NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

Chris Brien

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Your Ref:
Our Ref: AJ/DA (L293-17)
Enquiries to: Andrew Johnson
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Tel Direct: (01670) 622767
Date: 5th December 2017

Dear Chris

We were requested by Jan Renou, Regional Schools Commissioner for the North, to respond to you on a number of queries set out in her letter to me of 7th November regarding Haydon Bridge High School.

We have responded in as much detail as we can at this time however we don't feel we are yet in a position to respond to the point you raised regarding the communities reaction to the potential "discontinuation"/closure of Haydon Bridge High School.

We are holding an informal consultation in order to establish how the the issues faced by schools in the west of Northumberland are affected by any potential closure and the consultation carried out by Hadrian Trust to change its age range.

The decision on whether to hold this consultation will be made on 19th December 2017 and if agreed, a two- stage informal consultation process will take place between January - April 2018, it will be following this process that we will be able to fully respond to your questions.

Our responses those queries where we have existing data are as follows:

Number of parental first preferences for HBHS in the next school year commencing September 2018 and number of offers made:

(a) There have been 23 x 1st preference applications received 'on time' for places in Year 7 in September 2018; and 3 x 1st preference 'late' applications for Year 7 places in September 2018 giving a final total of 26. The Pupil Admission Number in this intake year group is 65.

(b) There have been 15 x 1st preference applications received on time and 12 x 1st preferences late applications for Year 9 places in September 2018, now giving a total of 27. The Pupil Admission Number in the Year 9 intake is 120, There are 2 admission points into Haydon Bridge therefore making a total of 185 places available in each of Years 9, 10 and 11 when this intake joins the existing cohort moving up from existing Year 8.

(c) There have been other applications from children for places in Year 7 and Year 9 in September 2018 for schools other than Haydon Bridge High School, but who live in the Haydon Bridge High School catchment as follows:

- 8 'on time' Applications for Year 7 places at William Howard High School in Cumbria for September 2018 and 1 'late' application giving a total of 9.
- 49 'on time' Applications for Year 9 and 5 late application places at Queen Elizabeth High School in the Hexham Partnership giving a total 54.

(d) There are 3 applications outstanding for places in Year 7 from the current Year 6 in the 6 primary feeder schools. There are 7 applications outstanding for places in Year 9 from the current Year 8 in the 2 feeder middle schools. Pupils in Haydon Bridge High School catchment whose parents do not apply for a place in Year 7 or 9 (as appropriate) in any school will automatically be allocated them to Haydon Bridge HS in the appropriate year group.

Number of pupils leaving HBHS in-year and number of staff leaving and not being replaced

In-year leavers from year groups known to the authority (other than Year 8 pupils requesting to transfer into Year 9 at the transition point of other schools) - 65 into Year 7 and 120 into Year 9 respectively. Therefore, it would be expected that the number of pupils in Year 8 in any given year would increase as they moved into Year 9 as a result after being joined by pupils transitioning from the feeder middle schools. However, the data shows that there has been a trend over the last few years for a significant number of Year 8 pupils on roll at Haydon Bridge High School to transfer to Year 9 at other schools at the transition point in September, while only a small number of pupils join the school in Year 9 from the feeder Middle schools.

November 2014 - Number of Year 8 pupils on roll at Haydon Bridge HS - 106
November 2015 - Number of Year 9 pupils on roll at Haydon Bridge High School - 88

November 2015 - Number of Year 8 pupils on roll at Haydon Bridge HS - 126
November 2016 - Number of Year 9 pupils on roll at Haydon Bridge High School - 92

November 2016 - Number of Year 8 pupils on roll at Haydon Bridge HS - 109
November 2017 - Number of Year 9 pupils on roll at Haydon Bridge High School - 71

Teaching staff leavers within financial years between 1.4.14 and 31.3.17 as follows:

2014 - 15 Leavers
2015 - 21 Leavers
2016 - 12 Leavers

How the school currently fits into LA plans for providing sufficient local school places in the medium to long term.

Prior to the announcement on 23 November 2017 that Bright Tribe were withdrawing as sponsors of Haydon Bridge High School, the Council included Haydon Bridge High School in its sufficiency of local school place plans as follows:

- provision of 130 secondary school places in Years 7 and 8 combined (65 per year group) for pupils moving from 6 feeder primary schools in the Haydon Bridge Partnership at the end of Year 6
- provision of 555 secondary school places in Years 9 to 11 combined (185 per year group) - these include 120 places for pupils in each year group who join the school in Year 9 from middle schools in the Haydon Bridge Partnership.

Data received from the NHS in relation to numbers of children registered with GPs indicates that over the next 10 years there will be an average of 143 children per cohort living in the Haydon Bridge High School catchment. This data is attached to this email. This data however shouldn't be taken in isolation as there is the wider impact of a reducing birth rate in hexham and parental choice that must also be considered.

Whether we have considered closing Haydon Bridge High School and Sports College and if so the outcome and rationale for chosen course of action. If not, what you view would be on the school being close.

The Council wrote to the Secretary of State for Education and to the RSC in December 2016 outlining a proposal to carry out a consultation on closing Haydon Bridge High School. At that point, the Secretary of State advised the Council that the proposal for Bright Tribe to become the sponsor of the school remained in place and that the DfE would implement an Interim Executive Board at the school. As outlined above, the Council would be prepared to carry out consultation on the closure of schools as part of a wider consultation with schools in the west of Northumberland.

If you have decided not to close the school please explain how you plan to make the school financially viable in the short to medium term (for example 1-5 years) - restructuring/additional financial support?

No decisions in relation to Haydon Bridge High School have been made by the Council at this stage, however we are proposing a wider consultation on education in the west of the county as the future of Haydon Bridge can't be taken in isolation.

If the school was to close, please provide details of schools within a set radius that could absorb the pupils now and cope with pupil place need in the medium to long term? Please provide proximity and capacity data.

This query pre-empts the proposed consultation process set out in the response to Query 3. Once proposals for consultation are formulated, these will be shared with the RSC.

If the school is in a rural region and local schools are some distance away, please provide details regarding public transport links to alternative links that have capacity to absorb the unviable school's pupils.

This would be considered as part of the consultation.

What is your assessment of the likely community and other stakeholders reaction if the school was to close?

We are unable to respond to this point at this time but will fully respond following an informal consultation with the wider Haydon Bridge community.

Any other relevant information? For example, historical financial information (has the school had financial issues for some time, suggesting viability has been an ongoing issue). Anything else the department needs to be aware of.

The financial data relating to the last 3 financial years is provided below. The school's poor financial situation was communicated to the Secretary of State and RSC in December 2016.

14-15 - £141,666 deficit
15-16 - £321,057 deficit
16-17 - £641,330 deficit

The school is forecast to have a deficit of £2,567,470 in 2019/20.

I hope this letter goes some way to answering your queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch if you require further details.

Yours sincerely

Dr Andrew Johnson
Interim Director of Children's Services