7th June 2018

Response by the governing body of Corbridge Middle School to the following consultation:

NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSALS FOR THE REORGANISATION OF SOME MAINTAINED SCHOOLS IN THE HAYDON BRIDGE PARTNERSHIP

Corbridge Middle School is not part of the Haydon Bridge Partnership of schools and is therefore not directly affected by these proposals.

The recent consultation on education in West Northumberland has however broadened the view of many schools outside the usual pyramid partnership model of schools so on that basis we wish to comment on the proposal as follows:

Secondary age education: The support shown by NCC in listening to local communities and providing parental choice for good school places at secondary level by wishing to keep Haydon Bridge High School open is appreciated. The commitment to increase the educational and financial support to HBHS is also encouraging. In the spirit of school to school support, we wish to formally extend an offer of support to the headteacher and IEB at HBHS, especially in relation to the educational provision for years 7 & 8.

Two tier education for Haydon Bridge Partnership: the proposed closure of Bellingham Middle School and switch to "two-tier education" for the Haydon Bridge Partnership raise the following concerns for us:

A vulnerability for all schools in the Haydon Bridge Partnership may continue to exist for the foreseeable future due to reduced pupil numbers, financial income and the ability to deliver the expected high quality year 5 & 6 curriculum in very small primary schools . It is unclear how parental choice will be affected by a change to two tier education in the Haydon Bridge Partnership, whilst the Hexham Partnership remains three tier. We assume that a risk analysis has been undertaken to understand what parents are likely to do with the educational choice available to them especially between years 4 and 5. Feedback within the Hadrian Learning Trust Consultation report highlighted that responses were received from all the catchment areas from the Haydon Bridge partnership area. Of these responses, only those connected with Kielder First School showed a majority wishing Queen Elizabeth High School to become a secondary school. The responses from all other areas including those where primary schools already exist did not wish for a change to two tier in Hexham. With this evidence there is an undoubted risk that parents may continue to or start to migrate from schools in the Haydon Bridge Partnership to those in the Hexham Partnership which will have negative consequences on both the schools and communities within Haydon Bridge Partnership.

Whilst a commentary has been provided regarding the implications of one entry point for Haydon Bridge High School at year 7 for Haltwhistle First and Middle Schools; the lack of clarity on a future academy sponsor for these schools must be making the situation very difficult for the local community. We would hope for an early resolution to this matter to enable the implications to be clearly communicated with the local community to allow their views to be sought. The implications for school transport for the Haltwhistle catchment area for years 7 & 8 does not appear to be clear in the consultation document. Will children cease to receive free transport to Haltwhistle Middle for years 7 & 8 if the entry point for Haydon Bridge High School is at year 7?

We remain passionate about the educational, pastoral and transitional benefits of middle schools for our children, especially those who live in rural areas. Our own parents recognise the benefits of the softer transitions between schools; specialist teaching and the larger cohort of children in years 5 & 6 which is undoubtedly harder to achieve but not impossible in small primary schools. We hope that the views of the communities and schools affected by this change from a first/middle to a

primary/secondary structure are listened to as they have been before, to ensure that the best provision possible is made available to these extremely rural communities.

Investment in school buildings: It had been expected that a more radical view would have been taken regarding the buildings at HBHS and Bellingham Campus, these buildings do not appear to be fit for purpose for the future as either secondary, 3-13 or primary schools. Both Haydon Bridge and Bellingham deserve investment fitting for education in the 21st Century.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Jo Holmes
Chair Governors
Corbridge Middle School