

Putting the Learner First

Northumberland schools
reorganisation newsletter

No.4 October 2005

Outcomes of Stage 2 (Step Two) Consultation

In April 2005 the County Council voted to move forward with plans to re-organise the system of Education in Northumberland from a first, middle and high school structure to a primary/secondary structure to bring us into line with the rest of the country and to align our education with the National Curriculum. The overriding reason for this change is our aspiration to raise the standards of achievement of the pupils in Northumberland and to provide them with the best opportunity to reach their full potential. Additionally, we need to tackle the current poor school building stock and address the issue of surplus places in order to develop an education system fit for the 21st Century.

Stage 2 (Step Two) Discussions in Cramlington

In September, we carried out Stage 2 (Step Two) discussions in the Cramlington Partnership. We had meetings at each of the thirteen schools within the Cramlington Partnership to which we invited parents, school governors and early years care/education providers. We also had four separate meetings for staff during this period.

At the meetings, three proposed models for the re-organisation of the Cramlington Partnership to a primary/secondary structure were presented. These three models had been developed as a result of a first round of discussions with Head Teachers, Chairs of Governors, Learning and Skills Council and Diocesan representatives, and locally elected county councillors. As well as discussing the options for re-organisation, the opportunity was also taken to review the catchment areas of the first

schools as they move towards becoming primary schools and these proposals were also presented at the Stage 2 (Step Two) meetings. Additionally, representatives from Cramlington High School gave time to present their vision for the secondary school in Cramlington.

At the Stage 2 (Step Two) meetings, parents, staff, governors and early years care providers were given the opportunity to ask questions and to fill in a feedback form with their views on the proposals regarding the models for re-organisation and the changes to the first school catchment areas. This feedback has been analysed carefully and has been used as part of the information gathered in order to identify a preferred model for recommendation to be taken forward to Stage 2 (Step Three) consultation, which is the statutory stage.

I would like to thank all those who attended the meetings for their valuable feedback on the night, or who sent in feedback up to the closing date. In addition, I would like to thank all the Head Teachers, caretakers and all other staff who helped to ensure that the meetings ran smoothly.

Recommendations arising from Stage 2 (Step Two) Discussions and next steps

As I have explained, I have analysed the feedback received from the recent meetings in the Cramlington Partnership and additionally I have reviewed the property feasibility studies carried out in the schools (in relation to the options available to refurbish, remodel or rebuild) in order to assist me in coming to a balanced decision on which preferred model of re-organisation to recommend to the County Council Executive. This recommendation will be considered by the Executive on November 3rd, and my full report can be read at

www2.northumberland.gov.uk/learning/documents.asp.

I am proposing that Model C should be the preferred model, with certain amendments, to be taken forward into the formal Stage 2 (Step 3) Consultation in Cramlington.

The basis of the Model C proposal with amendments, is:-

- The Current High school becomes an 11-18 Secondary School, all four Middle Schools close and generally the current First schools become primary schools (5-11).
- Complete Forms of Entry* for all primary schools in the Cramlington Partnership to be adopted. It is now recommended that Northburn First School should operate as a 2 Forms of Entry school (currently 1.5 Forms of Entry), and that Shanklea should operate as a 1 Form of Entry school (currently 1.5 Forms of Entry). The catchment areas of Northburn and Shanklea would be adjusted to take account of this proposal.
- As with the original proposal under Model C, Beaconhill, Cragside and Eastlea are recommended to have 1 Form of Entry respectively, while Hareside and Burnside are recommended to have 2 Forms of Entry respectively.
- It is recommended that Kramel First School should close and Hareside First School should take in the Kramel catchment area. If this recommendation was approved, Kramel would close at the end of the summer term in 2007.

Further adjustments to Model C have been recommended to take account of the effect of closure on the Kramel community:-

- The Early Years care at Kramel should be retained locally on the current site or close by
- Safe Walking routes should be investigated in relation to the transportation of pupils from East Cramlington to Hareside and a bus service to be considered if there is a safety issue

The feedback from parents, staff and others has been compelling and it has not been an easy task to identify the preferred model. However, there are sound educational reasons why I am recommending that primary schools in the Cramlington Partnership should operate on the basis of complete Forms of Entry.

Kramel First school has been identified for closure as a result of its continuing falling pupil numbers (it is the smallest school in the partnership at just over a half Form of Entry), its financial viability, and the fact that over half of the families in its catchment area already send their children to other schools in Cramlington. It is always a difficult decision to recommend the closure of a school but it is not one taken lightly and, as part of the whole reorganisation I believe that it is in the best future interests of all children in Cramlington.

Next Steps - Stage 2 (Step Three) Consultation

Providing the County Council Executive approves my recommendation to take Model C forward into formal consultation, further meetings will be organised in the Cramlington Partnership in mid to late November as part of Stage 2 (Step Three) Consultation. While these meetings are statutory (the County Council is required by law to consult with the public on the preferred model of re-organisation), they will be another opportunity for you to get involved in discussions on the detail of the model.

Meetings will once again take place in all schools in the partnership, with separate meetings for Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors, governors, staff, and parents of the relevant school all in one day. The dates of these meetings will be confirmed with you very shortly. Additionally, meetings will take place with Blyth Valley District Council, a special Area Committee will be organised in Cramlington and there will be briefings with our 'Strategic Partners' who include district councils, the Learning and Skills Council, Northumberland Strategic Partnership, Diocesan Representatives, Government Office North East, Connexions, Sport England, Community Council of Northumberland and Northumberland County Council Education Partnership Board.

At these meetings, we will present our reasons for recommending Model C and you will have the opportunity to air your views and influence the final shape of the model. There will be further opportunities for you to register your views at a later stage in the process once the Council Executive have considered the final recommended model.

Other News

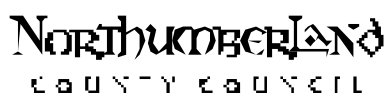
We have now heard from the Department for Education and Skills that unfortunately we have not been successful in our Targeted Capital Bid for £12 million to finance the rebuilding and the remodelling of Cramlington High School. While this is disappointing, we have to accept that when competing for money in this type of bidding we may not be successful. However as you would expect, we do have an alternative funding plan which is outlined in the Executive report. This will enable the planned improvements to the High School to take place as scheduled to deliver the 21st Century

learning environment that the pupils in Cramlington deserve. Money has already been identified by the Council to fund the re-organisation of the First Schools to Primary Schools.

Thank you for taking the trouble to read this long newsletter.

Jackie Strong
Programme Director,
Putting the Learner First

* Forms of Entry - This is a formula used to work out the capacity of a school. The formula assumes an average class size is 30. As there are 7 years in a Primary school, $30 \times 7 = 210$ pupils or 1 Form of Entry (1 FE). If a school had 420 pupils then it would have 2 FE and so on. Sometimes easier to think of in terms of how many reception year intakes a particular school has, e.g. 1 FE would mean there is one reception intake each year.



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