Northumberland County Council

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

Fwd: Proposed closure of Bellingham Middle School

1 message

Lorraine Fife <lorraine.fife@northumberland.gov.uk> 5 June 2018 at 15:21
To: Jacqui Pearson <jacqui.pearson@northumberland.gov.uk>

HI Jacqui

Can you provide the standard response please and save to the relevant folder?

Many thanks

Lorraine

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **Andy Johnson GCSX** <andy.johnson@northumberland.gov.uk>
Date: 3 June 2018 at 18:51
Subject: Fwd: Proposed closure of Bellingham Middle School
To: Lorraine Fife <Lorraine.Fife@northumberland.gov.uk>, "Aviston, Sue" <Sue.Aviston@northumberland.gov.uk>

fyi

Best Wishes

Andrew Johnson

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PA – Deborah Anderson

Tele: 01670 622764

Email: Deborah.Anderson01@northumberland.gov.uk

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **karen traill** <k.traill@btinternet.com>
Date: 3 June 2018 at 17:59
Subject: Proposed closure of Bellingham Middle School
To: Nick.Oliver@northumberland.gov.uk, Glen.Sanderson@northumberland.gov.uk, Peter.Jackson@northumberland.gov.uk, rsc.north@education.gov.uk, Veronica.Jones@northumberland.gov.uk, John.Riddle@northumberland.gov.uk, andy.johnson@northumberland.gov.uk, cath.mcevoy@northumberland.gov.uk, Cath.Homer@northumberland.gov.uk, guy.opperman.mp@parliment.uk, Richard.Wearmouth@northumberland.gov.uk, teamoppy@gmail.com, Wayne.Daley@northumberland.gov.uk

We write to oppose the planned closure of Bellingham Middle School (BMS).

We are parents of a 10yr old currently attending BMS and an 8yr old due to attend in 2019. We therefore have first hand experience of the benefits of a three tier system and schools within our rural community.

Since our son started at BMS in September 2017, we have nothing but praise for the school and teaching staff. We have watched him initially struggle with the experience of moving from a very small rural school to a middle school with five times the number of pupils. He has been nurtured and guided by the BMS staff and given the right amount of independence. He is now thriving and his confidence has grown dramatically.

We are in favour of the current three tier system, as we believe this is the best model for families within rural communities. How can you expect a child to go from a school of 25 pupils, which they daily walk to, to get on a bus at age 11 with children up to the age of 18, travel for up to 1.5hrs to a school of 1000+ pupils? Parents of current high school pupils speak of how volatile the school bus environment is, and the plan is to put even younger children onboard who are inexperienced & emotionally immature. This factor alone is highly intimidating.

BMS is that vital link which bridges the gap between a small rural school and a large high school. It is bad enough that children have to make this journey at age 13, let alone 11. The time spent travelling each day (some children up to 3hrs daily), could be better spent doing homework, after school clubs or just being children. Children from rural communities would be unable to attend after school clubs, unless parents can travel the 60-80 mile round trip to collect them. This is therefore putting them at a disadvantage. It was not so long ago that the journey time was deemed too long and children were given free boarding, yet now its suddenly ok?

By closing BMS you are not affording us the same rights as parents in Hexham and beyond. You are not giving us any choice - its Haydon Bridge or nothing. If we were to

choose to send our children to another school, we would have to fund the travel costs ourselves or equally give up work to be able to take and collect our children.

The proposed primary schools can not offer the same facilities at ages 9-11 that BMS can. The primary schools do not have specialist science laboratories, IT suites, woodwork rooms, etc. Therefore again putting our children at a disadvantage.

How many of those making this decision have actually visited the schools involved? Driven the long drive out to Byrness, Kielder & beyond, and tried that drive during the winter months? How many have spoken to the children about how they feel about the daunting prospect of going from a small rural school, which is just down the road in a close knit community, to getting on a large scary noisy bus for over an hour to somewhere unfamiliar with a 1000+ pupils? Would you want that for your children?

Why have we not had the same length of consultation process or indeed the same exposure as the original consultation? Are you hoping that people will be so relieved that the first schools are to stay open that BMS will be closed without a fight?

Our rural communities are suffering already and this time it is we who are expected to pay the price for the Haydon Bridge Academy debacle - the only area in the partnership that would have no choice but to change to a two tier system so that there are enough pupils to justify Haydon Bridge High School, despite the fact that we are the furthest families from it!

We ask you to consider this from the aspect of our communities, the parents & especially the children. Instead of spending millions on adapting the schools to fit an unsatisfactory model, spend our money instead on improving the schools which are already in place.

Regards

Mr & Mrs Traill

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Lorraine Fife
School Organisation Manager
Northumberland County Council
Tel: 01670 624050