

Putting the Learner First

Northumberland schools
reorganisation newsletter

No.11 May 2006

Judge's verdict on Judicial Review

I wrote to you recently to update you on the situation with regard to the legal challenge being faced by the County Council brought by 'Parents for Legal Action Limited' (PFLA), a group of parents who oppose the County Council's plans to improve educational opportunities for children in Northumberland. PFLA originally lodged five claims against the council. They later dropped two of these claims and the remaining three were heard in the high court in February 2006.

The County Council voted in principle to change its school system from a three tier to a two tier structure in April 2005. PFLA alleged that this decision was unlawful and wanted it quashed on the grounds that:-

- 1) The consultation that the decision was based on was defective
- 2) The County Council did not carry out an independent evaluation of the financial and educational case for change to a primary/secondary structure of education and therefore broke a resolution made in an earlier meeting
- 3) Certain information about costs presented to the full County Council on April 19th 2005 when they made their decision to carry out Stage 2 Consultation with school partnerships on the basis of a primary/secondary education structure was misleading

The Judge has rejected the claim that the council's decision was unlawful, dismissing the claims made under points 2) and 3) above. However, in relation to the claim made under point 1), the judge has partially upheld the challenge on consultation processes carried out in Cramlington Partnership. The council will now look at how to comply with the requirements of the judgement and we will let everyone involved in the Cramlington Partnership know how we plan to do this as soon as we can. Information will also be posted on the Putting the Learner First website (address below).

In the meantime, you can be assured that we remain committed to improving education in the county and to providing the best possible learning environment for our children now and in the future.

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