



Northumberland
County Council

Proposals on the Relocation and change to Designation for Atkinson House School



**13 October 2021 –
01 December 2021**

<mailto:educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk>



Northumberland
County Council

www.northumberland.gov.uk

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 3 |
| What are the reasons for the proposed changes to Atkinson House School? | 4 |
| What are the proposed changes for Atkinson House School? | 4 |
| What impact would these proposed changes have on current students? | 5 |
| Would my child still receive transport to the proposed new site? | 5 |
| What are the details of the proposed new site? | 5 |
| How many additional places would be added to Atkinson House if it moves to Ponteland? | 6 |
| If approved, when would Atkinson House relocate? | 6 |
| Admission Arrangements | 6 |
| Would there be any implications for staff of Atkinson House? | 6 |
| Sport and Recreation | 7 |
| Alternative Proposals | 7 |
| How can I find out more about this proposal? | 7 |
| How can I submit my views about this proposal? | 7 |
| The Consultation Response Form | 9 |
| Glossary | 12 |
| Ofsted Inspection | 12 |

If you require a large print version of this document or a translation into another language please call 01670 623611 or educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk

Introduction

Northumberland County Council is consulting on making changes to Atkinson House School and we would like to hear your views.

As a parent/carer, member of staff or a member of the community, you may feel you will be impacted by these proposals and therefore this consultation offers you the opportunity to have your say and to submit your views for consideration by the Council before any decisions on whether or not to make the changes are made.

Therefore, I hope that you will take this opportunity to respond to the consultation and I look forward to reading your comments.

Cath McEvoy-Carr
Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services
Northumberland County Council

What are the reasons for the proposed changes to Atkinson House School?

Atkinson House School offers specialist educational provision in Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs for secondary aged male students aged 11 –16 years old. Atkinson House school is currently the only dedicated SEMH provision in Northumberland.

Over the last 10 years in Northumberland, the number of children and young people being identified with Autism and SEMH needs has been increasing significantly. More female students are also being identified with SEMH needs from Year 7 onwards. To address this increasing need, the Council has been adding more accommodation at other special schools to support additional places and there is also a new academy school opening in Blyth in 2023 specifically for Autism and SEMH needs.

However, ahead of the new school opening the Council requires further additional places for young people with SEMH needs within Northumberland in order to ensure they are able to have their educational needs met closer to their home communities, rather than having to travel longer distances to schools in other local authorities.

Alongside this consultation, an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) is being carried out to assess what impact the proposed changes could have on identified groups; this will include the impact of the proposal on current Atkinson House students not just of the relocation, but of the proposal to make it co-educational. Other groups may include staff, parents/carers and members of the local community in Ponteland. This EIA will also be provided to the Council's Cabinet along with the results of the consultation.

What are the proposed changes for Atkinson House School?

As a specialist SEMH provision, the Council has identified that Atkinson House School has the necessary skills within its staffing body and the right curriculum to assist with addressing the need for additional places for both male and female students identified with SEMH. The Governing Body of the school is also supportive of these changes. However, the scale of the need for these additional number of places required means that the current site of the school would not be suitable for expansion. Therefore, the proposed changes for Atkinson House would be:

- 1. Relocate Atkinson House School to a former school building in Ponteland;**
- 2. Change the designation of the school from male students only (single sex) to co-educational i.e. mixed gender to allow places to be allocated to female students**

Given that these proposals include both a change in location and the change to co-educational provision, it is expected that the Governing Body of the school would also want to change the name of the school; students and parents/carers would be asked for their own ideas for the new name, should the proposed changes be approved to go ahead.

What impact would these proposed changes have on current students?

Staff at Atkinson House will discuss with parents and carers how they will manage the change in the location of the school and the change to co-educational on individual students and you can provide them with your comments. Details of how a member of staff will contact you can be found later in this document. You are also able to provide comments on the questionnaire linked from this document.

Would my child still receive transport to the proposed new site?

Transport for individual students is always arranged in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy. Transport of the current students on roll at Atkinson House School is provided by the County Council and the current arrangements for the transport of current and future students would continue except they would be dropped off and picked up from the site in Ponteland.

What are the details of the proposed new site?

A former school site in Ponteland has been identified as a suitable new building for Atkinson House. The building is larger than the current Atkinson house building and therefore has the space to increase the number of school places that can be offered. The additional space will also offer the opportunity for staff to further enhance the school curriculum.

The building is already owned by the Council and having been recently occupied it is in a good state of repair. As such, while some work would be needed to make it suitable for the needs of Atkinson House students, this work would be fairly limited and therefore costs are expected to be reasonable. There would also be removal costs to the new site. The Council would also ensure that should Atkinson House relocate to Ponteland, students would have access to playing fields.

During this consultation, an assessment of these costs will be made, and provided to the Council to assist them with making a decision on whether or not to approve the changes.

How many additional places would be added to Atkinson House if it moves to Ponteland?

The current Atkinson House building has the capacity for 80 students and there were 75 on roll in January 2021. During this consultation, work will be undertaken to identify the specific number of additional places that would be required for young people in the county for September 2022, and this would be included in any formal statutory proposal to increase places and subsequently the school's planned admission number (PAN) would be increased to match this number. However, initial data review indicates that it is unlikely that the number of additional spaces required would be more than 20 and given the additional space in the proposed new site in Ponteland, it is expected that the additional places would be more than comfortably accommodated.

If approved, when would Atkinson House relocate?

If approved to relocate, Atkinson House School would open in its new building in Ponteland in **September 2022**.

Admission Arrangements

There would be no change to the way in which students are admitted to Atkinson House as its primary educational provision will continue to be for secondary age students with SEMH, except that female students with SEMH would be able to be allocated a place at the school it is deemed suitable to meet their needs.

Would there be any implications for staff of Atkinson House?

All staff currently employed by Atkinson House would transfer to the new site, should the changes be approved although some may have longer or shorter journeys there. Due to the anticipated increase in pupil numbers, it is likely that there would be an increase in the number of school staff required to support students, so there could be additional bringing employment opportunities.

Discussions with the Governing Body and with the Trades Unions are also being undertaken as part of this consultation to discuss any implications of the proposed changes for staff. The Council is also holding meetings with staff and trades unions during consultation.

Sport and Recreation

The Council would ensure that students at Atkinson House were able to access suitable sports facilities at the proposed new location in Ponteland.

Alternative Proposals

If you have an alternative suggestion as to how the Council could achieve the additional places required for young people with SEMH for September 2022 that you would like the Council to consider - you can set out your alternative suggestion in the questionnaire linked at the end of this document.

How can I find out more about this proposal?

If you are a parent or carer of a young person currently on roll at Atkinson House School, a member of staff will arrange a time to telephone you directly during the week beginning 15th November to talk about what the proposals would mean for your child specifically and for you to register your comments with them. You are also able to complete the questionnaire accompanying this document (see section '[How can I submit my views about this proposal?](#)' below).

Meetings for staff and the Governing Body of Atkinson House have been arranged as follows:

Governors only meeting – Thursday 4 November 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

An invitation to a virtual meeting will be sent to Governors directly ahead of the meeting

Staff and staff representatives only meeting – Thursday 11 November 2021 at 3:30 p.m.

An invitation to the appropriate virtual meeting will be sent directly to staff ahead of the meeting.

It is the aim of the Council to hold an event during the consultation period where parents/carers and members of the public would have the opportunity to speak face to face to Council officers and the Senior Leadership Team of Atkinson House about this proposal. This event would need to be managed in line with COVID safety measures. When organised and if a face to face meeting continues to be possible, parents and other stakeholders will be contacted directly and the event will be advertised on the Council's website with instructions on how you may attend in COVID safe conditions.

How can I submit my views about this proposal?

A six-week consultation (school weeks) on the proposal to relocate Atkinson House to a site in Ponteland and to change its designation to co-educational began on **Wednesday 13 October and ends at midnight on 1 December 2021.**

The Council and the Governing Body of Atkinson House are keen to hear your views on the proposal, and also to learn if you have any alternative proposals that could bring the same benefits that have been identified in this document.

A link to a questionnaire is attached to the end of this document; please complete the electronic questionnaire if you can. However, if you or someone you know would prefer to send a hard copy, please request a printed form by contacting educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk stating that you require a printed survey form for the proposals for Atkinson House consultation (13.10.21 – 01.12.21).

To return your completed form, please send to:

School Organisation and Resources Team
Children's Services,
County Hall
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 2EF

At the end of this consultation, all feedback received will be considered by the Council before deciding on whether or not to move to the next step, which is statutory consultation.

Thank you for participating in this consultation

The Consultation Response Form

The consultation response form below is a duplicate of the Citizen Space survey so you can think about the questions and your response before you log on to complete the online survey [here](#).

Consultation on proposals for Atkinson House School

Overview

Northumberland County Council is consulting on making changes to Atkinson House School and we would like to hear your views.

Firstly, if you are a parent or carer of a young person currently on roll at Atkinson House, please be assured that these proposed changes will not affect your child's place at the school or their transport entitlement to the school if they are eligible.

As a parent/carers, member of staff or a member of the community, you may feel you will be impacted by these proposals and therefore this consultation offers you the opportunity to have your say and to submit your views for consideration by the Council before any decisions on whether or not to make the changes are made.

Therefore, I hope that you will take this opportunity to respond to the consultation and I look forward to reading your comments.

Cath McEvoy-Carr

Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services

Northumberland County Council

Introduction

1 What is your name? (Optional)

2 What is your email address? (Optional)

If you enter your email address then you will automatically receive an acknowledgement email when you submit your response.

3 Please select your role

(Required)

Please select only one item

- Parent of a child in Atkinson House
- Governor in Atkinson House
- Staff member in Atkinson House
- Resident / member of the community living in the area served by Atkinson House
- Member of a Parish Council in area covered by Atkinson House
- Other

4 If you answered 'other' to question 3 please provide details below

The consultation document referenced is this document

5 Do you support the proposal to relocate Atkinson House to a larger building in Ponteland in order to assist with providing additional specialist places for young people in Northumberland with Social, Emotional and mental health needs with effect from September 2022?

(Required)

Please select only one item

- Yes
 No

6 Please give the reasons for your answer

(Required)

7 Linked to the relocation of Atkinson House, do you support the proposal to change its provision from single sex to co-educational in order to provide additional specialist places for female students in Northumberland with Social, Emotional and mental health needs with effect from September 2022?

(Required)

Please select only one item

- Yes
 No

(Required)

Please select only one item

- Yes
 No

8 Please give the reasons for your answer

(Required)

9 If you have an alternative proposal to the relocation of Atkinson House that you believe would achieve the additional places required for young people with SEMH for September 2022, please outline it below providing as much detail as possible (or state none).

(Required)

10 Do you have any additional comments you wish the Council's Cabinet to consider when deciding on whether or not to approve further consultation on the proposals for Atkinson House?

(Required)

Glossary

It is important before responding you understand the roles, responsibilities and powers of the various organisations involved in school establishments.

The table below summarises roles/responsibilities and powers.

| Organisation | Role / responsibility | Powers |
|--|---|---|
| Local Authority-Northumberland County Council. | Northumberland County Council must ensure that there are sufficient good school places for the parents and children who live in Northumberland. They must ensure sensible place planning. They must hold maintained schools to account for their educational and financial performance (but not academies). | The Local Authority can hold consultations. Elected members of the Council Cabinet are the decision-making body and can merge, close, or extend age ranges of maintained schools (but not academies). They cannot establish solely run academy trusts, but can be stakeholders. |
| Regional Schools Commissioner / Department for Education | The RSC must broker the academy conversion of failing schools. They hold Academy trusts to account for both their financial and education performance. | The RSC has powers to instruct the Local Authority to close(discontinue)schools. The RSC is the decision-making body for any changes to Academies including closure or age range extensions. |
| Academy Trusts | Academy Trusts are accountable for the financial and educational performance of the academy schools within its trust. | Trusts can hold consultation on changes to age range, closure and growth and set up academies (with the permission of the RSC). |
| Diocese | The Diocese provides support and advice to its schools through consultation. They can hold consultations. They should be consulted and provide a strategic view on behalf of their schools. Hold its schools to account for their educational and financial performance. | The Diocese can provide capital investment for faith schools. They can support or oppose closures or changes. They can establish multi-academy trusts. |

As Atkinson House School is a **community special school**, the only involvement will be the Local Authority as no other organisation listed in the table above are involved in the school.

Ofsted Inspection

Atkinson House School (AHS) was inspected by Ofsted in January 2020 and was judged to require improvement for the quality of education.

[A full list of Ofsted reports can be viewed here.](#)