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Notification of the reorganisation of maintained schools in the Haydon Bridge Partnership.
Response from the Diocesan Director of Education on behalf of the Newcastle Diocesan Board of Education('NDEB') and the Bishop of Newcastle.

1. The NDEB wishes to work in partnership with all stakeholders including the Local Authority wherever possible. The NDEB is saddened by the closure of any school (in this case Bellingham Middle School and Sports College) and recognises the significant impact this will have on so many. However, the NDEB is keen to support the resulting age range change in the named first schools to primary schools provided adequate finances are made available to ensure the needs of the children are met.

2. The NDEB has always welcomed an open dialogue from all stakeholders regarding the future education of children in the West Tyne. The Local Authority has tabled concerns regarding future numbers of children across the partnership and we have seen the most recent request from the ESFA highlighting its own concerns around surplus places and asking the Local Authority to look at the overcapacity in the system. We therefore continue to feel it is important to discuss how we can best educate children in a way which is both sustainable going forwards into the future and to the highest standards.

3. With regards to Wark C of E First School we agree with the proposed changes to the PAN and age range of the school on the understanding that the local authority will continue to support the school with the changes required and makes the financial investment that is also required to bring the school up to a better standard of accommodation.

4. Primary Education can be more challenging in a rural context with lower numbers of children in each year group and the need for mixed age classes; however, the delivery of an outstanding education is still possible with appropriate support.

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