

Hadrian Learning Trust

## **Report on Consultation**

Proposals for Significant Changes at  
Hexham Middle School and Queen Elizabeth High School

2 March – 29 March 2018

## **1. Background**

During the four weeks from 2-29 March 2018, Hadrian Learning Trust conducted a consultation on proposals for significant changes at Hexham Middle School (HMS) and Queen Elizabeth High School (QEHS).

Details of the consultation process, including the proposals, rationale and who was consulted, can be found in the [Consultation Document](#).

Our consultation ran in parallel to a broader consultation by Northumberland County Council, which included models suggesting the possible closure of 16 schools. In our view, this has had a considerable impact on our own consultation, with a great deal of heat created around campaigns to “save our schools”. As we made clear, our view is that it would not be necessary for small rural schools to close in order to move to a Primary-Secondary model. It is unclear why the Council chose to frame its consultation in this way.

## **2. Number of responses received**

A public consultation is not a vote or referendum but designed to gather the views of stakeholders. In reaching its conclusions, the Trust Board has considered carefully all views expressed but this is more a qualitative than quantitative process.

In total, we received 3,131 responses to the Consultation. Please note that the number of responses cannot be equated to individuals. It is clear that some individuals submitted multiple responses. Indeed, this was actively encouraged by some campaign groups.

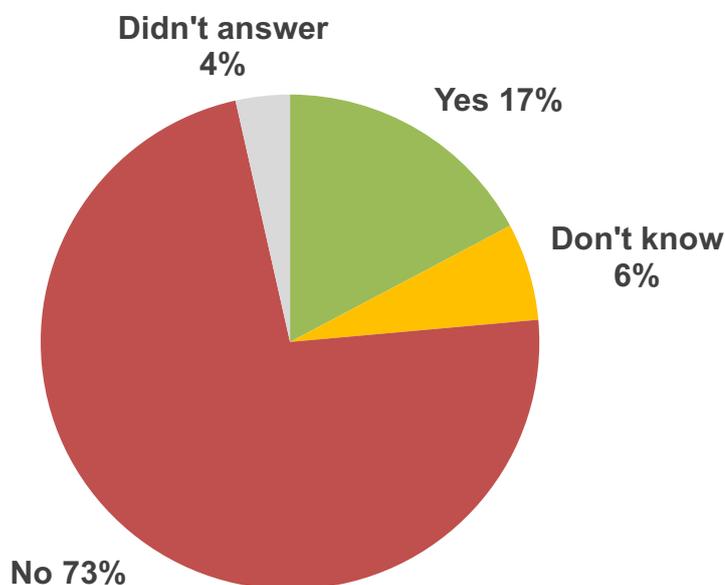
We do not have sufficient data to calculate a percentage response rate. However, as a guide, there are currently circa 5,000 children in schools across both Hexham and Haydon Bridge partnerships. To these, one would need to add their parents/carers and extended families, former students, teaching and support staff, governing bodies and governors, local residents and councillors, trades unions and other organisations. Potentially, this could run into many thousands.

A more detailed breakdown of responses by respondent type, postcode district and association with schools is given in the Appendix. Please note that many responses crossed several categories: for example, parents with children at more than one school. This means that there is an element of double counting compared to the total number of responses received.

### 3. Responses to proposal to form 11-18 Secondary school

*Do you agree that Hexham Middle School and Queen Elizabeth High School should be amalgamated and expand to form an 11-18 Secondary school?*

The chart below shows the responses to this question. Overall, the majority gave a negative response.



The reasons given for answers were similar to those stated in our Informal Consultation last Summer and indeed in the many other consultations on age range change across the country over the last ten years.

#### **Common reasons given in support of the Proposal:**

- Fewer transitions better for children.
- Better fit with National Curriculum and Key Stages.
- Each school held transparently to account for its own outcomes.
- Insufficient challenge in Year 7 and 8 in Middle schools.
- More time for students to settle before starting GCSEs.
- Financial pressures mean QEHS not educationally sustainable otherwise.
- Removing a Tier will reduce costs.
- Schools badly need capital investment and re-organisation will help fund this.

#### **Common reasons given against the Proposal:**

- Prefer Three-Tier.
- Don't want schools to close.
- Current system better suited to rural area.
- Outcomes are good so no reason for change.
- Middle schools provide stepping stone from rural first schools.
- Middle schools provide better pastoral care/extra-curricular opportunities.

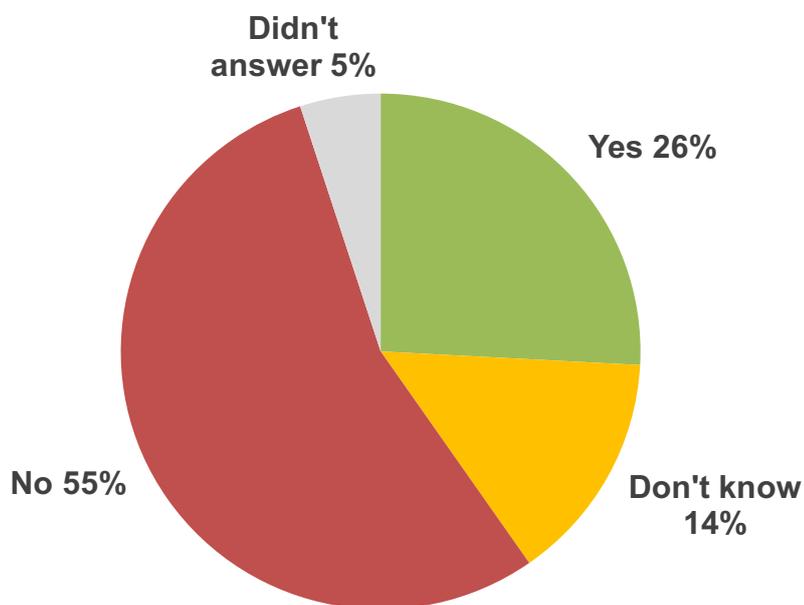
- Specialist teaching/facilities in Year 5 and 6.
- Don't want 11 year olds mixing with 18 year olds.
- QEHS would be too big.
- Don't believe financial projections.
- Capital investment not dependent on age range change.
- Opposed to academies/NCC should not invest in academy buildings.
- Opposed to unilateral move.
- Not enough information/time to consider/exploration of other options.

#### 4. Responses to proposal on places for Haydon Bridge children

*If a decision is taken by Northumberland County Council/Department for Education to close Haydon Bridge High School, do you agree that QEHS should expand to provide places for children from the Haydon Bridge Partnership from September 2019?*

To be clear, the Trust only consulted on this question because the Council had raised the issue of potential closure and asked if QEHS would provide places for any displaced students. As this would constitute a significant change, the Trust was obliged to consult before responding to the Council.

The chart below shows the responses to this question. Overall, a small majority gave a negative response. However, the reasons given for all responses tended to be more conditional than those given on the proposal on age range change, with an increased number of "Don't knows".



### **Common reasons given in support of the Proposal:**

- Children have to be educated somewhere/moral responsibility.
- Children have a right to a good quality education.
- What is the alternative?
- Could work with careful planning.
- Scale would offer best use of funding/better facilities.
- Strong secondary school is in best interests of children of West Northumberland.
- QEHS well placed geographically for Allendale/North Tyne.
- Haydon Bridge is not sustainable.
- As part of Three-Tier system.

### **Common reasons given against the Proposal:**

- Don't want Haydon Bridge/other schools to close.
- Haydon Bridge should have its own school.
- School in Haydon Bridge is important part of community.
- School would be too big.
- Impact on QEHS standards/ethos.
- Too far for children to travel.
- Lack of choice in West of Northumberland.
- QEHS is too academically focused/too high entry requirements for Sixth Form.
- QEHS does not have sufficient space or facilities.
- Need more vocational provision.
- Question pre-empts decision about future of school.

## **5. Alternative suggestions**

*If you have any alternative suggestions that meet the Trust's objectives of improving educational outcomes and experience, financial sustainability and capital investment, please state them here.*

- Keep things as they are/keep Three-tier system.
- NCC should invest in HMS and QEHS buildings.
- NCC should not invest in academies.
- Locate HMS and QEHS on single site.
- HMS and QEHS to merge to form 9-18 all-through school.
- Partnership schools to work together on collaborative solutions.
- Corbridge Middle School model/Haydon Bridge model/Haltwhistle model.
- HMS and QEHS to join Tynedale Community Learning Trust.
- Maintain faith-based/Catholic education at least until 13.
- Improve transitions between schools.
- Cluster/hub and spoke model to support rural schools.

- Mixed economy with entry to QEHS in Year 7 and Year 9.
- Post-16 more options/retain more students/sixth form college for Tyne Valley.
- Alternative vocational provision sited in Haydon Bridge.
- Accept students from catchment/Northumberland only to keep numbers manageable.
- Reduce spending to match income.
- Council to use capital funding to subsidise schools' revenue funding.
- Lobby MP/central government for better funding.
- Stop being academy/take all schools back into Local Authority control.

## 6. Conclusions

The Trust would like to thank everyone who took part in the consultation.

We would particularly like to thank the staff of HMS and QEHS who have continued to deliver to the highest professional standards during months of uncertainty. We appreciate that the majority of responses from our own staff were in favour of our proposal regarding age range change but acknowledge that those from HMS staff were more evenly split.

We would also like to thank all of those, including the governing boards of Acomb First and Sele First, who were supportive of a move to a Primary-Secondary system. It is worth noting that, together with students at HMS and QEHS, these schools are collectively responsible for the education of 62% of the children in Hexham Partnership schools.

We note that the majority of stakeholders, including some Partnership schools, did not respond to our consultation. While we appreciate that these are difficult issues, we would have liked to have heard their views on how best to resolve them.

We note the concerns expressed by the governing boards of some Partnership schools and their statements about a desire for a more collaborative approach. We have a strong track record of working closely with Partnership schools and first started talking to them over a year ago about the challenges we face. We are disappointed that they do not appear to have accepted the substance of those challenges. As a Trust, we are directly accountable for the "sharp end" of our children's education before they leave school. We are clear that the status quo is not sustainable going forward. We face harsh realities in the near future which will impact on all the children who progress to QEHS. No change is not an option.

We recognise that our proposals have been unpopular with considerable numbers of those who responded. We are dismayed that so much of the public discourse appears to have been based on myths, misconceptions and misinformation. We fully accept the right of people to disagree with us but attacks on the personal integrity of school leaders and Trustees, who are unpaid volunteers, are completely unacceptable.

## **Proposal on places for Haydon Bridge children**

The Council has now published a [report](#) on its own Consultation which will go to Cabinet for a decision on 8 May. The Council's report recommends that Haydon Bridge High School becomes an 11-18 Secondary school, with a subsidy of £1.54 million over at least the next three years.

As such, assuming that the Council accepts the recommendation in the report, there is no decision for Hadrian Learning Trust to make about accommodating any displaced children.

We will continue to welcome students from the Haydon Bridge area who express a preference for both our schools, subject to places being available.

## **Proposal to form 11-18 Secondary school**

Having carefully considered responses to our consultation, we remain of the view that a Primary-Secondary arrangement would be in the best interests of the children who progress through the school system to be educated at Queen Elizabeth High School.

However, the Council's [report](#) on its own consultation states that it cannot recommend a change to a Primary-Secondary system in the Hexham Partnership at this time. We assume this recommendation will be accepted.

In the view of the Trust, this is a unique opportunity missed and fails to meet the strategic challenges set out in the Council's Phase One Consultation.

It is wholly inconsistent for the Council to conclude that a Primary-Secondary model would be in the "best educational interests of the current and future pupils" in the Haydon Bridge area and not apply the same logic to the Hexham area.

As we have always made clear, Hadrian Learning Trust can only make decisions on behalf of HMS and QEHS. For our schools to become an 11-18 Secondary, others would have to become Primaries. The lack of support from the Council makes it impossible to move forward in a co-ordinated way.

Therefore, at this stage, we will not submit a Business Case for significant change to the Regional Schools Commissioner.

We welcome that the Council has indicated a willingness to invest in our school buildings and will work with them to explore options.

The Trust Board will reflect on the best way forward for our schools and the students for whom we are directly responsible.

We remain committed to building a better future for our children.

## Appendix – Detailed Response Analysis

### Proposal to form 11-18 Secondary school

Please note that the number of responses by category exceeds the total number of responses received, as many respondents indicated they fell into more than one category.

Respondent type	Yes	No	Don't know	Didn't answer	Total
Parent/Carer	234	1,203	88	68	1,593
Pupil/Student	173	534	74	7	788
Local Resident	33	305	12	17	367
Other	28	122	14	6	170
Staff Member	63	83	6	11	163
School Governor/Trustee	6	27	4	1	38
Local Councillor	2	9	1	-	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>2,283</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>3,131</b>

Top 10 Postcode Districts	Yes	No	Don't know	Didn't answer	Total
NE46	259	617	69	28	973
NE45	22	252	10	7	291
NE47	75	169	36	8	288
NE49	22	213	12	5	252
NE43	15	204	7	10	236
NE48	29	182	11	13	235
Not stated	41	111	24	3	179
DH8	16	143	8	6	173
NE44	7	113	6	2	128
NE42	9	63	2	8	82
<b>Total</b>	<b>495</b>	<b>2,067</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>2,837</b>

School	Yes	No	Don't know	No answer	Total
Queen Elizabeth High School	313	637	83	21	1,054
Corbridge Middle School	40	400	19	10	469
Hexham Middle School	121	268	36	9	434
Sele First School	91	155	35	9	290
Haltwhistle Upper School	26	202	20	2	250
St Joseph's Middle School	39	177	16	2	234
Corbridge First School	16	176	11	3	206
Whittonstall First School	6	176	2	4	188
Broomhaugh First School	6	134	4	2	146
Haydon Bridge High School	12	94	12	1	119
Beaufront First School	7	94	3	1	105
Chollerton First School	4	78	-	16	98
Haltwhistle Lower School	3	73	5	2	83
Acomb First School	14	38	6	-	58
St Mary's First School	8	43	3	1	55
Whitley Chapel First School	4	48	2	-	54
Hexham First School	6	43	4	-	53
Bellingham Middle School	4	32	3	1	40
Newbrough Primary School	9	18	5	-	32
Wark First School	4	23	1	3	31
Allendale Primary School	8	15	6	-	29
Humshaugh First School	5	19	2	1	27
Slaley First School	10	14	2	-	26
Greenhaugh First School	5	16	3	-	24
West Woodburn First School	3	16	1	2	22
Henshaw Primary School	5	12	2	-	19
Shaftoe Trust Primary School	2	11	2	-	15
Greenhead Primary School	2	8	-	-	10
Bellingham First School	1	7	1	1	10
Whitfield Primary School	-	6	1	-	7
Kielder First School	4	1	1	-	6
Otterburn First School	-	1	-	-	1
<b>Other schools</b>					
Broomley First School	5	57	1	-	63
Ovingham schools	2	21	1	-	24
Others	9	49	2	2	67

## Proposal on places for Haydon Bridge children

Please note that the number of responses by category exceeds the total number of responses received, as many respondents indicated they fell into more than one category.

Respondent type	Didn't answer	Don't know	No	Yes	Total
Parent/Carer	91	215	891	396	<b>1,593</b>
Pupil/Student	16	140	409	223	<b>788</b>
Local Resident	24	36	240	67	<b>367</b>
Other	12	29	86	43	<b>170</b>
Staff Member	11	24	58	70	<b>163</b>
School Governor/Trustee	3	8	21	6	<b>38</b>
Local Councillor	-	1	7	4	<b>12</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>1,712</b>	<b>809</b>	<b>3,131</b>

Top 10 Postcode Districts	Yes	No	Don't know	Didn't answer	Total
NE46	305	484	146	38	<b>973</b>
NE45	77	149	52	13	<b>291</b>
NE47	99	138	35	16	<b>288</b>
NE49	62	158	22	10	<b>252</b>
NE43	38	150	34	14	<b>236</b>
NE48	51	154	24	6	<b>235</b>
Not stated	38	103	33	5	<b>179</b>
DH8	34	107	18	14	<b>173</b>
NE44	20	77	28	3	<b>128</b>
NE42	23	41	8	10	<b>82</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>1,561</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>2,837</b>

School	Yes	No	Don't know	No answer	Total
Queen Elizabeth High School	339	520	160	35	1,054
Corbridge Middle School	110	248	92	19	469
Hexham Middle School	136	217	67	14	434
Sele First School	91	134	47	18	290
Haltwhistle Upper School	75	138	33	4	250
St Joseph's Middle School	79	121	31	3	234
Corbridge First School	47	118	34	7	206
Whittonstall First School	28	129	24	7	188
Broomhaugh First School	18	87	36	5	146
Haydon Bridge High School	24	81	11	3	119
Beaufront First School	16	72	13	4	105
Chollerton First School	14	73	10	1	98
Haltwhistle Lower School	11	58	8	6	83
Acomb First School	16	33	9	-	58
St Mary's First School	17	31	6	1	55
Whitley Chapel First School	15	26	10	3	54
Hexham First School	7	38	8	-	53
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Humshaugh First School	6	16	3	2	27
Slaley First School	5	15	4	2	26
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West Woodburn First School	2	14	5	1	22
Henshaw Primary School	7	8	4	-	19
Shaftoe Trust Primary School	6	7	1	1	15
Bellingham First School	3	3	3	1	10
Greenhead Primary School	2	7	1	-	10
Whitfield Primary School	3	3	1	-	7
Kielder First School	5	-	1	-	6
Otterburn First School	-	-	1	-	1
<b>Other schools</b>					
Broomley First School	15	42	6	-	63
Ovingham schools	6	15	3	-	24
Others	15	36	8	4	63

## **Data Protection**

Responses to the Consultation potentially included personal information, including names and full postcodes.

These have not been disclosed to any third-party person or organisation outwith Hadrian Learning Trust.

Data have been aggregated for the purpose of analysis in relation to the Consultation.

Responses will be retained for a period of up to twelve months and then destroyed.