Response to consultation on education in the west of Northumberland

From the Governing Body of Newbrough C of E Primary School

1. We would support a cohesive structure for education in the west of Northumberland. Our preference is for a wholly two tier system as we believe there are strong educational arguments for this.

2. We would wish to see strong partnerships of schools within this two tier structure. This would ensure that there is a smooth transition of the highest quality for pupils between schools. It would also facilitate professional dialogue between schools and promote opportunities for joint training and working.

3. We would wish to see a system where all schools are viable in:-

   - meeting the academic requirements of their pupils
   - being funded appropriately and within the constraints of whatever funding formula applies
   - each school estate is invested in equitably.

   We recognise that viability can sometimes only be achieved by decreasing costs or by increasing pupil numbers. However, there does need to be recognition that education in rural areas inevitably comes at a higher price. While there are undoubted economies of scale, this should be balanced against the critical role that small schools play within their rural communities.

4. Any new system must provide parents and pupils with choice. This should include both choice of provider and choice within the curriculum. It must also take into account the needs of all learners, including those who are most vulnerable.

5. We do not feel at present that we have had sufficient information in order to make a proper assessment of the advantage, merits or otherwise of an LA M.A.T. or being part one. We do, however, recognise that successful schools, such as ours, need to work together in partnerships more rigorously than they may have been doing in order to achieve and maintain viability and continue their vital role within their local communities. We would welcome an opportunity, in principle, to explore the benefits of partnerships of various kinds.