



West Tyne Church Schools

Henshaw CE Primary School, Bardon Mill,  
Hexham, Northumberland, NE47 7EP  
Mrs Sarah Hutchinson - Executive Head Teacher  
Telephone: (01434) 344324  
email: admin@henshawprimary.uk



29<sup>th</sup> March 2018 (amended 3 April 2018)

Dear Parents

## **WEST TYNE CHURCH SCHOOLS FEDERATION: NCC CONSULTATION**

We are writing to you today to update you on the current position of the Governing Body's response to Northumberland County Council's consultation over the future of schooling in the West of Northumberland.

### **GOVERNORS' POSITION**

**The governors are committed to making Greenhead School sustainably viable, but if it is to be closed as part of the ongoing NCC consultation we offer a managed, better alternative which would preserve the ethos and educational excellence we currently provide for our children within the West Tyne Church Schools.**

We would like to begin by acknowledging that, in attempting to create a solution to the huge challenges which face Greenhead Primary School, the Governors recognise that we have added another dimension to the anxiety created by the larger consultation, which has been expressed through the meetings of the last two weeks.

Our wish is not to seek the closure of Greenhead but to preserve and build upon the Federation and the good teaching and learning provided in it. In particular we want to find a solution which avoids Greenhead being absorbed into the Haltwhistle catchment which we perceive as a real risk and which is something parents feel very strongly against. We would also like to make it clear that it is the NCC alone who judge the viability of the school and the NCC alone who make any decision to close a school.

We have listened to these concerns and have modified the proposal which we intend to make to Northumberland County Council. In particular we have recognised the concerns about the speed of change we were recommending and will therefore remove the request to consider merger by the end of 2018, and move this end date to that given in the Consultation, namely September 2019

By doing this we are able to respond to the two most frequent suggestions made by respondents that first we should follow the given NCC timeframe for the consultation, and second allow more time to seek solutions to the two issues which challenge the viability of Greenhead Primary School – the large deficit budget and the fluctuating, small roll. These twin issues remain at the core of the proposal – unless they are resolved we still face the same outcome. However, the longer timeframe allows more time to consult and seek solutions.

The Governors discussed fully the issues raised at the meetings and in the correspondence we have received. The revised proposal below was **passed unanimously by the Governors last evening (28 March 2018)**:

#### **STATEMENT**

**The Governors of the West Tyne Church Schools Federation hold in mind the best interests for the education of our children. In light of this we recognise that, for Greenhead Primary School to continue to be part of the education system in the West Tyne, we must find a solution to the existing and continuing financial deficit (approx. £200k), and we must secure a roll of approximately 50 children.**

**The Governors are committed to working with parents and members of the community to find solutions to these questions. However in the light of the challenge they present we would also propose to NCC that they include an alternative option to that being consulted upon, as part of the larger consultation on education in the West of Northumberland.**

**The Governing Body proposes that, if NCC judges Greenhead Primary School to be unviable:**

- **that Greenhead School site closes (providing that the next two conditions are met)**
- **that the current catchments of Greenhead and Henshaw Schools are merged and**
- **that pupils from the new larger catchment be accommodated on the existing Henshaw Primary School site, which has sufficient space for the larger intake in a modern building, and plans currently under way for expansion to deal more appropriately with providing Key Stage 2 teaching and learning.**

**In addition, the Governors recommend most strongly that the NCC Consultation process does not permit any "mixed economy" of schools in West Northumberland: moves already taken to implement a coherent network of Primary/Secondary schools must be completed across the West of Northumberland.**

During the meeting of the Governing Body verbal reports from all the meetings were considered, and all governors present read all the letters and emails received from parents and community. From these we highlighted three recurring questions, which we will research and report in the early part of next term:

- seeking active solutions to the challenge of our deficit
- seeking guarantees about transport – both in terms of provision and safety issues
- working actively with the nurseries at both schools, especially in seeking to align admission policies.

In addition, the extended period while we seek a solution will allow us to consider other points made by respondents including:

- the impact on the local community beyond the school
- the Greenhead nature garden
- the proposed classroom extension at Henshaw
- any conflict with our mission statements
- the future of the Greenhead School building after any closure

We are aware of the tensions that the last few weeks and the issues raised have caused between some parents and the school and staff and governors, and between groups of parents. We hope that by relaxing the proposal we announced, in order to give time to seek solutions and consider your views more fully, we will return to the friendly and trusting relationships which have been a feature of our school communities.

This proposal will now be submitted to NCC. If you wish to comment on the proposal, whether you are in favour of it or oppose it, you should do this directly to NCC now, and before Monday 9 April. You may write a letter to:

[FAO Lorraine Fife, Children's Services, FREEPOST MP135, County Hall, MORPETH, NE61 1BR](mailto:FAO Lorraine Fife, Children's Services, FREEPOST MP135, County Hall, MORPETH, NE61 1BR)

or complete the consultation which you will find in the document at

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Document-store/School%20Consultation/Phase-2-Cons-Ed-West-Doc-Feb-April-2018-Final.pdf>

We will then need to await a new version of the NCC Consultation, upon which we will all be able to comment further. Whatever the future holds the Governing Body remains committed, first and foremost to the education needs of our children.

Yours sincerely

David Ratcliff  
Chair of Governors  
West Tyne Church Schools