Northumberland County Council

Education Consultations
<educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk>

Fwd: Proposed Closure of Bellingham Middle School

1 message

Cath McEvoy <cath.mcevoy@northumberland.gov.uk> 8 May 2018 at 11:48
To: Education Consultations <educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk>

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---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **LISA WHARTON** <lisawharton@btinternet.com>
Date: 6 May 2018 at 16:13
Subject: Proposed Closure of Bellingham Middle School
To: "peter.jackson@northummberland.gov.uk" <peter.jackson@northummberland.gov.uk>, "wayne.daley@northumberland.gov.uk" <wayne.daley@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>, john.riddle@northumberland.gov.uk, "cath.horner@northumberland.gov.uk" <cath.horner@northumberland.gov.uk>, "veronica.jones@northumberland.gov.uk" <veronica.jones@northumberland.gov.uk>, scott.dickinson@northumberland.gov.uk, "andy.johnson@northumberland.gov.uk" <andy.johnson@northumberland.

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Dear Northumberland County Council Cabinet Member

I am writing to object about the proposed closure of Bellingham Middle School in September 2019. My son will be due to start Year 5 at Bellingham Middle school this coming September. He has been looking forward to this for the last year but the recent proposals have caused him and me much concern.

I was relieved to see that under the recent proposals the first schools in the North Tynedale & Redesdale areas will be retained if even in the capacity of primary schools but I do not agree with being forced into a 2 tier system. Much of the new proposal heralds the fact that the views of many people have been taken into account. This may be the case with the Hexham school partnerships in retaining their 3 tier system, but I don't believe this is the case in the North Tynedale & Redesdale areas.

Bellingham Middle school is at the heart of the most rural and remote part of Northumberland and I feel that a 3 tier system is the best way to put the educational and welfare of our children first.
The closure of Bellingham Middle School would see my children from the age of 11 travelling over 40miles a day to get an education. It will take them over an hour each way depending on how many other pickups they have to do on the journey, as they will no doubt be the first onto the bus and the last off at the end of the day. What about after school clubs? I doubt transport will be provided after the usual school finish time. Is my son expected to get on a service bus at 11 to travel over an hour to get within 10 miles of home, because the already sparse local services do not provide a bus within 10miles of our home. At 13 this journey will be hard enough and up until recently it was deemed necessary to provide boarding facilities at Ridley Hall for the most rural children., but now it is proposed acceptable not only for 13 year olds but 11 year olds to undertake this lengthy journal to and from school each day. Due to our remoteness of our home under the previous arrangements my children would have boarded. With all this extra travelling when do you propose the children get time to do all their homework, social interactions with family and friends. This time could be better spent.

The other concern I have is that it is deemed appropriate for 11 year olds to share a school bus with children/young adults up to the age of 18 (6

formers.) There is a huge safeguarding issue here. Is there going to be chaperones on these school buses? I doubt that. Who is going to look after the younger children in the 2-3hours that they will spend on a bus on a daily basis?

The outcome of the consultation states that BMS has a pupil admission number of 60 with only 12 opting to attend in Year 5 from September 2018, I believe this number is actually 24 not 12. This proposal has been based on a factual incorrect document. I think the already low numbers are due to the uncertainty and lack of support from NCC towards the Middle school. If the school was given the relevant support and a second chance by the authorities I feel it would prosper again. It is vital in the education of our rural community.

If the proposed closure should go ahead in September 2019 I have huge concerns over the education my son will receive. Not only is it a huge worry to him already but the closure will no doubt see the loss of many members of staff looking for their next job as they will be made redundant by September 2019, and no one can blame them for that. My son is then likely to see a long line of supply teachers which will inevitably see a negative impact on his education. He will then be forced to take a step backwards and go back to a primary school, removing the great facilities he had at the Middle school.

This new proposal is seen to be still giving parents choice over their children's education, however, on paper the choice of high school may still be there but in practically it is not. If I wish my son to go the QEHS he would attend Bellingham Middle School in September 2018 for one year (because I cannot afford to transport him to Hexham Middle and no transport will be provided) he will then have to go back to Bellingham Primary for one year, then he would attend Hexham Middle for two years (providing transport would be provided) and finally on to QEHS. That is a lot of change for a young child. So in reality there is no choice. Hexham is actually nearer to our home in miles but we come under the Haydon Bridge catchment.

I feel that this whole process has cheated the families of the North Tynedale & Redesdale. Why this proposal was never brought to the table initially to allow people to comment or object. Once it was brought to the table it should have under gone a full consultation like the original 3 models. People feel it is a done deal already and are unaware that they can appeal or who to appeal to.
I hope that my concerns will be taken into account and that we will finally be listened to, otherwise a great disservice will be done to our children.

Yours faithfully

Lisa & James Crocker