

# Putting the Learner First

## Background

In order to have a quality education service we have to tackle these key issues:

- the need to raise achievement and raise standards even higher
- the need to provide modern fit for purpose learning environments across the County
- the need to reduced the number of school sites and surplus places
- the need to make the best use of the resources available.

## What has happened so far?

The Council on 9 June resolved in principle, as its preferred framework for school organisation, a system of primary and secondary education and asked for detailed and costed plans to be drawn up. This work has now been done.

The Council is now considering at its meeting on 8 December whether to enter into a First Stage of general consultation on a Strategic Plan for Education Provision in Northumberland

## What happens next ?

If the Council agrees that the document “Putting the Learner First, A Strategic Plan for Education Provision” is suitable in scope and content there will be a period of general consultation from December 9 until March 1. There will be special Area Committees and meetings across the County as well as Roadshows and an enquiry desk to answer your questions.

This would be a consultation on the strategy for schools.

The outcomes of this general consultation will be reported back to the Council in April.

The Council will then consider whether it wishes to proceed to making any formal proposals for individual schools and Partnerships.

## If there are changes when will they happen?

Not until there have been 3 stages of consultation. This is just the First stage. If any changes happen they would be in different parts of the County at different times as set out in The Plan and by 2016.

If ,after the 3 stages of consultation, it is decided to change to Primary and Secondary education in my area, how could this affect my child? Your child would only need to move once(not twice) during their school life-from Primary to Secondary. We will give schools extra support to manage change

I would prefer no changes at all. Can we stay as we are ? Even if we kept the present system we would have to radically re-organise the schools and reduce the number of school sites. Doing nothing is not an option.

Why not have a revised three tier system rather than move to a primary/secondary system? That is what we are consulting about as no final decision has been made.

There are models of possible changes for Primary/Secondary so you can see how a change might affect you alongside a revised 3 tier system.

The aim is to get the best value investment for the education of children.

A comparison between the systems is set out in the Strategic Plan along with the case for change.

Is it true that nearly all schools are in danger of falling down ?

No. But the surveys we have done over the past few months do confirm that nearly all of our schools do need a massive investment which the Council is committed to achieving. It would be an investment in the future of education in Northumberland.

If my child is in a first school what would happen if there is a school re-organisation?

Nothing can happen straight away - there are 3 stages of consultation for each school.

If changes happen it is envisaged they would happen at different times in different parts of the County. The Plan sets out what could happen under different models in different Areas.

It would depend on which school your child attends and which model is eventually adopted.

If your child's First School becomes a Primary school your child would spend 2 more years in the school before transfer to Secondary school.

What happens if there is eventually a decision to close my child's middle school?

This would be managed so that your child would only have to transfer once to their new secondary school. The Plan sets out how this could work.

## What happens if my child attends a High School?

If there is eventually a decision that the school becomes a secondary school the arrangements will vary from school to school. Most will have new buildings/refurbishment and some may have upper and lower schools or campus arrangements. The Plan sets out the possible models and what might happen when at each High School.

## Will you talk to me about how these possible changes might affect my children?

There will be meetings for parents at every school if and when a formal proposal for change made. The possible timescales for this are set out in the Plan.

## Will building work cause massive disruption?

All building work has the potential to be disruptive which is why we will insist on excellent project management by all involved if these changes happen. Building new schools on new sites can be less disruptive than refurbishment work.

## How will this strategy improve education in Northumberland ?

The aim of the strategy is to address the critical issues faced by the County and maintain a quality education service.

Education will be improved by:

- lining up the organisation of schools with the key stages of the national curriculum
- giving schools the tools to do the job
- reducing the number of times children start a new school
- reducing journey times for children where possible
- developing modern learning environments for new approaches to teaching and learning
- achieving best value investment
- developing new models such as Learning Villages and Federations
- designing Extended schools with a range of community facilities
- making education financially sustainable by removing surplus places and improving school budgets.

# Putting the Learner First Timeline

- 8 November 2004 Public announcement of timetable of meetings:
- Members
  - Headteachers
  - Website
- 22 November 2004 Final Executive Report and Papers out
- Members' Seminar
- General Briefings:
- Headteachers/Chairs
  - Press
  - Staff
  - Launched on website
- 30 November 2004 Executive Meeting and SG members
- 2 December 2004 Scrutiny Committee
- 8 December 2004 Full Council
- 9 December 2004 Consultation on primary secondary education and the strategy for reorganisation. Will include:
- Scrutiny meetings
  - Area Committees
  - Parents and Youth Forum
  - Area Roadshows
- April 2005 Special Full Council Meeting