



**Northumberland**  
County Council

## **CONSULTATION ABOUT EDUCATION IN THE BERWICK PARTNERSHIP**

**An opportunity to give us your views**



**PHASE 2 - 31 OCTOBER 2022 UNTIL MIDNIGHT ON  
3 MARCH 2023**

# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	2
BACKGROUND .....	4
SCHOOL CAPACITY, SURPLUS PLACES AND FALLING NUMBERS.....	7
EDUCATION OUTCOMES .....	15
FINANCIAL CHALLENGES .....	20
POTENTIAL MODELS .....	23
POTENTIAL TIMELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION .....	29
IMPACT OF PROPOSALS ON ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS INTO MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS.....	33
IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSED MODELS FOR STAFF .....	37
IMPACT OF PROPOSALS ON SCHOOL CATCHMENT AND TRANSPORT ELIGIBILITY AREAS .....	39
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS .....	40
POTENTIAL MODELS – POST-16 AND POST-18 .....	44
SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND ESTATES .....	45
OTHER FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION .....	47
EARLY YEARS .....	47
TRANSPORT .....	48
SPORT AND RECREATION .....	49
HOW WILL VIEWS FROM CONSULTATION BE GATHERED? .....	50

# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Phase 2 Consultation on the future of schools in the Berwick Partnership.

Phase 1 Consultation asked parents, staff and the wider community in Berwick whether they believed a reorganised 3-tier structure (the current structure) or a reorganisation to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure would be better able to secure a viable, sustainable and successful education system across all phases from nursery to sixth form. While many of the consultees who responded, including many schools in the Berwick Partnership, had very strong views about which system schools should be organised within, there was no majority view for either system.

As a result, this Phase 2 Consultation sets out possible models of school organisation within both the current 3-tier system and within a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system. This consultation document sets out the issues facing schools in the Berwick Partnership and why there have to be changes to the way schools are organised in the area, including possible school closures, in whatever system it is decided should be in place.

Before you continue to read this Phase 2 consultation document, it is important to understand that Northumberland County Council does not have any powers to make changes to academies – within the Berwick Partnership, this applies to Berwick Academy and St Cuthbert's Catholic First School. However, the Council is carrying out this consultation on their behalf also so that everyone's views can be collected and analysed in a consistent way. The Diocese of Newcastle and the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle also have a significant role to play in this consultation process.

The following table summarises the roles and powers of the various organisations with responsibilities for schools and academies.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Role/Responsibility</b>	<b>Powers</b>
Local Authority: Northumberland County Council	Northumberland County Council has a statutory duty to ensure 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 brokers the academy conversion of failing schools and through its Advisory Board, approves or declines requests of maintained schools to become converter academies. They hold Academy trusts to account for both their financial and educational 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 (e.g. Berwick Academy; Bishop Bewick Trust	Academy Trusts are accountable for the financial and educational performance of the academy schools within its trust.	Trusts can carry out consultation on proposed changes including age range, but permission to make such changes is given by the RSC.
Governing Bodies of maintained schools (community/com munity; voluntary; foundation)	Accountable to the Local Authority for financial and educational performance.	Maintained schools have some powers to make changes to schools depending on the type of change; typically, the type of change and thresholds within which voluntary and foundation schools can make changes are more extensive than for community schools.
Dioceses	The Dioceses provides support and advice to their schools through consultation. They can hold consultations. They should be consulted and provide a strategic view on behalf of their schools. They hold their schools to account for their educational and financial performance.	The Diocese can provide capital investment for maintained faith schools. They can support or oppose closures or changes and have the right to appeal decisions made by the Local Authority with regard to changes to maintained schools to the Schools Adjudicator. They can establish multi-academy trusts.

## BACKGROUND

The Berwick Partnership is currently organised mainly within the 3-tier (first/middle/high) school structure. There are 11 first schools, 1 first academy, 1 primary school, 3 middle schools, 1 age 13-18 academy and 1 special school:

The 18 schools within the partnership are:

- **Belford Primary School – age 2-11**
- **Berwick St Mary's CE First School – age 3-9**
- **Berwick Holy Trinity CE First School – age 3-9**
- **Holy Island CE First School - age 4-9**
- **Hugh Joicey CE First School – age 4-9**
- **Lowick CE First School – age 2-9**
- **Norham St Coelwulf's CE First School – age 3-9**
- **Scremerston First School – age 4-9**
- **Spittal First School – age 4-9**
- **St Cuthbert's Catholic First School – age 3-9**
- **Tweedmouth Prior Park First School – age 3-9**
- **Tweedmouth West First School – age 4-9**
- **Wooler First School – age 2-9**
- **Berwick Middle School – age 9-13**
- **Glendale Community Middle School – age 9-13**
- **Tweedmouth Community Middle School – age 9-13**
- **Berwick Academy –age 13-18**
- **The Grove Special School – age 2-19**

Some first schools also have provision for children from age 2 or 3 which are run separately from the school, but based on the school site e.g. Tweedmouth Prior Park First and Spittal First Schools.

In the 3-tier structure educational pathway, pupils in first schools leave at the end of Year 4 and transfer into Year 5 at middle school, where they remain until the end of Year 8. From middle school, pupils then transfer into Year 9 until the end of Year 11 or the end of Year 13 depending on their choices.

While the educational standards achieved by many of the schools and academies in the Berwick Partnership are good, the medium to long-term future of schools in the area remains uncertain due to a number of factors beyond the direct control of Northumberland County Council.

It has been well-publicised during Phase 1 Consultation that the Council has committed £39.9m towards the replacement and refurbishment of school buildings in the Berwick Partnership. The reason for carrying out Phase 1 Consultation and Phase 2 Consultation on the structure of schools in the Berwick area is to ensure that this investment is made in a school structure that can deliver consistently good outcomes for all children and young people within a viable and sustainable educational pathway, now and for the future generations to come. These objectives are articulated in the 'Vision for Change for Berwick Partnership', agreed by the schools and academies in the partnership as follows:

#### **'Vision for Change for Berwick Partnership'**

- **Improving Education Outcomes** at each phase to ensure every child meets their potential.
- **Sustainability of Education** across the whole of the Berwick Partnership for the long term.
- **Improving and extending SEND offer** for children and young people in Berwick Partnership so that their needs are met locally and travel times are reduced significantly.
- **Engaging the Berwick Community** in the review process to build an understanding of all the issues and to grow support for any proposed changes within schools in order that the community engages, supports and thrives.
- Ensure **schools work together** to further develop the partnership and create a sustainable model for the future.
- Underpinning **best value for NCC capital Investment** as well as any wider investment opportunities that may arise.



As for Phase 1 Consultation, while everyone's view is welcome in this next phase and will form part of the overall feedback to the 'decision-makers', again it is not a referendum and any decision about the structure of schools will be based on the quality of the educational rationale rather than 'votes' for one system or another.

The factors facing schools in the Berwick Partnership highlighted during Phase 1 Consultation remain the same:-

### External Factors

- The need to ensure investment in school buildings in the Berwick Partnership;
- The need to provide appropriate specialist provision for a growing number of children and young people living in the Berwick area with Special Educational Needs as close to their home communities as possible;
- The need to reduce the over-provision of school places in the light of falling school rolls to support viable and sustainable schools in the Berwick area for decades to come.

### Opportunities

- Investment of millions of pounds into school buildings in the partnership;
- Opportunity for all parties who have an interest in education in the Berwick area to shape a school system that will be in place for decades to come;
- Opportunity for a wide-ranging view of education to be taken that includes mainstream, specialist and Post-16 and Post-18 provision;
- Opportunity for alternative proposals for school organisation to be put forward and considered.



## SCHOOL CAPACITY, SURPLUS PLACES AND FALLING NUMBERS

The 'capacity' of a school building is based on a calculation that works out the appropriate number of pupils that can be educated within it. The calculation is slightly different depending on whether a school is a primary or secondary school, as pupils of different ages have differing educational and space requirements. For middle schools in Northumberland which are 'deemed secondary', their capacities are worked out from a mixture of primary and secondary needs.

The number of 'Surplus places' in a school is the difference between the number of children on the school roll and its capacity – e.g. a first school with a capacity for 150 pupils which has 135 pupils on roll has 15 surplus places, or about 10% spare capacity. A small amount of capacity in a school is a good thing as the school will generally be viable and sustainable, as it allows for some fluctuation over the school year if some children leave and some joining without impacting the school staffing or finance arrangements. It also allows for some parental preference with regard to school choice.

However, the number of pupils being born in the Berwick Partnership has been falling for a number of years and according to the latest data available to the Council, this is set to continue for the foreseeable future.

At first school level, there are currently 1,435 places in the Berwick Partnership. As at October 2022, there are 950 pupils on roll in these schools. This means there are currently 485 unfilled places in these schools. This is the equivalent number of places that would fill 3 schools the same size as Belford, Holy Trinity and Wooler First Schools. In last year's cohort, there were 978 pupils on roll in Berwick first schools and in the previous year there were 1,058, demonstrating the yearly decline in numbers.

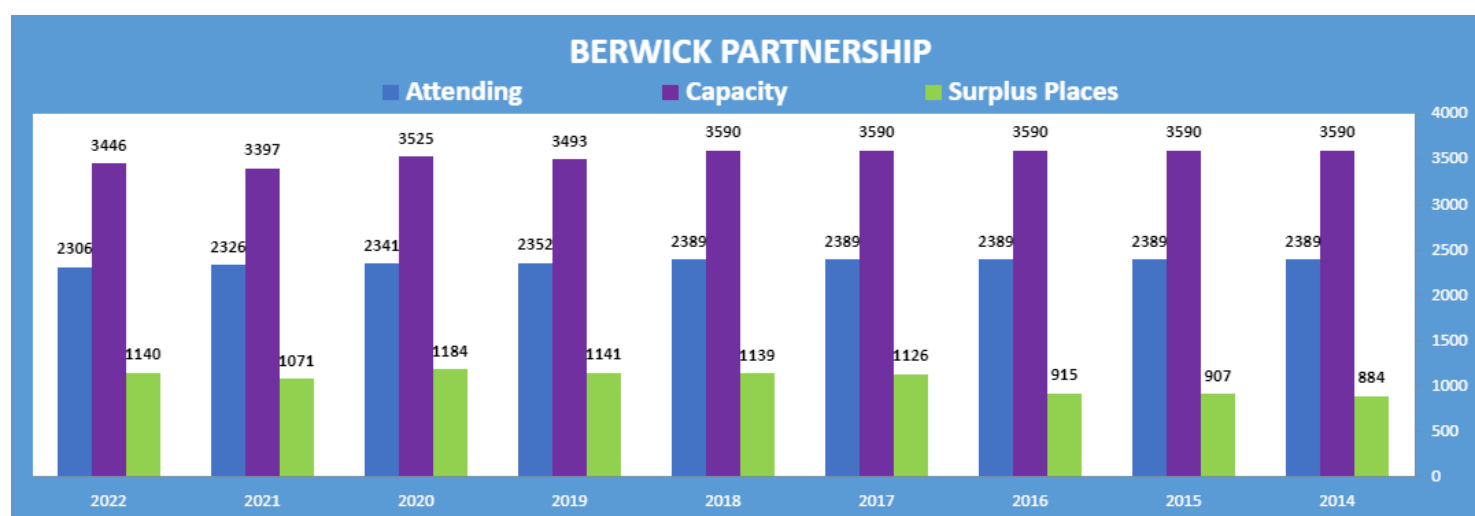
Excessive surplus places due to falling pupil numbers can be seen as beneficial for parents, as they are more than likely to secure a place for their child in the school of their choice, whether it is their local catchment school or another school. However,



this is a short-term benefit as schools begin competing with each other to attract pupils from a reducing pool of pupils year on year and all schools' finances are affected. Some schools gain pupils from outside of their own catchment area which supports their own viability, while other schools that are less popular at a given point in time with parents have their finances severely impacted.

Without intervention to better match schools with their populations, this situation could result in schools competing for pupils, with the potential for some schools closing that have larger pupil populations than the surviving schools, resulting in longer journeys to schools.

The following graph shows the total number of pupils attending schools in the Berwick Partnership (blue bar), the total number of places available in schools (purple bar) and the number of those places that are unfilled (green bar).



As can be seen, there has been an upward trend in the number of surplus places since 2014 and this trend will continue as the number of pupils living in the Berwick area continues to fall.

The location of schools in rural areas is also particularly important, as there is a limit to the length of journey that is acceptable for children in these areas to undertake daily. This inevitably means that in rural areas of Northumberland, there has to be

an acceptance there will always be a level of surplus places in certain rural schools, providing they are able to remain viable.

Linked to this, the distance travelled by pupils daily to school is a key factor in their educational experience. It is an objective of the Council that children and young people of statutory school age have access to good schools as close to their home communities as possible.

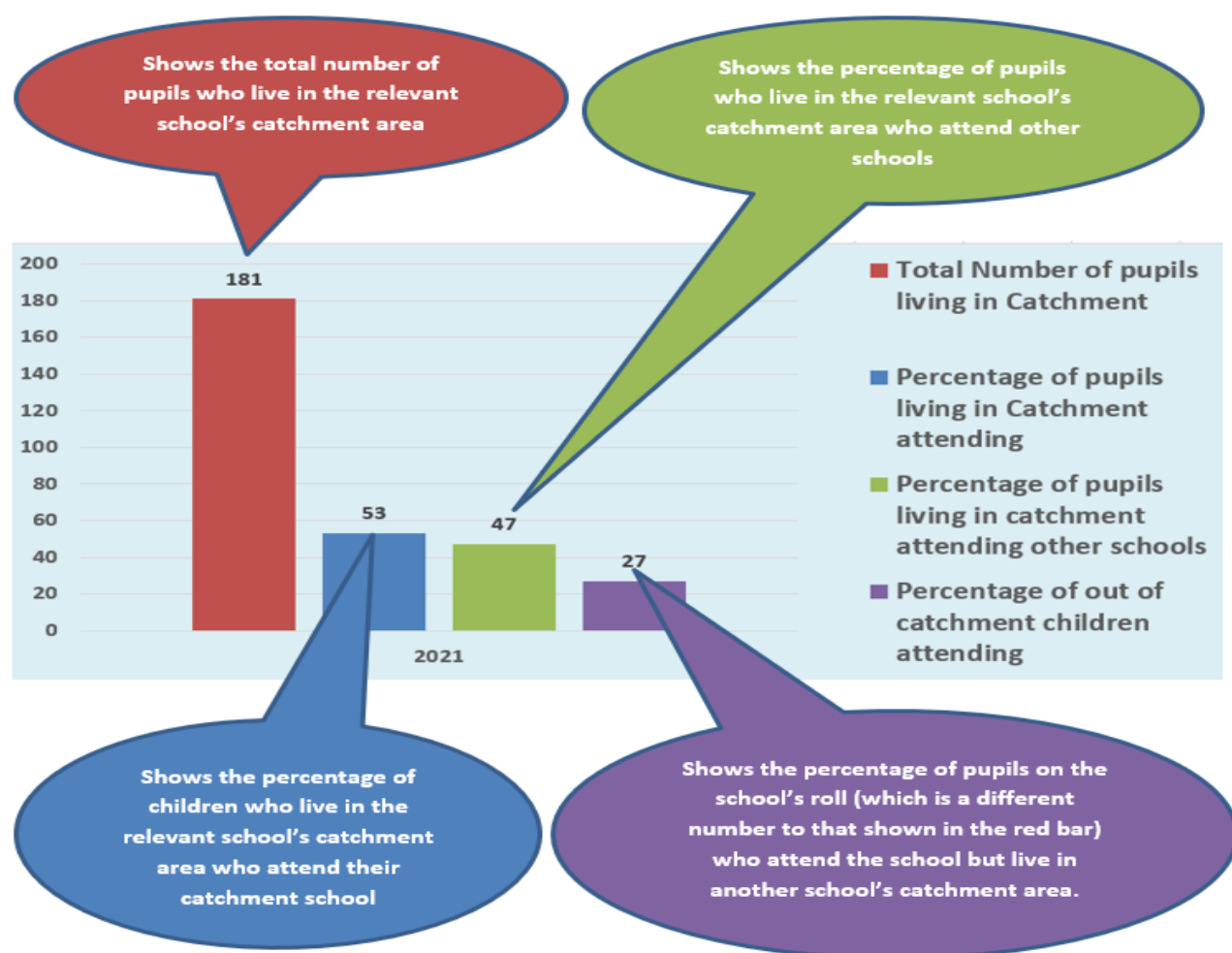
At the same time, the Council is committed to reducing the carbon footprint of residents and businesses across the county through the implementation of its Climate Change Action Plan 2021-23. Reducing unnecessary car journeys, including the daily transportation of pupils passing local schools to schools outside of their home communities, is a key plank of this strategy and is supported by the Council's School Organisation Plan 2021-24.

The following graphs show the pattern of pupils attending schools in the Berwick Partnership for each of the last 5 years. These show the number of children that live in the school's catchment area (as at January 2022), the percentage of children who attend their own catchment school and the percentage of the school's catchment children who attend other schools. It also shows as a percentage how many children who are on the school's roll actually live in other school's catchment areas.<sup>1</sup>

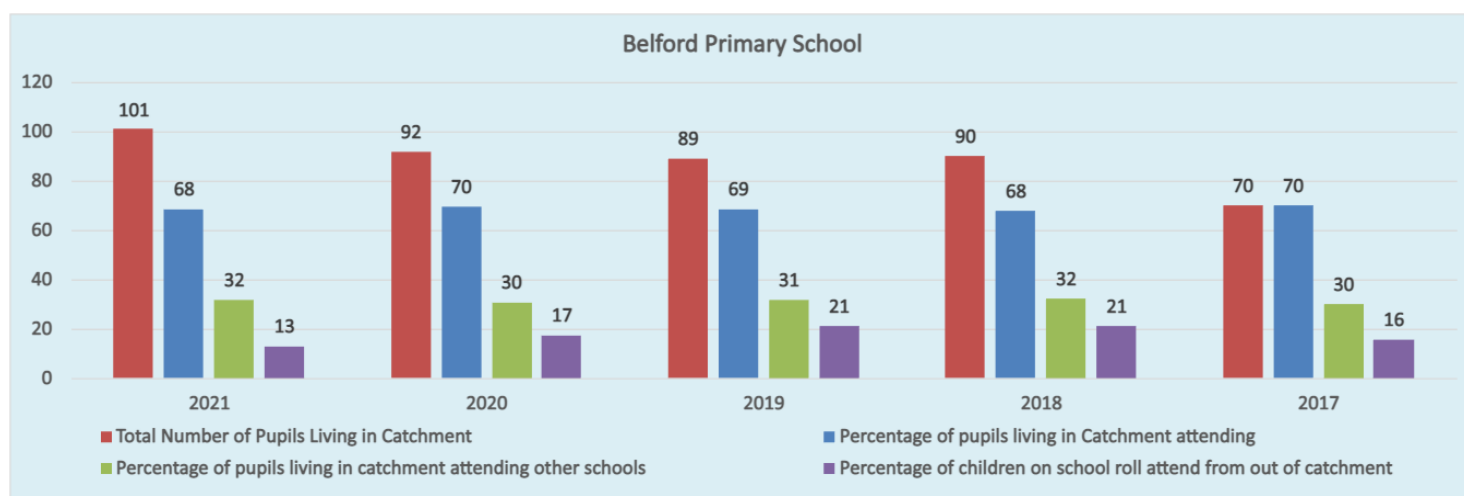
---

<sup>1</sup> Note that St Cuthbert's RC First School does not have an allocated catchment area, therefore all pupils who attend reside in other school's catchment areas.

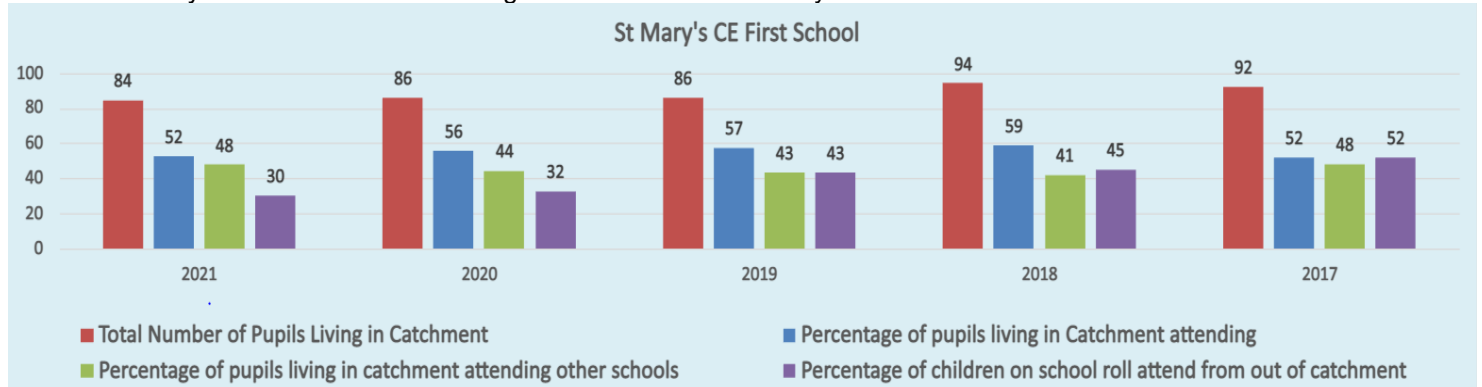
## Key For Graphs:



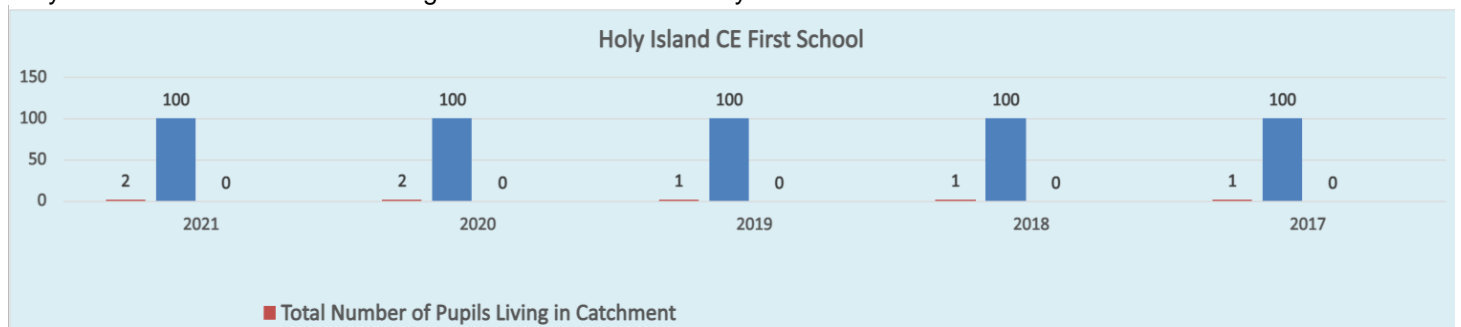
Belford Primary School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



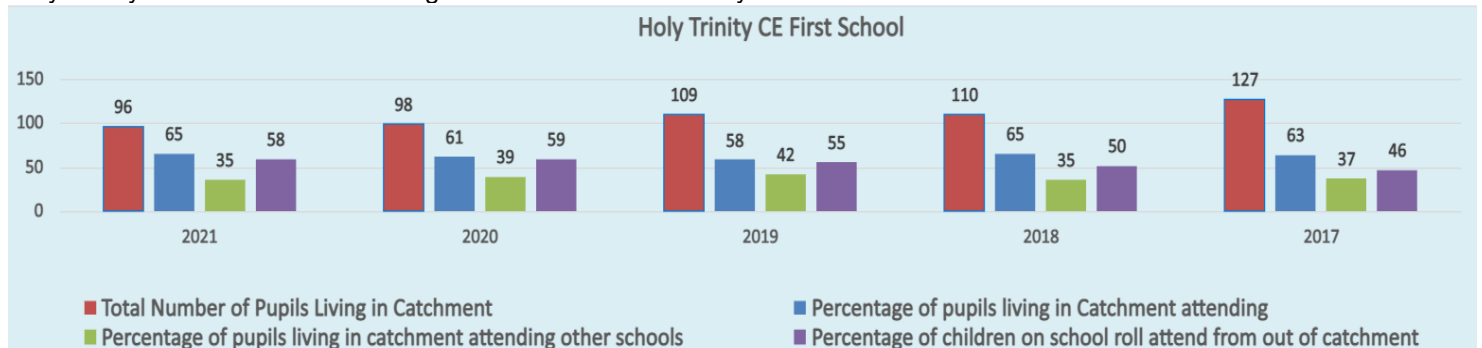
Berwick St Mary's CE First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



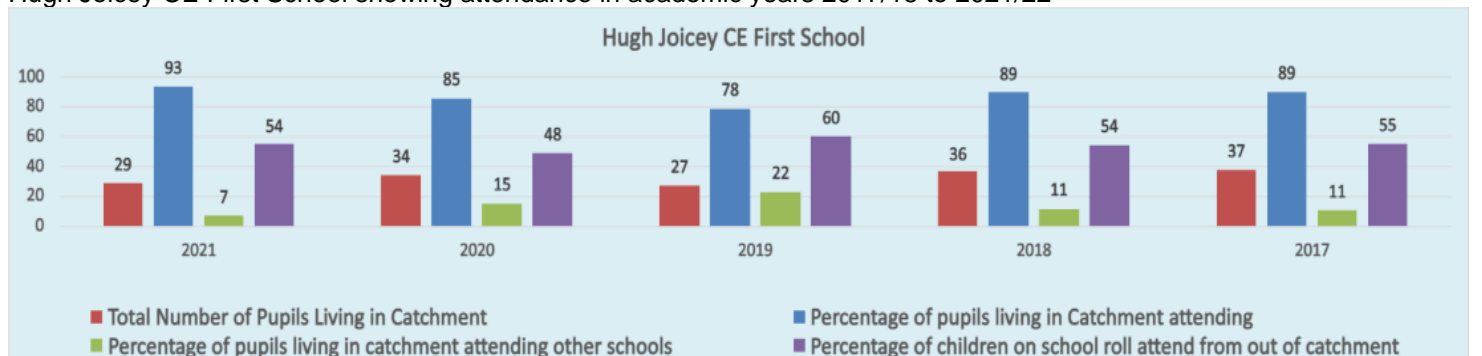
Holy Island CE First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



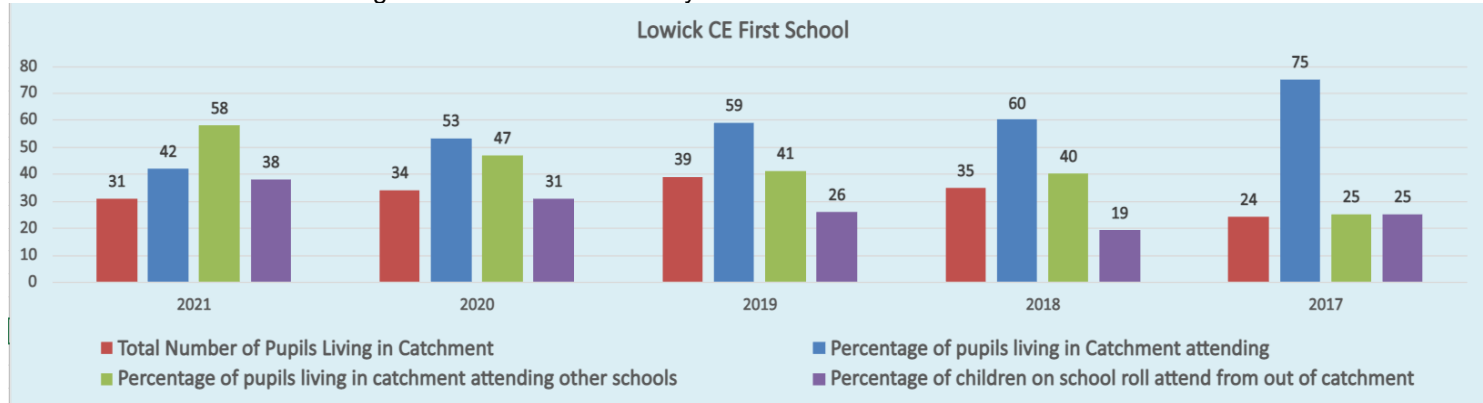
Holy Trinity CE First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



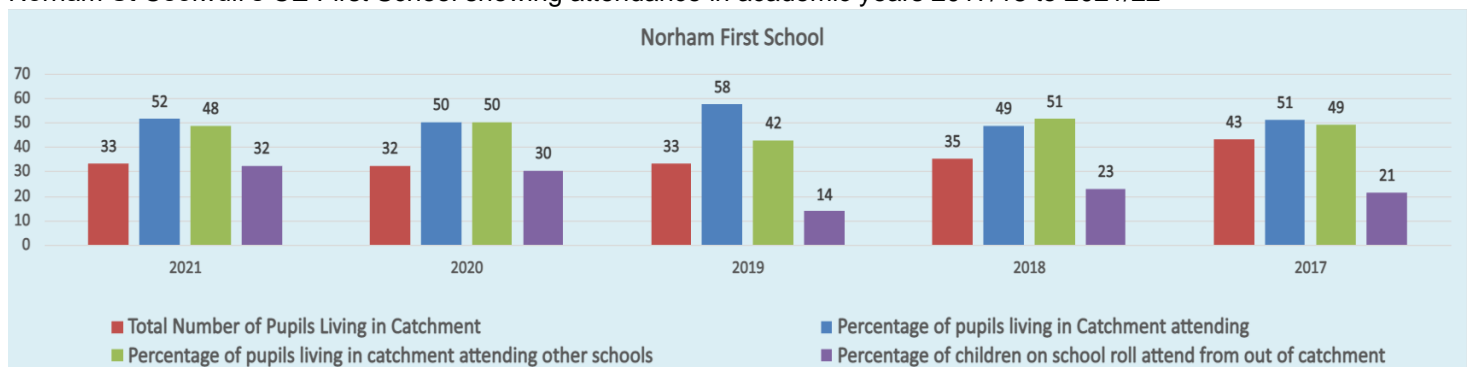
Hugh Joicey CE First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



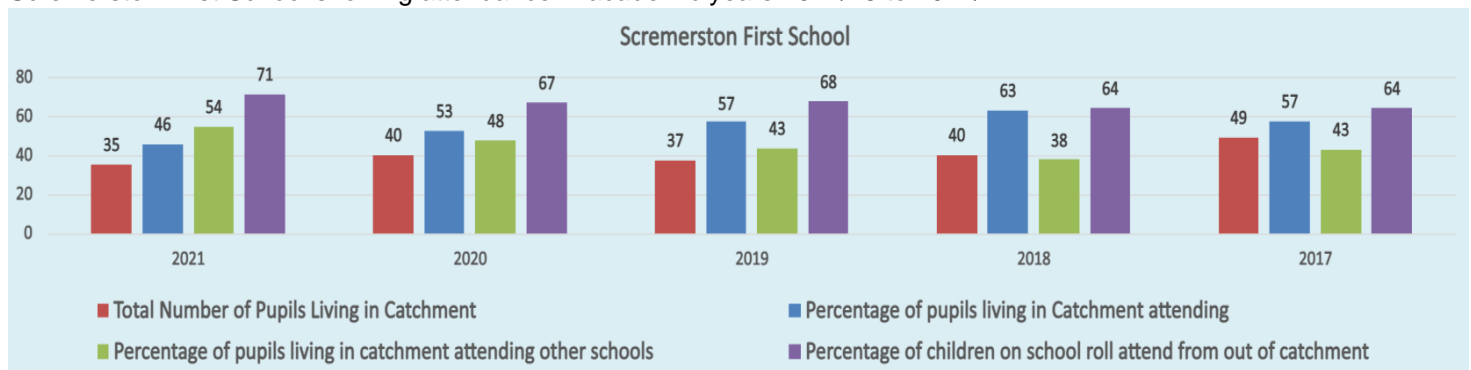
Lowick CE First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



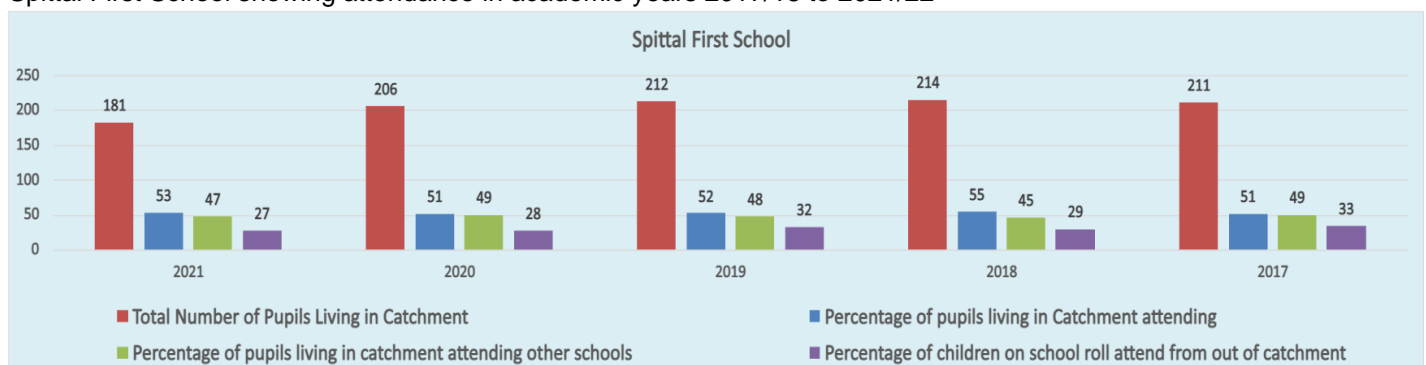
Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



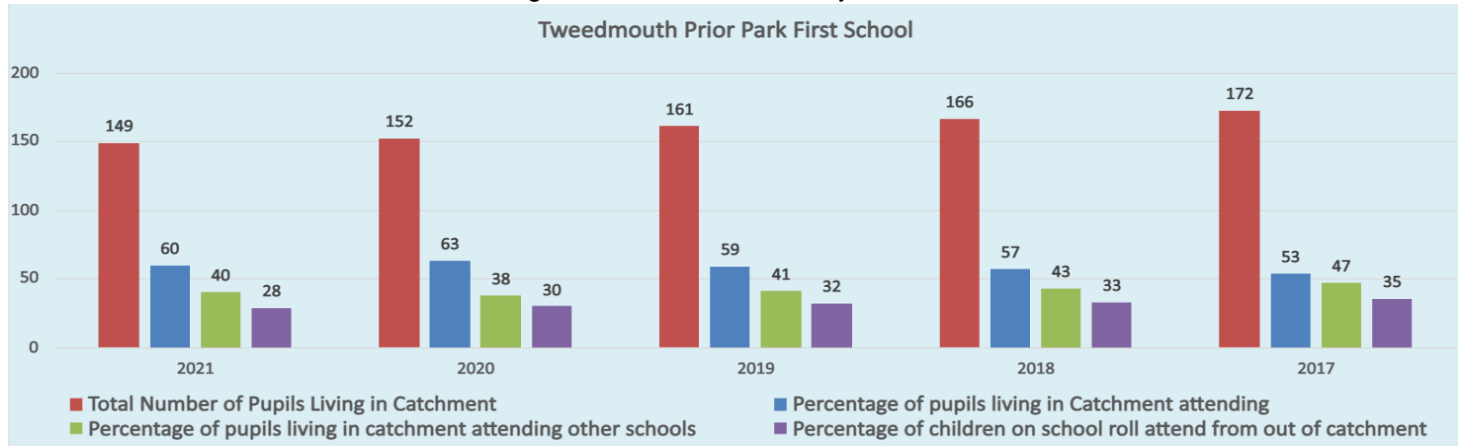
Scremerston First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



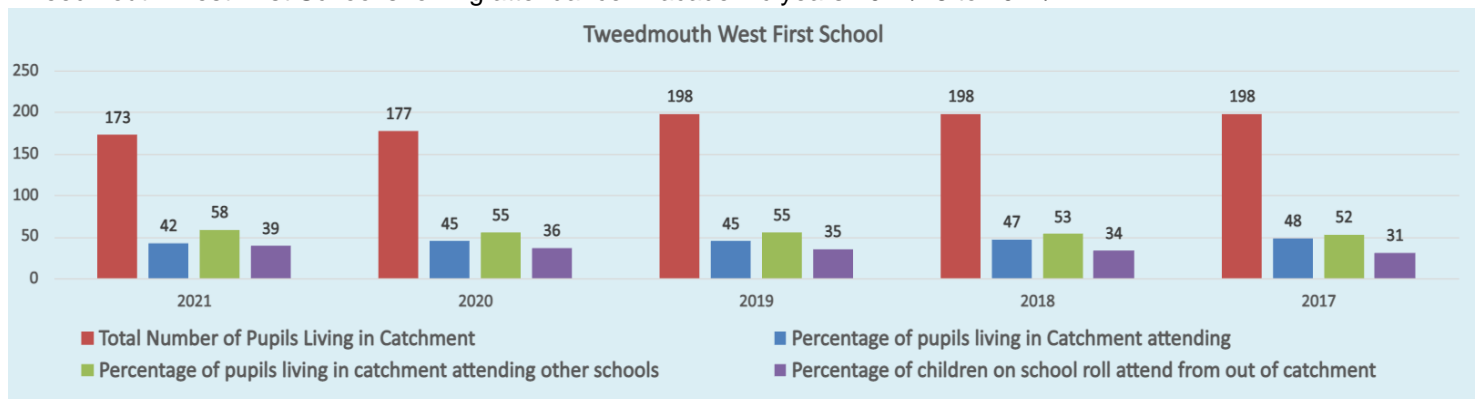
Spittal First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



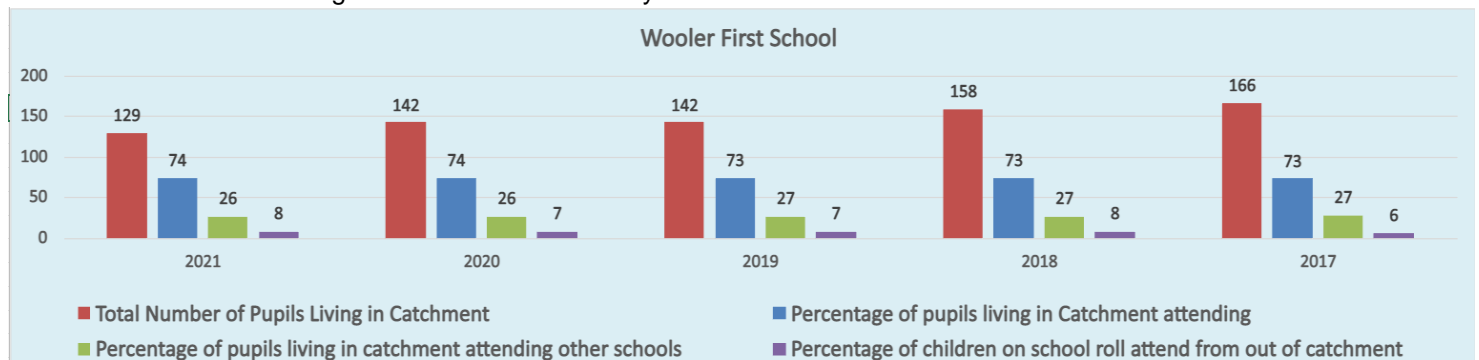
Tweedmouth Prior Park First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



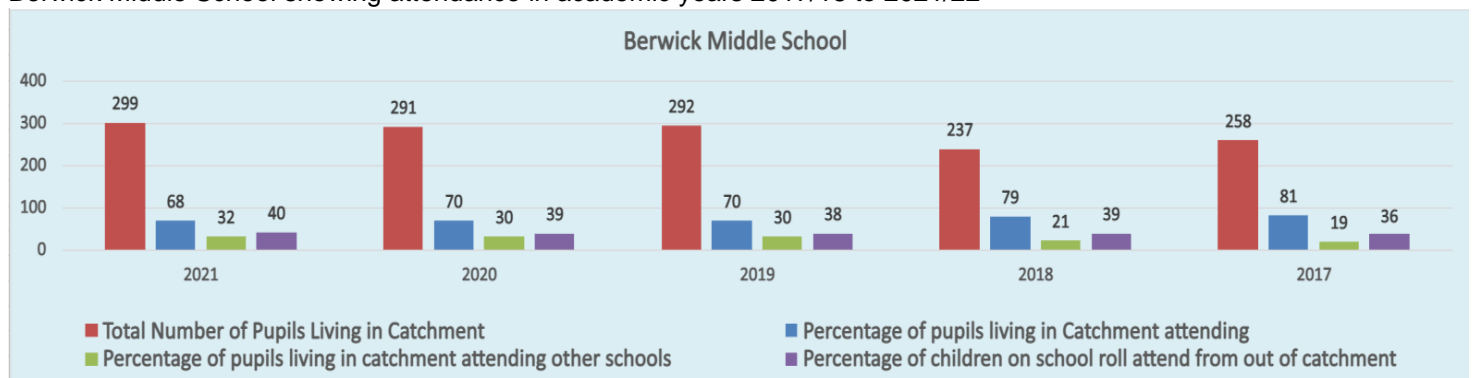
Tweedmouth West First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



Wooler First School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22

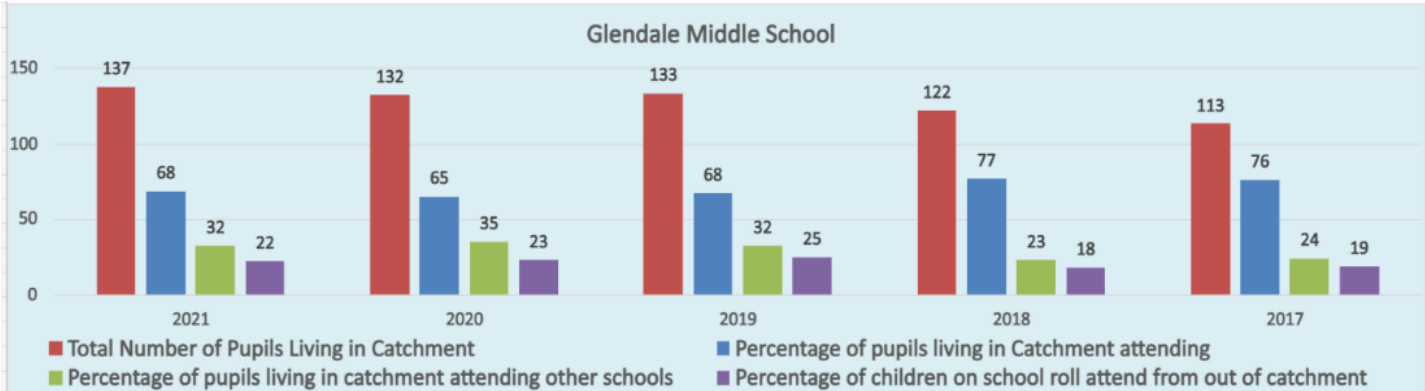


Berwick Middle School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22

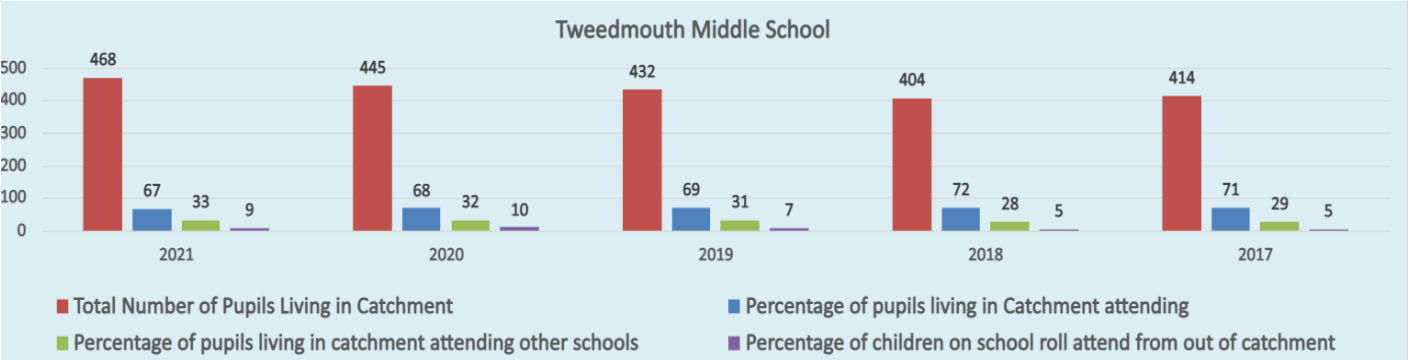




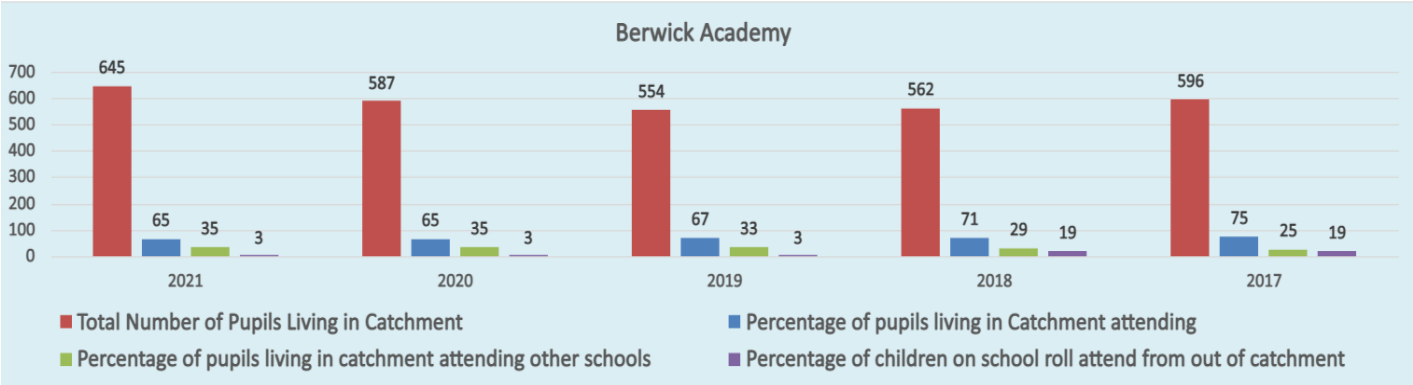
Glendale Middle School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



Tweedmouth Middle School showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



Berwick Academy showing attendance in academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22



## EDUCATION OUTCOMES

All parents want their children to have the best opportunity to achieve to the best of their ability when they are at school. This desire is shared by the Council for every pupil within Northumberland, with the additional objective that we want pupils to be able to access a good education within or as close to their home community as possible.

As we stated in Phase 1 consultation, achievement can cover a number of different factors that measure the quality of a pupil's educational experience, with academic achievement being just one. Whichever model of school structure is finally approved for the Berwick Partnership, it would need to demonstrate that it has the potential to not just improve academic achievement, but the whole educational experience of pupils throughout their educational journey.

Educational outcomes were included in Phase 1 consultation in the Summer Term, but as the outcomes for 2022 of the tests and examinations that pupils sat in the Summer Term for 2022 are not yet available, they are repeated here again for your information.

### **Key Stage 1:**

Children in first schools and primary schools are assessed at the end of Key Stage 1 (KS1) assessments, which are taken by children at the end of Year 2 when they are aged 7 or almost 7. These assessments are not published as their purpose is mainly to assist schools with developing the next learning steps for individual children, although they are shared with parents.

### **Key Stage 2:**

Children in primary schools and middle schools are assessed at the end of Year 6 when they are aged 11 or almost 11. Key Stage 2 (KS2) assessments did not take place in 2020 and 2021, therefore the last available data for Berwick Partnership is from 2019 as results from summer 2022 will not be available until this coming December.

Children are assessed against a number of measures, but one of the key measures is the percentage of children who meet the expected standard for Reading, Writing and Maths. The results for 2019 for children in Year 6 in schools in the Berwick Partnership were provided in the Phase 1 Consultation and they are repeated here again for your information, together with the Northumberland and England averages that year.

***Percentage of students achieving KS2 expected standard in Berwick Partnership 2019***

	<b>% Children who met expected standard</b>
<b>Belford Primary School</b>	<b>88%</b>
<b>Berwick Middle School</b>	<b>72%</b>
<b>Glendale Middle School</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>Tweedmouth Middle School</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Northumberland average</b>	<b>66%</b>
<b>England average</b>	<b>65%</b>

From the previous table, you can see that the highest percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths was at Belford Primary School, with the two Berwick town middles also achieving above average scores, while Glendale Middle achieved just below the county and national average.

### **Key Stage 4 – GCSE Results**

The last verified outcomes at GCSE (Key Stage 4) for Berwick Academy were in Summer 2019, as set out in the following table – we are expecting the verified outcomes from Summer 2022 in late Autumn. However, the DfE has stated that the Covid pandemic has had an uneven impact on 2021/22 performance data and

therefore when the data is made available, it is not recommended to make direct comparisons of a school's outcome data for this year with results from previous years (such as 2019) when examination conditions were the same. In the same way, it is not recommended to make comparisons of a school's 2022 GCSE data with that of other schools.

In Phase 1 consultation, we also reported that the DfE had stated that the GCSE results from 2020 and 2021 could not be meaningfully compared to previous years' results as a way of measuring pupil performance due to the way they were assessed and awarded in those years.

However, the key measures of pupil performance at GCSE in 2019, 2020 and 2021 for Berwick Academy were included in Phase 1 Consultation and so they are included here again in the following table for information purposes. For the reasons explained it is not possible to produce a Northumberland or England average.

## GCSE results, Berwick Academy

		GCSE 2019	GCSE 2020	GCSE 2021
<b>Progress 8</b> (measures how much value a school has added to pupil progress compared to other schools. 0 = Expected Progress)	<b>Berwick Academy</b>	-0.55	-0.26	Not available, but expected to make progress on 2020 results
	Northumberland average	-0.12	N/A	N/A
	England average	-0.03	N/A	N/A
<b>% Students Achieving Grade 4 or more in English and Maths (equivalent to low C pass in previous grading system)</b>	<b>Berwick Academy</b>	47%	62%	63%
	Northumberland Average	65%	N/A	N/A
	England Average	65%	N/A	N/A
<b>% Students Achieving Grade 5 or more in English and Maths (equivalent to high C pass in previous grading system)</b>	<b>Berwick Academy</b>	21%	35%	36%
	Northumberland average	43%	N/A	N/A
	England average	43%	N/A	N/A
<b>Attainment 8</b> (measures how well pupils perform against 8 qualifications - higher figure is best)	<b>Berwick Academy</b>	38.9	43.8	41.8
	Northumberland average	46.5	N/A	N/A
	England average	46.7	N/A	N/A

## Key Stage 5 - 'A' Levels Results

As for GCSE results, 'A' level grades achieved by students in 2020 and 2021 cannot be directly compared to the last verified results in 2019, again as a result of the alternative grade awarding methods, but results for Berwick Academy in the last 3 years are included in the following table for information.

### *'A' level results, Berwick Academy*

	2019	2020	2021
Average result - Berwick Academy	D+, 22.5 points	C-, 27 points	B-, 35 points
Average result - Northumberland	C+, 32.5 points	N/A	N/A
Average result - England	C+, 34.01	N/A	N/A
Progress Score (0 = expected standard)	-0.18 (Average for England)	N/A	N/A

Berwick Academy has reported that all university applicants in the 2020/21 year group gained a place at one of their chosen **universities, with 95% being placed at their first choice. Students seeking routes into employment and training were supported by staff throughout the lockdown period and most secured their next step.**



## FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

There are 16 local authority-maintained schools in the Berwick Partnership (including The Grove Special School) and 2 academies.

Currently 1 school is forecast to be in budget deficit at the end of the 2023/24 academic year, 4 schools are forecast to be in budget deficit by the end of 2024/25 and 8 schools forecast to be in deficit by 2025/26<sup>2</sup>. Therefore by 2025/26, there is predicted to be a deficit of circa £839,000 across the partnership, not including academies (the Council does not hold the financial responsibility for academies and therefore Berwick Academy and St Cuthbert's Catholic First School forecasts are not included in this information).

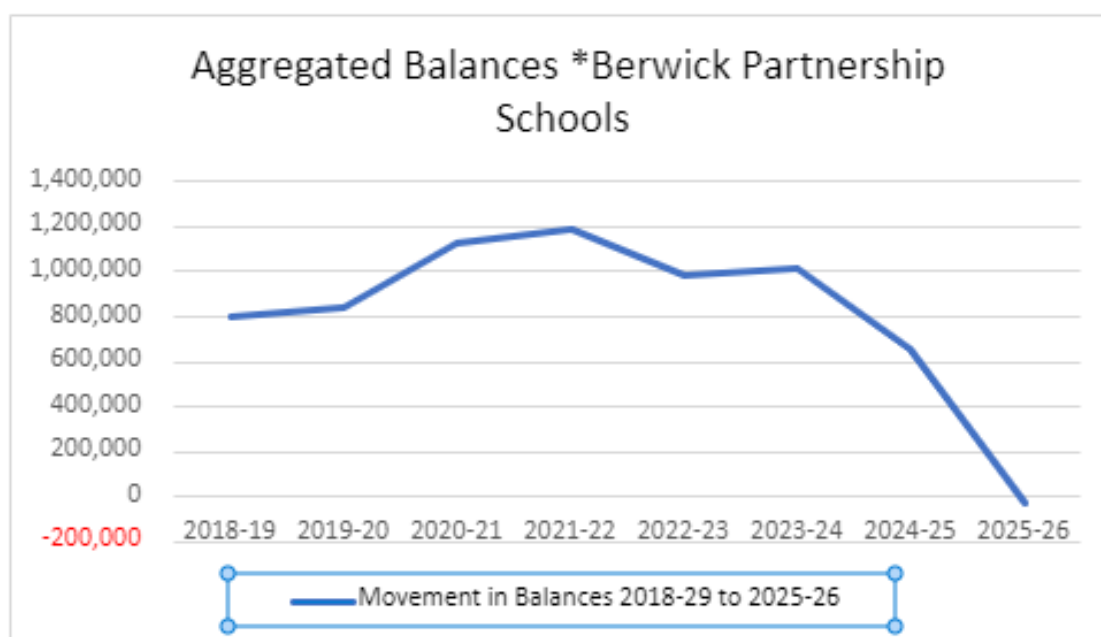
Furthermore, these forecasts do not take into account the impact on school budgets of the forthcoming planned salary increases for school staff, while there is also evidence that some schools have over-predicted the number of pupils they would have on roll when forecasting their future budget position. This may impact some schools currently forecasting deficits even more negatively, while some schools currently not predicting deficits may in fact end up in deficit within the 3-year forecasting period.

The following charts shows the current forecast predictions for the Berwick Partnership overall, at first/primary school phase and at middle school phase, bearing in mind that they do not include the financial positions of the two academies in the partnership:

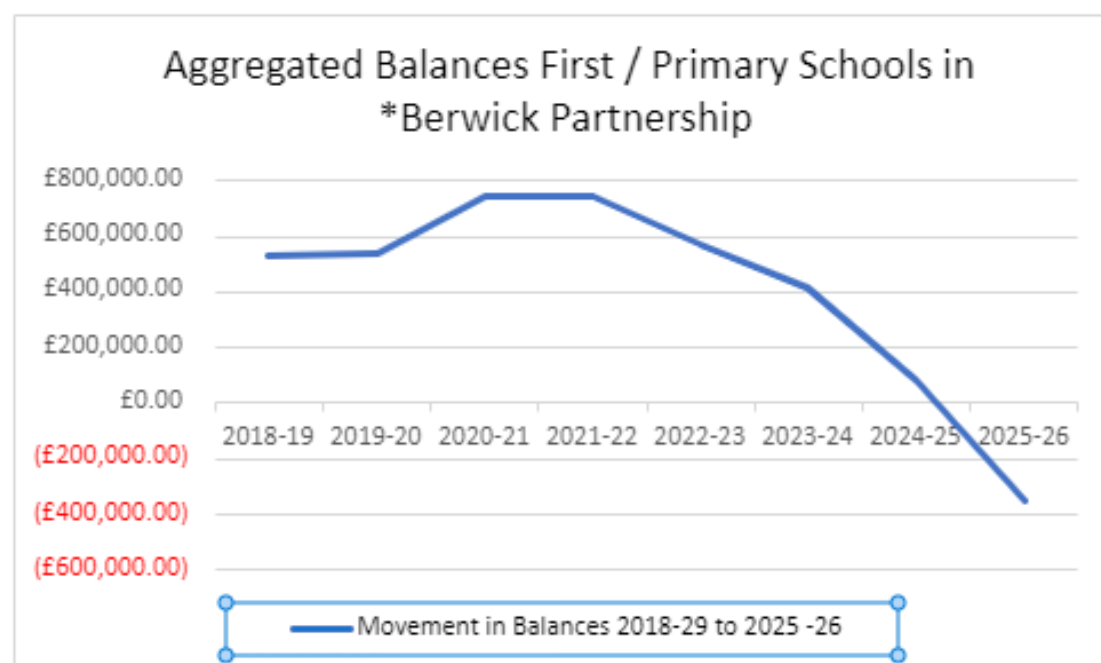
---

<sup>2</sup> The Grove Special School is not included in these financial forecasts as specialist provision is funded differently compared to mainstream schools

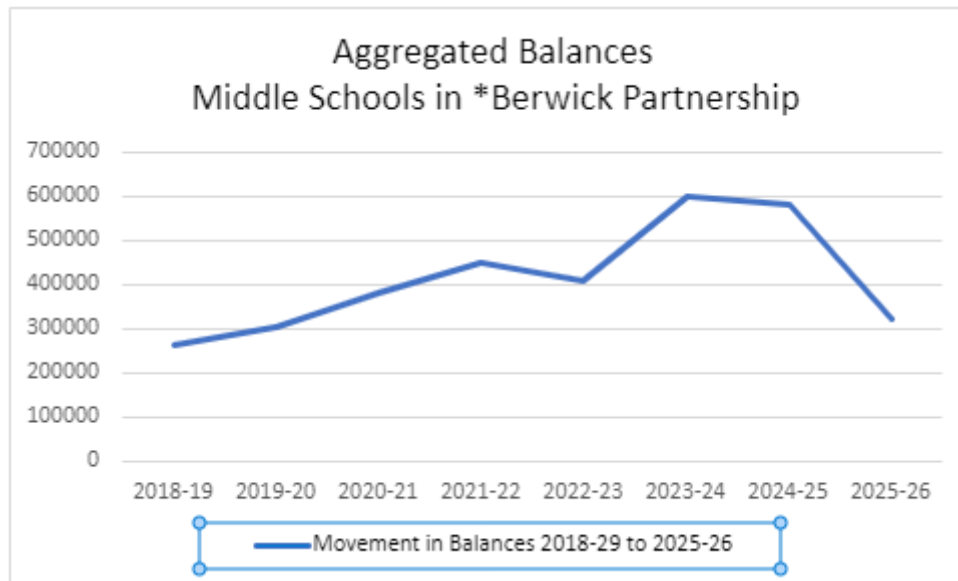
### Berwick Partnership - current Total Predicted budget position by 2025-26



### First/Primary schools in Berwick Partnership - current Total Predicted budget position by 2025-26



**Middle schools in Berwick Partnership - current Total Predicted budget position by 2025-26**



## POTENTIAL MODELS

### Model A (Revised 3-tier System of Schools in Berwick)

In this model Berwick Academy would remain as 13 to 18 high school but with a reduced PAN of 180 (6 Forms of Entry).

Berwick Middle and Tweedmouth Middle Schools would operate as they do currently on their existing sites, within their existing capacity. It is proposed that Glendale Middle School, within this model, would close and pupils in Years 7 and 8 would transfer to Duchess High School in Alnwick.

Under this model it is proposed that three first schools would either close or amalgamate.

Belford Primary – The school is already a primary school; the proposal under this model is that it moves into the Alnwick Partnership. As part of the move, the catchment area for Belford Primary would be reduced.

Berwick St Mary's CE First – The school would remain a first school on its current site but would have a reduced PAN of 15 (0.5 Form of Entry). It is also proposed that on-site specialist SEN provision would be created at the school.

Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First – The proposal is that the school would close, and its catchment area would be split between Tweedmouth Prior Park, Tweedmouth West First and Hugh Joicey CE First.

Scremerston First – The proposal is that the school would close, and its catchment area split between Tweedmouth Prior Park First, Tweedmouth West First and Spittal First Schools.

Spittal First - The school would remain a first school on its current site but would have a reduced PAN of 30 (1 Form of Entry).

Tweedmouth Prior Park First – The school would amalgamate with Tweedmouth West First School on the Tweedmouth Prior Park site. The school would take on Tweedmouth West's DfE number and URN.

Tweedmouth West First – The school would amalgamate with Tweedmouth Prior Park First school on the Tweedmouth Prior Park site. The school would retain its DfE number and URN.

Wooler First – The proposal is the school would change its age range and become a primary school on its current site and become part of the Alnwick Partnership. If approved the greater catchment area for Alnwick would be expanded.

The following table for Model A, provides further detail

**Model A – Revised 3-tier system of schools in Berwick**

School	Current Situation				Possible Model			
	No. on Roll in Sept. 2022 *	Forms of Entry (FE)	Planned Admission Number (PAN)	Latest Ofsted	Capacity	Forms of Entry (FE)	Planned Admission Number (PAN)	Distance in miles to nearest school
Belford Primary	84	1	30	Good	Moves into Alnwick Partnership and catchment area reduced			
					187	1	30	8.5
Berwick St Mary's CE First	64	1	30	Good	Reduces PAN and opens on-site specialist SEN provision			
					75	0.5	15	0.9m
Holy Island CE First	3	0.2	5	Outstanding	25	0.2	5	8.4m
Holy Trinity CE First	141	1	30	Good	150	1	30	0.9m
Hugh Joicey CE First	47	0.5	15	Good	73	0.5	15	4.8m
Lowick CE First	16	0.3	10	Good	50	0.3	10	4.8m
Norham St Ceolwulf CE First	28	0.3	10	Outstanding	Closes and catchment split between amalgamated Tweedmouth West/Tweedmouth Prior Park and Hugh Joicey First Schools			
								7.5
Scremerston First	54	0.6	18	Good	Closes and catchment split between amalgamated Tweedmouth West/Tweedmouth Prior Park and Spittal First Schools			
								1.7
Spittal First	122	1.3	40	Good	Reduces PAN			
					171	1	30	1.1
St Cuthbert's Catholic First	72	0.5	15	n/a	75	0.5	15	n/a
Tweedmouth Prior Park First	114	1	30	Requires Improvement	School amalgamates with Tweedmouth West First School on Tweedmouth Prior Park site and retains Tweedmouth West First School's DfE Number and URN			
								1.2m
Tweedmouth West First	114	1	30	Good	300	2	60	1.1
Wooler First	91	1	30	Good	Converts to become a primary and moves into Alnwick Partnership			
					210	1	30	8.7
Berwick Middle	338	3.8	114	Good	Opens on-site specialist SEN provision			
					456	3.8	114	
Glendale Middle	104	1.4	42	Good	School Closes			
Tweedmouth Middle	362	3.1	93	Good	440	3.1	93	
Berwick Academy	552	7.5	225	Requires Improvement	Reduces PAN and opens on-site specialist SEN provision			
					740	6	180	

\*Note number on roll is an estimate as October Census not yet available



## **Model B (2-tier (Primary/Secondary System) of Schools in Berwick)**

In this model Berwick Academy would change its age range to become an 11-18 secondary school but with a reduced PAN of 180 (6 Forms of Entry).

The three middle schools (Berwick Middle, Tweedmouth Middle and Glendale Middle Schools) in the partnership would close on 31 August 2026. Children in Years 7 and 8 would be educated at Berwick Academy and children in Years 5 and 6 educated in the new primary schools.

Under this model it is proposed that the 11 first schools (Berwick St Mary's CE, Holy Trinity CE, Holy Island CE, Hugh Joicey CE, Lowick CE, Norham St Ceolwulf's CE, Spittal, Tweedmouth Prior Park, Tweedmouth West and Wooler) change their age range to become primary schools. One first school (Scremerston First) could close.

Belford Primary – The school is already a primary school, and the proposal is that it remains a primary school and moves into the Alnwick Partnership. As part of the move the catchment area for Belford Primary would be reduced.

Berwick St Mary's CE First – The school would become a primary school on its current site but would have a reduced PAN of 15 (0.5 Form of Entry). It is also proposed that on-site specialist SEN provision would be created at the school.

Scremerston First – The proposal is that the school would close, and its catchment area split between Tweedmouth Prior Park First, Tweedmouth West First and Spittal First Schools.

Spittal First - The school would become a primary school on its current site but would have a reduced PAN of 30 (1 Form of Entry).

Wooler First – The proposal is the school would change its age range and become a primary school on its current site and remain in the Berwick partnership.

The table, for Model B, provides further detail. As stated previously these are only proposals and are the subject of this consultation. We welcome your views and any alternative suggestions you might have.



**Model B – Proposed model for a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system of schools**

School	Current Situation				Possible Model			
	No. on Roll in Sept. 2022*	Forms of Entry (FE)	Planned Admission Number (PAN)	Latest Ofsted	Capacity	Forms of Entry (FE)	Planned Admission Number (PAN)	Distance in miles to nearest school
Belford Primary	84	1	30	Good	Moves into Alnwick Partnership and catchment area reduced			
					187	1	30	8.5
Berwick St Mary's CE First	64	1	30	Good	Becomes primary, reduces PAN			
					105	0.5	15	0.9m
Holy Island CE First	3	0.2	5	Outstanding	Becomes primary			
					35	0.2	5	8.4m
Holy Trinity CE First	141	1	30	Good	Becomes primary			
					210	1	30	0.9
Hugh Joicey CE First	47	0.5	15	Good	Becomes primary			
					105	0.5	15	4.8
Lowick CE First	16	0.3	10	Good	Becomes primary			
					70	0.3	10	4.8
Norham St Ceolwulf CE First	28	0.3	10	Outstanding	Becomes primary			
					70	0.3	10	7.5
Scremerston First	54	0.6	18	Good	Closes and catchment split between Tweedmouth Prior Park and Spittal First Schools			
								1.7
Spittal First	122	1.3	40	Good	Becomes primary and reduces PAN			
					210	1	30	1.1
St Cuthbert's Catholic First	72	0.5	15	n/a	Becomes primary			
					75	0.5	15	n/a
Tweedmouth Prior Park First	114	1	30	Requires Improvement	Becomes primary			
					210	1	30	1.2m
Tweedmouth West First	114	1	30	Good	Becomes primary			
					210	1	30	1.1m
Wooler First	91	1	30	Good	Converts to become a primary and remains in the Berwick Partnership			
					210	1	30	8.7
Berwick Middle	338	3.8	114	Good	School Closes			
Glendale Middle	104	1.4	42	Good	School Closes			
Tweedmouth Middle	362	3.1	93	Good	School Closes			
Berwick Academy	552	7.5	225	Requires Improvement	1100	6	180	

\*Note number on roll is an estimate as October Census not yet available

## POTENTIAL TIMELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION



### Potential timeline for implementation of revisions to 3-tier Structure of Schools in Berwick Partnership and additional SEND Provision

#### 1 September 2024

- Wooler First School extends its age range to become a primary school and retains pupils on roll in Year 4 on 31 August 2024 as they become Year 5;
- Glendale Middle School operates with Years 6, 7 and 8 only.
- Parents of pupils in Years 6 of Belford Primary and Years 6 at Glendale Middle School are able to apply for places in Year 7 at Alnwick The Duchess High School for 1 September 2025 as catchment students.
- Parents of pupils in Year 8 in Glendale apply as usual in Autumn 2024 for a place in Year 9 at Alnwick The Duchess High School for 1 September 2025 as catchment students (in-year applications), or to another school according to parental preference.
- Parents of pupils in Year 8 in Berwick and Tweedmouth Middle Schools apply as usual in Autumn 2024 for a place in Year 9 at Berwick Academy or another school according to parental preference for 1 September 2025.

### **31 August 2025**

- First schools approved for closure/amalgamation would close on 31 August 2025.
- Glendale Middle School would close on 31 August 2025.
- Pupils in Years 7 of Glendale Middle School on 31 August 2025 are guaranteed a place in Years 8 at Alnwick The Duchess High School for 1 September 2025 due to the discontinuance of Glendale Middle School from 31 August 2025.

### **1 September 2025**

- Pupils in Reception to Year 3 on 31 August 2025 in first schools approved for amalgamation/closure would transfer to their new catchment school or other school according to parental preference into Years 1, 2, 3 and 4 for 1 September 2025.
- Pupils in Year 4 on 31 August 2025 in first schools approved for amalgamation/closure would transfer into Year 5 as usual at their catchment middle school or other school according to parental preference for 1 September 2024.
- Wooler First retains pupils on roll in Year 5 on 31 August 2025 as they become Year 6 and its catchment area becomes part of the Alnwick Partnership;
- Pupils on roll in Glendale Middle School in Years 6, 7 and 8 on 31 August 2025 transfer to Alnwick The Duchess High School or other school according to parental preference as Years 7, 8 and 9. Alnwick The Duchess High School operates with bulge Years in Years 8 and 9 if necessary to accommodate the displaced pupils transferring from Glendale Middle School only.
- Pupils on roll in Year 8 at Berwick Middle and Tweedmouth Middle Schools on 31 August 2025 transfer as usual into Year 9 at Berwick Academy or another school according to parental preference.
- Alnwick The Duchess High School extends its catchment area to include Wooler Primary (as it would be) and Belford Primary Schools catchment areas – Belford's catchment would be slightly reduced.
- Berwick St Mary's CE First School, Berwick Middle School and Berwick Academy open their specialist provision for students with ASD, SEMH and SLCN.

- Berwick St Mary's CE and Spittal First Schools reduces their PANs (see model) for children joining in Reception.
- Berwick Academy reduces its PAN for students joining in Year 9 from 225 to 180.

## **Potential timeline for implementation of 2-tier Structure of Schools in Berwick Partnership and additional SEND Provision**

### **September 2024**

- No applications accepted for Reception places for September 2025 in first schools planned to close in August 2025;
- No applications accepted for Year 5 places for September 2025 in middle schools.

### **31 August 2025**

- First schools approved for closure/amalgamation would close on 31 August 2025.

### **1 September 2025**

- Pupils in Reception to Year 4 on 31 August 2025 in first schools approved for amalgamation/closure would transfer to their new catchment school or other school according to parental preference into Years 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 for 1 September 2025.
- First schools remaining open would extend their age ranges to become primary schools and retain pupils on roll in Year 4 on 31 August 2025 as they become Year 5;
- Pupils in Reception classes join their new primary schools, with Berwick St Mary's CE and Spittal Primary Schools reducing their PANs (see model).
- Middle schools operate with Years 6, 7 and 8 only.

### **31 August 2026**

- Glendale, Berwick and Tweedmouth Middle Schools close.



## 1 September 2026

- Pupils on roll in middle schools in Years 6, 7 and 8 on 31 August 2026 transfer to Berwick Academy or other school according to parental preference as Years 7,8 and 9;
- Berwick Academy reduces its PAN from 225 to 180 for students joining in year 7;
- First schools would extend their age ranges to become primary schools and retain pupils on roll in Year 5 on 31 August 2025 as they become Year 6;
- Belford Primary School amended catchment area becomes part of the Alnwick Partnership.
- The Grove Special School transfers site to the former Tweedmouth Middle School and extends its provision to include places for SEMH students across all age groups.



# IMPACT OF PROPOSALS ON ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS INTO MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

## **Changes to Admissions Arrangements if planned revisions to the 3-tier Structure of Schools in Berwick Partnership are implemented**

### *Scremerston, Norham St Ceolwulf's CE, Tweedmouth Prior Park and Tweedmouth West First Schools*

Under the revised 3-tier proposal, Scremerston and Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First Schools would close and their catchment areas would be joined with the amalgamated catchments of Tweedmouth West and Tweedmouth Prior Park. The Tweedmouth West DfE number would continue to be used and it would become a 2-form Entry school (2 classes of 30 pupils per year group) on the Tweedmouth Prior Park site. The new Governing Body of the amalgamated schools may decide to change the name of the school.

As these changes are proposed to begin in September 2025, only two of the current year groups in these schools (Reception and Year 1) would still be in the first school phase when the new arrangements would begin and these would be Years 3 and 4 at that time. The current number of pupils on roll in these year groups at the 4 schools indicates they would all be able to be accommodated within Tweedmouth West, which would be a 2-form entry school from that date. The number of children that would be in the Year 1 and 2 classes at that point is currently unknown but given the falling pupil numbers in the area, it is assumed they would also be able to be accommodated in the school. Children who would join Reception in the larger Tweedmouth West in September 2025 would apply in the Autumn of 2024 as usual.

### *Wooler First School, Glendale Middle School and Belford Primary School*

The Wooler Primary (as it would become) and Belford Primary Schools catchments and Transport Eligibility Areas would become part of the Alnwick Partnership from 1 September 2025.

Applications from students in Year 6 at Glendale Middle School and in Year 6 at Belford Primary School in Autumn 2024 would apply for places in Year 7 at Alnwick The Duchess High School for September 2025 and would be treated as catchment applications for places and transport where eligible.

To support the transition, students in Years 7 and 8 on roll at Glendale Middle School on 31 August 2025 would be guaranteed places in Years 7 and 9 at Alnwick The Duchess High School as it becomes their catchment school and would not have to apply for places. Parents of students who did not wish their child to take up a place in Year 8 or 9 at Alnwick The Duchess High School would need to apply for a place at another age-appropriate school.

#### *Berwick St Mary's CE and Spittal First Schools*

From 1 September 2025, the Planned Admission Number (PAN) of Berwick St Mary's CE First School would reduce from 30 to 15, while the PAN of Spittal First School would reduce from 40 to 30. This would impact the number of children joining their Reception class in that year.

#### *Other first schools and middle schools*

There would be no changes to the process for applications into Reception classes at the other first schools remaining open or into Year 5 at the middle schools remaining open in the Berwick Partnership for September 2025.

#### *Berwick Academy*

Subject to the agreement of the Berwick Academy Trustees and the subsequent approval of the Regional Schools Commissioner, the PAN of Berwick Academy would reduce from 225 to 180 for students joining Year 9 in September 2025.

## **Changes to Admissions Arrangements if 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure of schools in Berwick Partnership implemented**

### *Scremerston and Tweedmouth Prior Park First Schools*

Under the proposed 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure, Scremerston First School would close and pupils on roll at the school in Reception to Year 4 on 31 August 2025 would be allocated places at Tweedmouth Prior Park Primary (as it would be) in Years 1 to 5. The catchment area of Scremerston would be joined with that of Tweedmouth Prior Park Primary, save for a small area that would be allocated to Spittal Primary (as it would be) in a tidying up process.

As these changes are proposed to begin in September 2025, three of the current year groups in these schools (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2) would be impacted by the new arrangements and these would be Years 3, 4 and 5 at that time. The current number of pupils on roll in these year groups at the 2 schools indicates that Years 3 and 4 would be able to be easily accommodated within Tweedmouth Prior Park, but that the Year 5 year group may be a 'bulge' year with more than 30 pupils; this would be factored into the accommodation and staffing arrangements as they moved through the school. The number of children that would be in the Year 1 and 2 classes at that point is currently unknown but given the falling pupil numbers in the area, it is assumed they would also be able to be accommodated in the school. Children who would join Reception in the larger Tweedmouth Prior Park Primary in September 2025 would apply in the Autumn of 2024 as usual.

### *Berwick St Mary's CE and Spittal First Schools*

From 1 September 2025, the Planned Admission Number (PAN) of Berwick St Mary's CE First School would reduce from 30 to 15, while the PAN of Spittal First School would reduce from 40 to 30. This would impact the number of children joining their Reception class in that year.

### *Belford Primary School*

The Belford Primary School catchment and Transport Eligibility Area would become part of the Alnwick Partnership from 1 September 2026 and therefore applications

from students in Year 6 at the school in Autumn 2025 for places in Year 7 at Alnwick The Duchess High School in September 2026 would be treated as catchment applications for places and transport where eligible.

#### *Other first schools becoming Primaries*

There would be no changes to the process for applications into Reception classes at the other first schools in the Berwick Partnership as they become primary schools in September 2025.

#### *Berwick Academy*

Subject to the agreement of the Berwick Academy Trustees and the subsequent approval of the Regional Schools Commissioner, on 1 September 2026, Berwick Academy would have an intake of students into Year 7, 8 and 9, while in subsequent years admissions would be into Year 7 only. Students applying for places in Year 7 and Year 9 for September 2026 in Berwick Academy would apply through the Admissions Portal in Autumn 2025.

Students in Year 7 at the middle schools on 31 August 2026 would be guaranteed a place at Berwick Academy in Year 8 on 1 September 2026 as a result of the closure of the middle schools and would not need to apply for a place. However, if parents of students in this year group did not wish their child to take up a place at Berwick Academy in Year 8 in September 2026, they would need to apply for a Year 8 place for them at other schools.

The PAN of Berwick Academy would reduce from 225 to 180 for students joining Year 7 in September 2026 and in subsequent years.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSED MODELS FOR STAFF



There would be implications for staff working in the schools in the Berwick Partnership under both proposed models of school organisation.

It is likely that as a result of the proposed closure and/or amalgamation of some schools in the Berwick Partnership under both models, there would be a number of staff placed at risk of redundancy.

In relation to the proposed 2-tier (primary/secondary) model, the continuing first schools becoming primary schools would need to redesign their curriculum and staffing structures to incorporate appropriate teaching and learning for pupils in Years 5 and 6, and this would be likely to include the recruitment of additional staff. Likewise, the Trustees of Berwick Academy would need to accommodate an additional two year groups at Years 7 and 8 and therefore would also need to redesign its staffing structures, with the likelihood that additional staff would be required.

In order to ensure that as many staff as possible would be retained within the Berwick Partnership if either a revised 3-tier structure or 2-tier structure is approved, Council HR Officers will work with schools and staff representatives (Trade Unions)

during this consultation period to develop a 'Staffing Protocol' agreement that hopefully all schools and academies would sign up to. This protocol would ensure that staff at risk of redundancy would be guaranteed interviews for any vacancies they choose to apply for that are identified within the Berwick schools over the transition period of the relevant model of organisation. This would ensure that the appointment process across the schools is fair for all staff and hopefully would retain staff within the Berwick system.



## IMPACT OF PROPOSALS ON SCHOOL CATCHMENT AND TRANSPORT ELIGIBILITY AREAS

Northumberland County Council holds the responsibility for setting and implementing the Home to School Transport Policy in the county. The Council therefore sets the Transport Eligibility Areas for every area of the county. The Council also sets the school catchment areas for community and voluntary controlled schools for managing admissions when places are oversubscribed, and these match their Transport Eligibility Areas.

The Governing Bodies of voluntary aided and foundation schools and academies set their own school catchment areas to manage admissions into their schools (although some academies do not have catchments and use distance from home to school as a criterion instead). Historically, in Northumberland the catchment areas of these types of school match the Council's Transport Eligibility Areas, but this is not always the case. For example, the Council does not have Transport Eligibility Areas at all for Roman Catholic schools or for some foundation schools and academies e.g. St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary in Berwick does not have a catchment area, but some pupils may meet the eligibility criteria to qualify for transport there on the basis of religious preference.

Within the proposals for both the revised 3-tier structure and for the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure for the Berwick Partnership, some school closures or amalgamations are proposed. If implemented, this would mean that the Council would need to amend the school catchment and Transport Eligibility Areas of the schools that would continue and this is indicated in the proposed Model A and Model B set out previously. Revised proposed catchment/Transport Eligibility Area maps will be displayed at all of the public events that will take place during the consultation period so that you can express your views on these as well as the proposals generally. The revised proposed catchment/Transport Eligibility Area maps will also be taken to each of the staff and Governing Body meetings that will take place throughout the consultation period.



## SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS



During Phase 1 consultation, we informed you of the increasing number of children and young people living in the Berwick area who are being diagnosed with primary special educational needs in Autism (ASD) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH). A small but significant number of children in the Berwick Partnership are also diagnosed with Speech, Learning and Communication needs particularly in the primary years, which often leads to a diagnosis of ASD in the secondary years.

The increase in vulnerable students with these types of primary need is not limited to Berwick, but can also be seen across Northumberland and the country. While many pupils with a special educational need (SEN) are able to remain in mainstream education, a significant number need more specialist help. The Grove School in Berwick provides specialist education to around 36 pupils who live in the Berwick Partnership area (although pupils also attend from outside the area as there are 48 on roll). However, there are a further 58 children living in the Berwick Partnership area with special educational needs on roll at 6 specialist provisions outside of the area, some of them travelling a considerable distance to and from school daily.

The Council's forecasts for the number of students with ASD and SEMH needs were included in the Phase 1 document and are repeated below for your information:

*Forecast for number of pupils with ASD as a primary need living in Berwick area*

Forecasts by year Group	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Sep-22	1	1	4	1	6	6	8	4	16	5	9	3
Sep-23	3	2	1	6	2	7	8	7	8	15	7	8
Sep-24	3	4	2	2	7	2	9	7	15	8	22	6
Sep-25	3	4	4	2	2	8	2	8	15	15	11	20
Sep-26	2	4	4	5	3	2	10	2	18	15	22	10
Sep-27	3	3	4	5	6	3	3	9	5	17	22	20
Sep-28	3	3	3	5	6	7	4	3	20	5	26	20
Sep-29	3	3	3	4	6	7	9	4	6	20	7	23

*Forecast for number of pupils with SEMH as a primary need living in Berwick area*

Forecasts by year Group	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Sep-22	0	3	2	9	16	18	8	13	8	9	13	7
Sep-23	0	0	5	3	11	20	15	10	12	9	9	10
Sep-24	0	0	0	8	4	14	16	17	9	13	9	6
Sep-25	0	0	0	1	9	4	11	19	16	10	13	7
Sep-26	1	0	0	0	1	11	4	13	18	17	10	10
Sep-27	0	1	0	0	1	1	9	4	12	19	17	7
Sep-28	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	11	4	13	19	13
Sep-29	0	0	1	2	1	1	1	1	10	4	13	14

As for all forecasts, the data in the previous tables is an educated prediction of what could happen in the future and various factors could occur that mean the actual number varies from the forecast number. Also, not all students would need to attend a Special school. However, the forecasts clearly show the increasing numbers of children and young people with these primary years is set to continue.

The discussions that have taken place on the structure of schools in the Berwick Partnership over the last 28 months have also presented the opportunity to have a 'joined-up' approach to reviewing the current specialist provision within the

area. Headteachers in the Berwick Partnership, including The Grove Special School have met in the last few months to discuss what, where and how provision could be put in place to address this growing need. Council Officers and some schools have also had informal meetings with representatives from some groups who support children with special educational needs and their families to find out if they had any suggestions that could be consulted on with the wider community of the Berwick area.

The initial feedback received in relation to ideas for additional specialist provision are set out here. The potential models for specialist provision would need to work within either the current (revised) 3-tier system of school organisation or within a 2-tier(primary/secondary) structure and therefore 2 models have been put forward for you to consider and submit your views as part of this consultation as follows:

<b>Proposed Model of Specialist Provision in revised 3-tier structure</b>	<b>Proposed Model of Specialist Provision in 2-tier(primary/secondary) structure</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Grove Special School continues with its existing provision on its current site with specialism, particularly in Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and Profound Learning Difficulties (PMLD);</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Grove Special School relocates to the site of Tweedmouth Middle School, increases its planned student numbers to 70 across all year groups and amends its SEND designation to include SEMH.</li> <li>• Shared site with Berwick Academy would enable opportunities for older students to access mainstream education and study for qualifications where appropriate.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First School phase - Specialist provision for primary-age students with ASD or SEMH primary needs to be established at St Mary's CE First School with between 10 and 12 planned places. This provision would be separate to the school's mainstream provision, but with opportunities for pupils to access mainstream education where appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary phase – St Mary's CE First School would continue to operate as a Primary Support Base (nurturing unit) for pupils in line with the Council's Inclusion Strategy.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Middle School phase - Specialist provision for middle school-age students with ASD or SEMH primary needs to be established at Berwick Middle School with between 10 and 15 planned places. This provision would be separate to the school's mainstream provision, but with opportunities for students to access mainstream education where appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Options to be identified for ways in which all schools across the Berwick Partnership, particularly small, rural schools, could pool funding in order to support specialist SEND provision on site through a peripatetic approach, with the aim of enabling those students for whom it is appropriate within their mainstream school.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High School phase - Specialist provision for high school-age students with ASD or SEMH primary needs to be established at Berwick Academy with 15 to 20 planned places. This provision would be separate to the school's mainstream provision, but with opportunities for students to access mainstream education and study for qualifications where appropriate.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Options to be identified for ways in which all schools across the Berwick Partnership, particularly small, rural schools, could pool funding in order to support specialist SEND provision on site through a peripatetic approach, with the aim of enabling those students for whom it is appropriate within their mainstream school.</li> </ul>	

## POTENTIAL MODELS – POST-16 AND POST-18

In the same way as the consultation on school structure is providing a broader opportunity to review and improve special educational needs provision in the Berwick area, there is a desire to also consider how the investment in the partnership could provide opportunities to extend and improve Post-16 and Post-18 provision for students and the wider community with links to business, apprenticeships and further education.

The vision agreed by the schools in the Berwick Partnership and shared by Northumberland County Council (set out in the Background of this document) sets out the ambition for young people and the wider community to be able to gain the skills and/or qualifications to equip them for employment or further education and enable them to contribute positively to the local and wider community.

Discussions have already begun between Berwick Academy and Northumberland County Council to see how this vision can become a reality through the development of achievable plans linked to the capital investment in the Berwick Partnership, which will lead to young people being able to access the right vocational, academic or mix of studies that will equip them for the world of work. These discussions also include proposals on how this offer could be broadened and extended over time to the wider community to offer Post-18 skills, learning or qualifications, therefore creating a community learning hub.

Again, as part of this consultation we are seeking your views on what opportunities you would like to see being offered at Post-16 and Post-18 for young people and the wider community of the Berwick area.

## SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND ESTATES

As for many areas in the county, school buildings in Berwick Partnership are in need of significant capital investment.

£39.9m has been identified in the Council's Medium Term Plan and as already stated, a key element of the rationale for carrying out this consultation is to ensure that this investment is made in a school structure in the Berwick area that secures viable and sustainable schools for decades to come.

The Council's information on the combined backlog maintenance (capital works required to the fabric of school buildings) for schools in the Berwick Partnership amounts to approximately £7.2m. This figure does not include backlog maintenance for Berwick Academy and St Cuthbert's RC Catholic First School, since as they are funded by the Department for Education (DfE), requests for capital funding for maintenance are managed directly through them. However the Council is aware that Berwick Academy currently has approximately £10.9m backlog maintenance. The DfE also allocates around £7m to Northumberland County Council towards backlog maintenance for community and voluntary controlled schools and therefore the council has to operate a priority list for capital works, with school buildings that are in the greatest need of repair or maintenance at the top of the list.

If either of the models set out in this document were implemented, there would be a need to carry out some building works, especially in relation to Berwick Academy. While investment would be primarily to enable schools to operate within the revised 3-tier or reorganisation to 2-tier, it may provide opportunities to address some of the other maintenance issues within a school building, for instance if a school wished to 'piggy-back' on works being carried out at their school through the addition of their own maintenance funding. If any schools are approved to be closed or amalgamated, the future of the relevant school buildings would be reviewed for need. In general, buildings owned by the Council are assessed in the first instance to see whether it could be used by any other educational or social care service; it would then be assessed whether there was an opportunity for the building to be taken on by the community to provide a local service and so on.

Detailed buildings costs for each model will be worked up during this consultation process and presented to the Council together with the feedback from consultation. Your views on how any capital investment made available to Berwick Partnership should be invested are also welcomed as part of this consultation. Particularly how any investment in schools could also have a positive impact on the wider Berwick community, through enhanced community use.



## OTHER FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION



## EARLY YEARS

During Phase 1 Consultation we asked schools, parents, Council Officers in the Early Years team and other stakeholders for the views on the amount and quality of Early Years provision in the Berwick area.

Feedback indicated that while there is sufficient Early Years provision in the Berwick area, there may be some issues in relation to the viability of some Early Years Providers. As the issue of viability may be addressed through the implementation of the changes proposed as part of the revised 3-tier structure or a reorganisation to 2-tier (primary/secondary, no specific proposed changes to Early Years provision within the Berwick Area are being put forward as part of this consultation. However, in responding to consultation on the proposals, you may also wish to comment on Early Years provision if you believe there may be a positive or negative impact as a consequence of the implementation of either model.



## TRANSPORT

Eligibility for home to school transport for pupils in Northumberland is assessed in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.

In relation to journey length, some pupils on roll in schools proposed to close under either model would potentially have longer journeys to school, but all would be far below the DfE's suggested best practice of primary pupils undertaking journeys of no more than 45 minutes each way.

However, should the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure be implemented, pupils would stay in the primary schools (as they would become) for an additional 2 years and would therefore have shorter journeys to school for that period. As the middle schools in Berwick and Berwick Academy are within a short distance of each other, there would be a negligible impact on the length of journey pupils would have to take to Berwick Academy in Years 7 and 8.

As the area covered by the schools in the Berwick Partnership is one of the largest in Northumberland and mostly rural in nature, many pupils are eligible for home to school transport and therefore the costs are high. The current approximate total cost for transporting eligible pupils who live in the Berwick Partnership to school every day over an academic year (excluding pupils travelling to specialist provision) is just over £1m. This includes transporting pupils to schools in Scotland or other neighbouring partnerships such as Alnwick as a result of those schools being closer to the pupil's home address or on religious preference grounds. However, in relation to the impact of the revised 3-tier structure or the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure on home to school transport, there is likely to be very little difference in relation to cost.

## SPORT AND RECREATION

There would be no impact on the current sport and recreation facilities at the first schools proposed to continue under either the revised 3-tier or the 2-tier(primary/secondary) models. If any schools were approved to close or amalgamate, the Council would need to have regard to the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 and Section 77 of the School Standard and Framework Act 1998 in relation to any potential loss of playing fields. It would be hoped under these circumstances that there would be an opportunity for community groups to put forward proposals to take on playing fields for continuing use by the local community – any ideas or proposals in relation to the use of playing fields are welcomed as part of this consultation.

With the reprovision and enhancement of the buildings at Berwick Academy, there is an expectation that this will provide an opportunity for improved sport and recreation facilities at the site under either model and include wider use for the local community.



# HOW WILL VIEWS FROM CONSULTATION BE GATHERED?

## Alternative Proposals

While this consultation has presented Model A (Revised 3-tier system of schools in Berwick) and Model B (Proposed model for a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system of schools) you may have an alternative suggestion for addressing the issues set out in this document. If you have an alternative suggestion, please set this out in the questionnaire and response form that accompanies this document.

## How can I find out more about these proposal?

Public drop-in events have been arranged during the consultation period for you to find out further information about any aspect of these proposals.

### Public Drop-in events

**Date: Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2023, 7.30 to 9.30 p.m.**

**Venue: Wooler First School, 15 Brewery Lane, Wooler, NE71 6QF**

**Date: Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023, 6.30 to 8.30 p.m.**

**Venue: Belford Primary School, West Street, Belford, NE70 7QD**

**Date: Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2023, 10.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m.**

**Venue: Berwick Academy, Adams Drive, Spittal, Berwick, TD15 2JF**

**Date: Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023, 6.30 to 8.30 p.m.**

**Venue: Berwick Community Trust, The Willian Elder Building, 56-58  
Castlegate, Berwick, TD15 1JT**

**All interested parties are welcome to drop-in at any time within the above hours.**

There will also be separate meetings held in schools with staff working in schools in the Berwick Partnership and their representatives, and with Governing Bodies during the consultation period. Staff and Governors will be contacted directly with the date and time of these meetings.

An online Padlet dedicated to the consultation on school structure is also available by following this link <https://padlet.com/Northumberland/Berwick>. Additional information is posted on the padlet, including Frequently Asked questions that may assist you in your response to the consultation.

## **How can I submit my views about this proposal?**

A 15-week consultation (school weeks) on the proposals set out in this consultation document began on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022 **and will end at midnight on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2023.**

The Council is very keen to hear your views on the models of school organisation set out in this consultation document and also to learn if you have any alternative proposals.

A link to a questionnaire is here:

<https://haveyoursay.northumberland.gov.uk/education-skills/berwick-consultation-phase-2/consultation/edit> (**copy and paste link into browser**) 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](mailto:educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk) stating that you require a printed survey form for the Consultation on Education in the Berwick Partnership.

To return your completed hard copy form, please send to:

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

## **What happens to feedback and next steps?**

At the end of this consultation, all feedback received will be considered by the Council's Cabinet before deciding on whether or not to move to the next steps in the process.

**Thank you for participating in this consultation**