

RESPONSE FORM

Initial Consultation on Proposed Changes to Age Ranges of Queen Elizabeth High School and Hexham Middle School

The Trust Board would like to hear the views of all our stakeholders before deciding how to move forward. Our stakeholders include parents, students and staff but anybody is welcome to respond. This proposed change could help shape education in this area for the next 30 years or more, so it is important that we hear the views of the whole community.

Please give us your views on the three statements below.

All responses will be treated as confidential but it would help our understanding if you could provide the following background information.

Name (optional): [Jane Kennedy](#) on behalf of [Governors at Corbridge Middle School](#)

First digits of postcode (e.g. NE46): NE45

Position/Organisation (if applicable): Headteacher

Are you responding as (please put an 'x' in each box that applies):

Current HMS Student

Current QEHS Student

HMS Staff Member

QEHS Staff Member

Current HMS Parent

Current QEHS Parent

Parent of Child/Children at Other School/s

Please state name of School/s [Corbridge Middle School](#)

Other (please state)

- 1. We have set three key objectives for our schools: first and foremost, improving educational experience and outcomes; secondly, becoming financially sustainable; and, thirdly, securing capital investment.**

Please let us know your views on this.

Whilst the three objectives are not an issue, we strongly disagree with the ways in which you propose to achieve these objectives.

We have had 7 well-attended consultation meetings to gather the views of our parents, prospective parents and staff. The meetings have demonstrated the strength of the support for the 3-tier system that we currently have and have recognised the financial hardship of Queen Elizabeth High School. Queen Elizabeth High School is the catchment school and the school of choice for nearly all of our parents. We feel strongly that, as a partnership, we should be committed to clear progression routes for all of our pupils. Should Corbridge Middle School join the Tynedale Community Learning Trust, it is intended that the progression route will remain as now with the majority of parents wishing their child to transfer to Queen Elizabeth High School in Year 9.

There is a strong feeling from these meetings that Hadrian Learning Trust (HLT) should not unilaterally affect change across the whole of the partnership but instead should investigate every other alternative *together with* the other schools. Our understanding is that the RSC will not consider any proposal to change the age range unless schools work together to ensure an appropriate co-ordinated implementation, and will only approve any individual proposal in that context. Corbridge Middle School has continued to emphasise to all other schools in the partnership and all parents that we are committed to working together as a partnership to secure the best possible outcomes for all the pupils. Parents feel strongly that they want their children to attend their local catchment school. They did not like the perceived threat of having to potentially leave the 3-tier middle school of their choice to attend QEHS earlier than they wish as they may not have a place at Year 9 unless they do so.

Before any decisions are made that affect CMS we would like to know:

- How exactly do you expect standards to be raised in English and Maths? For the proposed Year 5 and 6 the pupils would, in many cases, be taught by primary teachers rather than subject specialists. GCSE 2016 analysis shows that pupils taught within the 3-tier system outperformed those in the 2-tier system by 4.8%
- How would you expect standards to be raised in foundation subjects when the Year 5 and 6 pupils would be taught by their primary teacher rather than specialist subject teachers? Year 5 and 6 have access to specialist facilities and resources which many primary schools are unable to offer. GCSE 2016 analysis shows that more pupils from the 3-tier system achieved EBacc than those from the 2-tier system. We are firmly of the view that the loss of specialist facilities for Year 5 and 6 would pose a threat to the quality of the outcomes at Year 6 and Year 11.

- Why are you suggesting that it would be an advantage for QEHS to have the children in Year 7 and 8 and that this would raise standards when you currently have a significant number of the pupils from Year 5? What exactly would you do differently? Why can't we do this now in collaboration? We could have a 2 year advantage on secondary schools nationally by working even more closely together as Middle and High schools from Year 5.
- QEHS is a high performing school. This is due in part to the quality of provision in your feeder first and middle schools. Middle schools can support aspects of the curriculum such as CEIAG (dedicated lessons being introduced into Y7 & 8 at CMS). 84% of middle schools nationally are good or outstanding and one of their strengths is the broad and balanced curriculum; currently a priority for Ofsted and a real strength of the 3-tier system. Do you envisage that the schools becoming 2-tier would improve this broad and balanced curriculum? We do not.
- Have you given any proper consideration to the pastoral importance of first and middle schools and the effectiveness of transition in 3-tier compared to the transition in 2-tier especially given the rural area that our partnership operates in? Parents love the pastoral support that the 3-tier system gives their children and this is widely recognised as a strength of first and middle schools. In the current climate, where mental health issues have never been more concerning, the current support that the pupils receive helps them to thrive and therefore learn. How do you propose that this outstanding pastoral provision would be maintained or improved in a 2-tier system where pupils may then be in a much larger schools?
- Could understanding what learning looks like and feels like for learners at all stages and establishing an all-through pedagogy that builds on the best of all phases have a much greater impact on raising standards at all key stages than a move to 2-tier?
- You suggest that changing the age range will 'especially benefit disadvantaged and SEND students'. How? This proposal needs to consider carefully the learning journey of SEND and disadvantaged children.

2. We have concluded that the status quo for our schools is not sustainable and that there needs to be a change.

Please let us know your views on this.

We acknowledge that your MAT has concluded that the “status quo for our schools is no longer sustainable”. However, we firmly disagree with your rationale and that there is a need to change the whole Hexham Partnership to achieve your aims. The only clear financial benefits of this proposal, should the funds become available, are the likely closure of some of the other schools in the partnership including your proposed closure of HMS in the hope of raising capital funds. This proposal has to be balanced against the significant disruption that you have alluded to in your documents for the Hexham Partnership, which is currently a very successful three-tier system, and the potential effect it will clearly have on the surrounding communities and the learning journeys for the pupils.

The outcome of your proposed conversion to a secondary school we consider will significantly put at risk the already successful educational experience and outcomes for the pupils within the Hexham Partnership. Therefore, as part of this consultation, we would ask you to share the modelling you have based your rationale on so that as a partnership we can work together to explore the opportunities that you are seeking to resolve for HLT and to assist you to manage any impact that may arise for the partnership as a whole.

Before any decisions are made that affect CMS we would like to know:

- What financial modelling have you done in coming to the decision to consult on changing the age-range?
- What are the predicted numbers on entry used in the modelling? Were you aware when you carried the financial modelling that St Joseph’s Middle School and Corbridge Middle School were intending to remain as middle schools? The parents at CMS are overwhelmingly in favour of the 3-tier system and want their children to stay until the end of Year 8. Have you anticipated this or just presumed they would all come to you in Year 7? What risk assessment has been carried out for the Partnership as a whole on both educational outcomes and financial sustainability?
- If being on one-site would save money, why can’t this be as a middle and high or all through school from Y5 to Y13?
- What strategies have already been tried to increase the numbers at HMS and QEHS to fill up the surplus places? CMS has increased its intake by 18% in under 3 years. If HMS and QEHS could replicate this, this would generate significant extra funding.

3. It is proposed that Queen Elizabeth High School and Hexham Middle School should come together to create a single 11-18 Secondary school.

Please let us know your views on this.

We strongly disagree. Why not a single 9-18 school or a new build middle and high school on one site? Is any capital investment from NCC limited to the 2-tier model? Have you considered becoming a mixed MAT and modelling the impact on finances of all schools from the partnership joining together (excepting for St Mary's First and St Joseph's Middle)?

Please let us know if you have any other comments on this consultation or if there are any alternative proposals that you would like us to consider.

We urge you to reconsider this proposal which will have a devastating affect on local schools and communities. We urge you to work together with all the other schools in the partnership, the local authority, the diocese and parents to come up with a plan that will provide the best educational journey and outcomes for all the pupils in our already successful rural partnership.

We realise that there are many questions in this response but there has been a lack of clarity about what the whole partnership would look like which has caused additional concerns for parents as we have been unable to respond to their questions fully.

Thank you for taking part in this Initial Consultation.

Please return your Response Form by 4pm on Friday 21 July 2017
by email to consultation@qehs.net

OR hand in paper copies at either HMS or QEHS Reception

OR by post to: Age Range Consultation, Queen Elizabeth High School, Whetstone Bridge Road, Hexham NE46 3JB.