

## **Reasons for reorganisation of the community and voluntary schools in the Berwick Partnership to a 2-tier(primary/secondary) structure**

Cabinet considered the responses to the statutory and pre-statutory consultations in relation to the following proposals:

- Close the following schools with effect from 1 September 2026:  
Berwick Middle School  
Glendale Middle School  
Tweedmouth Community Middle School
- Extend the age ranges of the following schools to become primary schools with effect from 1 September 2025:  
Berwick St Mary's Church of England First School  
Holy Trinity Church of England First School  
Holy Island Church of England First School  
Hugh Joicey Church of England First School  
Lowick Church of England First School  
Norham St Coelwulf's Church of England First School  
Scremerston First School  
Spittal First School  
Tweedmouth Prior Park First School  
Tweedmouth West First School  
Wooler First School
- Establish a SEN unit at Berwick St Mary's Church of England First School with effect from 1 September 2025

Cabinet agreed that the above proposals should be adopted and implemented without modification for the following reasons:

- 1) In relation to the proposal to establish a 2-tier(primary/secondary) organisation of schools within the Berwick Partnership, the Governing Bodies of 11 of the schools and academies in the partnership gave their full support to the statutory and non-statutory proposals for the community and voluntary schools, with only the 2 middle schools in Berwick overtly opposing the proposal. 4 other schools remained neutral (albeit 2 of these stated they would implement the approved system while 1 is already a primary), and 1 school did not respond to the statutory proposal.
- 2) The Trustees of Berwick Academy have gained the approval of the DfE Regional Director of the North East to extend the academy's age range from 11 to 18 with effect from 1 September 2026, while the Trustees of Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust (in relation to St Cuthbert's Catholic First School) have gained the Director's approval to extend the age range of the academy to an age 3 to 11 primary with effect from 1 September 2025. This will enable whole partnership reorganisation.
- 3) The CE and RC Dioceses continue to support the proposal to reorganise to a 2-tier(primary/secondary) structure in the Berwick Partnership.
- 4) As part of reorganisation, an additional 70 places would be provided within the partnership for students with primary needs in SEMH, ASD, SLCN and MLD through the creation of SEN units at St Mary's CE First School and Berwick Academy, enabling them to be educated within or closer to their home communities, reducing the need for long journeys to school and supporting their ability to make local friendships.
- 5) Cabinet continues to support the educational rationale put forward by the educationalists in support of reorganisation to a 2-tier(primary/secondary) structure at Phase 2 consultation as follows:
  - There would be only one transition point between primary and secondary education at the end of Key Stage 2 for pupils to cope with and schools to manage. Furthermore, having just one transition would be of particular benefit to pupils with special educational needs and this was supported by the North Northumberland Autistic Society in Phase 2 consultation;

- Schools would have responsibility for whole key stages (primary schools for EYFS, KS1 and KS2 and Berwick Academy for KS3, KS4 and KS5) allowing for consistency of curriculum and planning and this matches the National Curriculum and is the predominant structure across the country;
- Teachers are trained in either the primary or secondary system; there is no longer specific middle school teacher training;
- First school teachers are primary trained, with many having worked in primary schools, and already teach the first half of KS2. Therefore, the expertise and knowledge to deliver good outcomes at KS2 already exists in these schools (noting that currently in the 3-tier system when pupils are assessed at KS2 at the end of Year 6, they have been educated in first schools for five of their seven years in statutory education at that point);
- Schools would have longer to develop relationships with pupils and their families;
- Students joining Berwick Academy in Year 7 would have two years to settle and become familiar with specialist subjects while teachers would have the opportunity to learn about their students in order to advise them before making critical subject choices for GCSE in Year 9. It is expected that this will be a key factor in delivering steady and significant improvement in outcomes at KS4 over time;
- It is expected that a 2-tier organisation of schools would support recruitment and retention of teaching staff, with wider opportunities for within individual schools;
- Pupils on roll in first schools becoming primary, especially the rural village schools would be able to be educated within their local communities for an additional two years; this will be of particular benefit to those pupils with SEN.
- Education in Years 5 and 6 would continue to be provided in the North of Berwick.

- 3) £41.177m will be invested into the buildings of Berwick Partnership to support the reorganisation and to provide new/refurbished buildings for Berwick Academy which would also include an enhanced post 16 and post 18 offer.
- 4) Parents will retain the ability to express a preference for a place for their child in any school in Northumberland or another local authority.
- 5) The consultation on this proposal has been very extensive, reasonable and robust.