Northumberland County Council

Jacqui Pearson <jacqui.pearson@northumberland.gov.uk>

Fwd: closure of Bellingham Middle School

1 message

Lorraine Fife <lorraine.fife@northumberland.gov.uk> 7 June 2018 at 14:32
To: Jacqui Pearson <jacqui.pearson@northumberland.gov.uk>

For standard response and filing

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **Andy Johnson GCSX** <andy.johnson@northumberland.gov.uk>
Date: 6 June 2018 at 22:15
Subject: Fwd: closure of Bellingham Middle School
To: "Aviston, Sue" <Sue.Aviston@northumberland.gov.uk>, Lorraine Fife <Lorraine.Fife@northumberland.gov.uk>

Best Wishes

Andrew Johnson

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PA – Deborah Anderson

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---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **Hamilton, Karen** <Karen.Hamilton@scp.newcastle.sch.uk>
Date: 6 June 2018 at 21:35
Subject: closure of Bellingham Middle School
To: Education Consultations <educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk>
Cc: "Peter.Jacksonv@northumberland.gov.uk\"" <Peter.Jacksonv@northumberland.gov.uk>, "andy.johnson@northumberland.gov.uk" <andy.johnson@northumberland.gov.uk>, "dean.jackson@northumberland.gov.uk" <dean.jackson@northumberland.gov.uk>, "Wayne.Daley@northumberland.gov.uk" <Wayne.Daley@northumberland.gov.uk>, "John.Riddle@northumberland.gov.uk" <John.Riddle@northumberland.gov.uk>, "Nick.Oliver@northumberland.gov.uk" <Nick.Oliver@northumberland.gov.uk>, "Richard.Wearmouth@northumberland.gov.uk" <Richard.Wearmouth@northumberland.gov.uk>, "Glen.Sanderson@northumberland.gov.uk" <Glen.Sanderson@northumberland.gov.uk>, "Cath.Homer@northumberland.gov.uk" <Cath.Homer@northumberland.gov.uk>, "Veronica.Jones@northumberland.gov.uk" <Veronica.Jones@northumberland.gov.uk>

Re: Proposed closure of Bellingham Middle school.

I understand that Northumberland County Council (NCC) are proposing to close Bellingham Middle School (BMS), moving the remaining schools in the North Tynedale and Redesdale area from a three tier education system to a two tier system.

I am very concerned about the implications of this proposal, both for my family and for the wider community in the North Tyndale and Redesdale area.

Closing BMS will have a significant impact on the large, rural community which it serves, a community which is spread over a large area and where children and young people already have to travel significant distances to access school and social activities. This decision, if carried through, will increase travelling times to school up to and beyond the maximum times recommended by the government for a large number of 11 and 12 year olds. It will make it more difficult for parents and carers to support their child to access after school activities, discriminating against those children whose family circumstances will make it impossible for them to drive the 50 miles plus round trip to collect them. Access to after school activities such as sports, social events and additional learning opportunities is recognised as a significant factor impacting on future outcomes and life chances. The closure of BMS potentially decreases the life chances of a significant number of children who are already less likely than their peers in more urban areas to access further education.

I am interested in the reasons for retaining the three tier system in Hexham and removing it in Haydon Bridge partnership area. Clearly NCC are not promoting the two tier system as the preferred approach within the county, therefore it appears that the change in system is driven purely by financial factors. I am very concerned that decisions about my child's educational opportunities are being made based on what will provide the best financial outcome for NCC. While I accept the realities of the current financial climate and the pressures on schools, local authorities and local government, I find it unacceptable that difficulties in other parts of the education system are being solved to the detriment of my daughter's school, a school which is supported within its local community, is improving the educational outcomes for its pupils and has no financial difficulties of its own. The proposed closure of BMS is not being suggested as a way to improve my daughter's educational outcomes, but simply to save money for NCC. This is not acceptable.

The closure of her school will have a significant impact on my daughter. She struggled with the transition to middle school and after a great deal of excellent support and input from the staff at BMS is now doing extremely well. She will not be the only child who found the transition from her small first school to the larger middle school difficult and who is already beginning to show signs of stress and anxiety about another potential transition if BMS closes. This transition is even more difficult to prepare her for due to the uncertainty about Haydon Bridge, the school which NCC is proposing she moves to at the end of year 6.

The current situation with Haydon Bridge is not of NCC's doing and I appreciate that the proposed closure of BMS is part of a wider plan to improve and develop the opportunities and provision at Haydon Bridge. At the moment myself and other parents with children at BMS are being told we have to move our children from a school we see improving and developing and providing well for our children, to one which is continuing to fail and has an uncertain future.

I would ask you to ensure that my child is given the same opportunity that her peers in Hexham Middle School have been given; to continue to be taught in her improving, local school at the heart of her local community, with access to after school activities and social events alongside her peers.

Yours faithfully,

Karen Hamilton

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Lorraine Fife
School Organisation Manager
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