARDS AT KS2**

As part of the Coalition Government's education policy, the Department for Education (DfE) now requires that schools that have failed to meet KS2 minimum standards for five consecutive years or more should either become academies or should close. The DfE have suggested that standards at both Bedlingtonshire Junior High School and Bedlingtonshire High School could be improved if they both became an academy with a sponsor as part of one Academy Trust.

However, standards at Bedlingtonshire High School are above the Government's minimum targets and the Governing Body and the headteacher do not believe that it would be in the best interests of pupils for the school to become an academy. The two schools are also in the process of breaking the federation between them, which would mean each of the schools would have a separate Governing Body, although there would continue to be one Headteacher for both schools. Bedlingtonshire Junior High School would not be able to operate alone, even as a stand-alone Academy, as it would need to continue to share facilities with the High School e.g. buildings and staffing for KS3; catering and sports facilities at KS2.

However, it is believed that changing Bedlingtonshire Junior High School to an academy would not solve the issues around the number of transfers that pupils in the three-tier system

undergo and the added problem that those transfers take place halfway through key stages (these are believed to be the main reasons why standards at KS2 have not improved over the last six years). Evidence for this conclusion is that other actions taken to improve standards at the school i.e. federation; site change, have so far failed to raise standards at KS2 above the Government's minimum targets.

The reorganisation of the first schools that feed into Bedlingtonshire Junior High School to become primary schools would mean that pupils in Years 5 and 6 would complete the whole of KS2 in one school. This would remove a transfer at the end of Year 4 and would make the new primary schools wholly responsible for KS2, making it easier for teachers to plan the curriculum over the full four years. Similarly, the reorganisation of Bedlingtonshire High School to secondary status would make that school wholly responsible for pupils from Year 7 to Year 13.

While there are many things to celebrate about Bedlingtonshire Junior High School, improvement in standards at the end of KS2 has not been achieved over many years, in spite of the actions taken so far and a more radical solution is now required. Therefore, the proposal now being consulted upon is that Bedlingtonshire Junior High School should close, that Bedlington Stead Lane, Bedlington Station and Cambois First Schools should become primary schools and that Bedlingtonshire High School should become a secondary school. The details of this proposal are set out below.

### **The Proposed Model for Reorganisation**

While there are 13 schools in the Bedlington Partnership schools, only the following schools would be directly affected by this proposal:

- Bedlingtonshire High
- Bedlington Junior High
- Bedlington Station First
- Bedlington Stead Lane First
- Cambois First

The proposal would be to close Bedlington Junior High School, and to change its three feeder First Schools into Primary Schools. This would mean that Bedlington Station, Bedlington Stead Lane and Cambois would educate pupils from age 3 to 11. The proposal for Bedlingtonshire High School is that it would become a secondary school and would educate pupils from age 11 to 18. However, the number of pupils going into Years 7 and 8 at Bedlingtonshire Secondary School (as it would be) would be limited to 75 pupils so that

pupils transferring from the three proposed primary schools would have priority for those places. Further details are given in the following table:

SCHOOL	CURRENT SITUATION			PROPOSED PRIMARY/SECONDARY MODEL		
	Capacity in Sept 2011 (Number on Roll in Dec 2011)	Forms of Entry (FE)	Planned Admission Number (PAN) 2011/12	Capacity	Forms of Entry (FE)	Planned Admission Number (PAN)
Bedlington Station First School	150 (132)	1.0	30	210	1.0	30
Bedlington Stead Lane First School	150 (148)	1.0	30	210	1.0	30
Cambois First School	75 (43)	0.5	15	105	0.5	15
Bedlington Junior High School	320 (216)	2.7	80	CLOSE		
Bedlingtonshire High School	882 (759)	7.3	220	1107	2.5 in Year 7, expanding to 7.3 in Year 9	75 in Year 7, expanding to 220 in Year 9

There are no plans to change any of the other schools in the Bedlington Partnership and the current transfer arrangements at the end of Year 4 and Year 8 would remain unchanged for those schools.

There would be no change to Special Educational Needs or Early Years provision currently provided by any of the schools that are part of this proposed reorganisation. There would also be no change to the current catchment areas of Bedlington Station, Stead Lane and Cambois First Schools, should they become primary schools. However, the catchment area of Bedlingtonshire Junior High School would be retained only for pupils applying for entry into Years 7 and 8 at Bedlingtonshire High School. This would be to ensure that pupils transferring from Bedlington Station, Bedlington Stead Lane and Cambois primary schools (as they would be) were given priority for those places. This catchment area would not apply to pupils entering Year 9 and upwards, as the current catchment area of Bedlingtonshire High School would be retained.

There would need to be some adjustments to school buildings if the proposed changes were to be implemented. These proposed changes are set out below:

#### *Bedlingtonshire High School*

The pupils in Years 7 and 8 from Bedlington Junior High are already educated within the High School building, therefore there would be no need for further building work.

### *Bedlington Station Primary School*

The current building is not large enough to take the additional pupils from Years 5 and 6 as it is currently organised. Further work would need to be carried out to assess whether the current building could be changed to take all the pupils up to Year 6 on the current site. However, one of the alternative options could be that the school could operate on two sites, possibly with its current site for Nursery to Year 2 and Year 3 to Year 6 being educated on the current Bedlingtonshire Junior High site (some facilities may be shared with the High School). In any event, any building solution would be made with the agreement of the Governing Body.

### *Bedlington Stead Lane Primary School*

The current building is not large enough to take additional pupils from Year 5 and Year 6 and the building would need to be extended. Further work would need to be undertaken to identify how the school could be extended effectively. As a temporary measure, one additional mobile classroom would be provided for September 2012 to accommodate the Year 5 pupils for that year.

### *Cambois Primary School*

The current building is large enough to take the proposed additional pupils from Year 5 and Year 6 without the need for any changes or funding.

The cost of any necessary changes to the existing school buildings would be met from the Council's budget for this kind of work.

## **Other Implications of the proposal**

If Bedlingtonshire Junior High School is approved for closure, all the staff at the school would be at risk of redundancy. However, additional staff would be required at the proposed primary schools and the proposed secondary school as a result of the additional pupils at those schools. Discussions with the Governing Bodies of all five schools involved in this proposal and with the trades Unions would be undertaken about how to minimise the impact on staff of the proposed closure.

Transport for pupils affected by the proposed reorganisation should it be approved would be arranged in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy on an individual basis. Finally, there would be no implications for sport or recreation as a result of the proposed reorganisation.

## MY CHILD IS ENROLLED WITH ONE OF THE FIVE SCHOOLS INCLUDED IN THIS PROPOSAL – HOW WILL THIS AFFECT HIM/HER?

### Proposed Timeline for implementation

If this proposal is approved by the Council following consultation, it would be proposed that the changes would take place according to the following timeline:

- **31 August 2012** - Bedlington Junior High School would close.
- **1 September 2012**- New Planned Admissions Numbers (PANs) would come into effect for all new admissions to all schools.
  - *Bedlington Junior High School*
    - All pupils in Year 8 in Bedlington Junior High School on 31 August 2012 would have already been offered a place at a High or Secondary School for September 2012 and will transfer to that school as planned.
    - All pupils in Year 6 and Year 7 in Bedlington Junior High School on 31 August 2012 would transfer to Bedlingtonshire High School as Year 7 and Year 8, but parents may choose to seek an alternative school for their child.
    - All pupils in Year 5 on 31 August 2012 would transfer to Bedlington Station Primary School as Year 6 on 1 September 2012, but parents may choose to seek an alternative school for their child. It is expected that these pupils would continue be educated in the current buildings on the current Bedlingtonshire Junior High site.
  - *Bedlington Station First School*
    - All pupils aged 3 in Nursery and in Reception to Year 3 on 31 August 2012 would remain in the school as normal.
    - Pupils aged 4 in Nursery on 31 August 2012 would have already been offered a place at a First or Primary School for September 2012 and would transfer to that school as planned.
    - The school would retain pupils moving from Year 4 into Year 5.
    - The school would be expected to inherit all the pupils moving from Bedlington Junior High School moving from Year 5 into Year 6, but these pupils are likely to continue to be educated in the primary unit at the High School site.

- *Bedlington Stead Lane and Cambois First Schools*
  - All pupils aged 3 in Nursery and in Reception to Year 3 on 31 August 2012 would remain in the school as normal.
  - Pupils aged 4 in Nursery on 31 August 2012 would have already been offered a place at a First or Primary School for September 2012 and will transfer to that school as planned.
  - The school would retain pupils moving from Year 4 into Year 5.
- **September 2013**
  - The three Primary Schools would retain pupils from Year 5 into Year 6.
  - It is believed that any building works required at Bedlington Stead Lane and/or in relation to Bedlington Station Primary Schools would be completed by this time.

## **HOW CAN I MAKE MY VIEWS ABOUT THIS PROPOSAL KNOWN?**

The decision on whether or not to approve the proposal will be made by the Council's Executive when they have reviewed feedback received from all those who have been consulted and in light of the issues raised in this consultation document.

Therefore, the Council Executive would like to hear your views on this proposal and whether you have any alternative suggestions that could resolve the issues raised in this document.

A questionnaire is attached to the end of this document for you to complete with your views and return by FREEPOST to the County Council by **24 April 2012**.

Additionally, the following meetings will be held at the schools involved in this proposal in **February 2012**. The purpose of these meetings is for Council Officers to present the reasons for the proposal and to enable staff, parents, Governors and other interested parties the opportunity to ask questions and clarify any of the issues raised in this document. Please attend the meeting for the group that you most associate with.

## CONSULTATION MEETING SCHEDULE

Venue	Meeting for:	Date	Time
Bedlington Station First School	Staff of Bedlington Station only	Monday 6 February 2012	3.30 p.m.
	Governing Body of Bedlington Station only	Monday 6 February 2012	5.00 p.m.
	Parents of pupils in Bedlington Station and Public	Monday 6 February 2012	7.00 p.m.
Cambois First School	Staff of Cambois only	Wednesday 8 February 2012	3.30 p.m.
	Governing Body of Cambois only	Wednesday 8 February 2012	5.00 p.m.
	Parents of pupils in Cambois and Public	Wednesday 8 February 2012	7.00 p.m.
Bedlington Stead Lane First School	Staff of Bedlington Stead Lane only	Thursday 9 February 2012	3.30 p.m.
	Governing Body of Bedlington Stead Lane only	Thursday 9 February 2012	5.00 p.m.
	Parents of pupils in Bedlington Stead Lane and Public	Thursday 9 February 2012	7.00 p.m.
Bedlingtonshire Junior High School	Staff of Bedlingtonshire Junior High only	Tuesday 21 February 2012	3.30 p.m.
	Governing Body of Bedlingtonshire Junior High only	Tuesday 21 February 2012	5.00 p.m.
	Parents of pupils in Bedlingtonshire Junior High and Public	Tuesday 21 February 2012	7.00 p.m.
Bedlingtonshire High School	Staff of Bedlingtonshire High only	Wednesday 22 February 2012	3.30 p.m.
	Governing Body of Bedlingtonshire High only	Wednesday 22 February 2012	5.00 p.m.
	Parents of pupils in Bedlingtonshire High and Public	Wednesday 22 February 2012	7.00 p.m.

## CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL TO REORGANISE PART OF THE BEDLINGTON PARTNERSHIP - QUESTIONNAIRE

Your name:

Are you responding mainly as a (tick one box only):

Parent/carer:  Governor:

Staff Member:  Please state which school: \_\_\_\_\_

Resident:  Parish Councillor:  Other:

**Your views; (continue on a separate sheet where necessary)**

In relation to the proposal, please answer the following questions:

- 1) Do you agree with the proposal to close Bedlingtonshire Junior High School with effect from 31 August 2012?

Yes, I agree  No, I do not agree

Please provide the main reasons for your answer:

- 2) Do you agree with the proposal to reorganise Bedlington Station, Bedlington Stead Lane and Cambois First Schools to become primary schools (age 3-11) with effect from 1 September 2012?

Yes, I agree  No, I do not agree

Please provide the main reasons for your answer:

- 3) Do you agree with the proposal to reorganise Bedlingtonshire High School to become a secondary school ((age 11-18) with effect from 1 September 2012?

Yes, I agree

No, I do not agree

Please provide the main reasons for your answer:

- 4) If you think there are other ways of dealing with the issues as an alternative model to the proposal outlined in this document, please set out your suggestions below. '. (Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary).

Please return this form in an envelope, or send by fax or email by **24 April 2012**, to:

**FAO Lorraine Fife, Planning and Organisation, Children's Services, FREEPOST  
MP135, County Hall, MORPETH, NE61 1BR.**

**Fax 01670 533108; email [Lorraine.Fife@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Lorraine.Fife@northumberland.gov.uk)**

**Thank you for taking part in this consultation**