

Education in the West

CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM

VIEWS ON PROPOSED OPTIONS FOR SCHOOLS IN HAYDON BRIDGE AND HEXHAM PARTNERSHIPS

PART 1- ABOUT YOU

CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM

VIEWS ON PROPOSED OPTIONS FOR SCHOOLS IN HAYDON BRIDGE AND HEXHAM PARTNERSHIPS

Your name (Optional): Governing Body of Corbridge Middle School

The contents of this response have been approved at a full governing body meeting of Corbridge Middle School held on 20th March 2018

Are you responding mainly as a

- Parent/carer
- **Governors**
- Staff Member
- Pupil/Student

If you ticked any of the above, with which school or schools are you associated?

- Acomb First School
- Allendale Primary School
- Beaufront First School
- Bellingham First School
- Bellingham Middle School and Sports College
- Broomhaugh C of E First School
- Chollerton C of E First School
- Corbridge C of E Aided First School
- **Corbridge Middle School**
- Greenhaugh First School
- Greenhead C of E Aided Primary School
- Haltwhistle Community Campus Lower School Academy
- Haltwhistle Community Campus Upper School Academy
- Haydon Bridge High School
- Haydon Bridge Shaftoe Trust Primary School
- Henshaw C of E Aided Primary School
- Hexham First School
- Hexham Middle School
- Hexham Priory School
- Humshaugh C of E First School
- Kielder Community First School
- Newbrough C of E Primary School
- Otterburn First School

- Queen Elizabeth High School
- Slaley First School
- St Joseph's RC Middle School
- St Mary's RC First School
- The Sele First School
- Wark C of E First School
- West Woodburn First School
- Whitfield C of E Voluntary Aided Primary School
- Whitley Chapel C of E First School
- Whittonstall First School
- Other

If other school, please specify?

- Resident
Town or village in which you live:
- Parish Councillor:
Parish/town council:
- Other
Please clarify:

Context

Corbridge Middle School is a 'GOOD' school with the last two School Improvement Partner reports judging the school as on the cusp of OUTSTANDING. The school is:

- operating at 98% capacity
- 3rd for overall KS2 performance in Northumberland 2017
- 25th nationally in our group of 125 similar schools based on percentage of pupils meeting expected standard at KS2 2017
- in surplus financially for the next three years

Hexham partnership already has evidence of working well together:

- A clear 3 year development plan is in place and reviewed
- Three distinct headteacher focus groups to consider a partnership approach to assessment, the attainment and progress of PP students and community cohesion.
- The work on a common assessment approach across all schools; after "levels" were withdrawn and the introduction of "numbers" at KS4. Good practice has been shared, systems aligned and processes continue to evolve
- Moderation and standardisation of English and maths across key stages 1,2 and 3 and moderation and standardisation of all foundation subjects, apart from R.E, across key stages 2 and 3
- Shared INSET across middle and high is best practice.

There is no evidence to suggest that due to their size, the current small first schools in the Hexham partnership are unable to offer a broad and balanced curriculum. Results at KS2, 3 and 4 are above or well

above average in comparison with national data, with QEHS

- in the top 12% schools nationally for KS4 progress
- 4th nationally in their group of 55 “similar” schools for both KS4 attainment and progress
- 22nd nationally in the Sunday Times parent guide for non selective secondary schools
- in the top 15% schools nationally for KS5 with progress score 0.16 and average grade B vs C nationally.

It is however recognised that change and improvement can still be made. There is broad agreement that we need:

- closer alignment of the curriculum across schools in order to meet the desired outcomes for 16 year old students; in particular STEM subjects and languages
- extra capacity for SEND provision, both at The Priory as planned and in schools. A partnership approach to SEND support
- local alternative provision
- better opportunities for staff and career development across schools which will help recruitment
- to review the financial viability and sustainability of all schools in light of the National Funding Formula
- new building stock for some schools, in particular Queen Elizabeth High School and Hexham Middle School

There are also exciting opportunities for all schools from more formal collaboration to:

- deliver a cohesive curriculum across all schools which meets the desired outcomes for 16 year old students; in particular in the areas of STEM subjects, languages and careers education
- formally share specialist staff resources (both teaching and support)
- offer staff career development and progression amongst all partnership schools
- greater accountability for outcomes across schools through federations or a multi academy trust
- achieve financial savings from the economies of scale

You will be in receipt of the joint letter from 15 schools dated 21st March to Northumberland County Council. Our governing body continue to support the content of this letter and as a result find it difficult to respond to the questions asked regarding the three potential models put forward.

All three models appear to involve an element of lengthy transition for children and staff whilst modifications or new schools are built. We see no reason why, given the current excellent education carried out in the Hexham partnership of schools, that if closures become necessary, these should take place until new fit for purpose accommodation is provided.

Corbridge Middle School supported and signed
PART 2 – YOUR VIEWS ON MODEL A

Having read the consultation document, thoroughly, I believe that Model A represents a good option for securing sustainable and viable education in the west of Northumberland. This model includes the closure or merger of several schools.

- Yes
- No
- **Don't know**

Your reasons for ticking the above

Unanimous decision by the Governing Body.

We do not feel that enough information has been provided to answer the question. No financial modelling or impact upon local communities has been provided. We do however wish to make the following points:

1. Closure of Haydon Bridge High School - our stakeholders are clear that it is important for there to be two “high/secondary” schools in the west of Northumberland to allow for parental choice and in the event that QEHS failed either financially or educationally for whatever reason.
2. Closure of eight schools- whilst offering the fewest closures of the three options, it is not clear how the annual loss of 6% of the total revenue income to the two partnerships will be found in efficiency savings by closing/merging schools.
3. Continued hybrid system in Haydon Bridge partnership - the current situation of small primary schools being close to middle schools provides an ongoing risk to the viability of small primary schools. It appears that currently some parents are choosing to move their children at the end of year 4 to middle schools rather than remain for years 5&6 in their primary schools.
4. Surplus places - the closure of Haydon Bridge High School would remove a large percentage of the total number of surplus places from the Haydon Bridge partnership, however the proposed closure of the suggested first/primary schools would leave no spare capacity (-14 places) in first schools in the Hexham Partnership and still leave 29% surplus capacity in the first/primary schools in Haydon Bridge partnership.

In your opinion, if it is a viable option but there are change to Model A that would improve it, please outline them below

We believe it is important to offer at least one model that is fully three tier across both partnerships. This would help with school to school support/collaboration and potentially prevent “leakage” from smaller two tier schools into larger three tier schools.

PART 3 – YOUR VIEWS ON MODEL B

Having read the consultation document, thoroughly, we believe that Model A represents a good option for securing sustainable and viable education in the west of Northumberland. This model includes the closure or merger of several schools.

- Yes
- **No**
- Don't know

Your reasons for ticking the above

Majority decision by the Governing Body.

We do not agree that creating an 11-18 secondary school is the only option or the best way to meet the objectives. In summary we strongly believe that an age range change would have a detrimental impact on our students, families and communities. We urge you to listen to *all* the schools in the Hexham Partnership to ensure that all the schools continue to go from strength to strength. We would refer you to the ‘Making significant changes to an open academy - Departmental advice for all types of academy trust’ document which states:

Where proposals are likely to have a significant impact on other local provision a full business case will usually be required to provide evidence that the education of children in the area, as a whole, will not be compromised. Where local provision is organised in three tiers and the aim is to move to two tier age range, the department expects schools to work together to ensure an appropriate coordinated implementation, and will only approve any individual proposal in that context.

Our view is based upon the following and responds to information from the Hadrian Learning Trust consultation document which has been shared with Hadrian Learning Trust

1. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES AND EXPERIENCE

All schools in the Hexham Partnership are good or outstanding. Outcomes at the current 13-18 Queen Elizabeth High School are:

- in the top 12% schools nationally for KS4 progress
- 4th nationally in your group of 55 “similar” schools for both KS4 attainment and progress
- 22nd nationally in the Sunday Times parent guide for non selective secondary schools
- in the top 15% schools nationally for KS5 with progress score 0.16 and average grade B vs C nationally.
- Last year, 60% of your KS4 students stayed at your school for post 16 studies.

Currently approximately 40% of all students at Queen Elizabeth High School are part of Hadrian Learning Trust by virtue of having attended Hexham Middle School.

Impact on the wider partnership

Model B states that there would be a significant impact on other schools within the partnership and their communities including the potential closure of Corbridge Middle School and some of the first schools

closing or becoming primary. From responses we have received, we know that this would be overwhelmingly unpopular with our parents, staff and wider community. (*Appendix 1*)

No information has been provided to suggest how, by changing the age range of the schools this would improve the progress of students. The pupils in a primary school would not have the range of specialist teaching in years 5 & 6 which we believe would risk the standards currently achieved at GCSE. This level of specialism would not be possible in one form entry or less primary schools. We have noted from the Sele First School response states that they propose forming a three form entry primary school in order to offer specialist teaching in years 5&6. This would suggest that the current provision of specialist teaching in middle schools is valued by our local teaching school. A broad and balanced curriculum for primary aged students is currently a focus for Ofsted. At Corbridge Middle School we do have specialist teaching in years 5 to 8. We have attached an extract of the speech given by Amanda Spielman, HM Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, at the Festival of Education 23rd June 2017 which shares her views on curriculum and the substance of education (*Appendix 2*).

Without evidence that a risk assessment on the effect on attainment at KS2 has been completed we are concerned that standards may not be maintained at KS2, leading to the potential that standards at KS4 would not be maintained let alone improved. Evidence from other schools, or partnerships of schools, who have expanded or changed their age range shows this is a high risk. Nine of the sixteen secondary schools in Northumberland have changed their age range. In 2017, the top four secondary schools for progress 8 and top three secondary schools for attainment 8 are all 13-18 secondary schools with feeder middle schools.

We have seen no measurable evidence that students in the care of Hadrian Learning Trust since year 5 have progressed any better than those from Corbridge Middle School or St Joseph's Middle School. There is no evidence that the progress of pupils would be improved by extending the teaching, leadership and management of Hadrian Learning Trust for all 11 - 18 students.

No evidence how educational experience would be better than now

The enrichment opportunities that students at Corbridge Middle School have are outstanding. We are able to frequently involve whole year groups in a variety of enrichment opportunities. We also engage fully with local businesses and members of the community to extend students' learning into business and the local community. This would be much harder in a very large secondary school, with little evidence that this currently takes place at Queen Elizabeth High School. There is a lack of evidence how enrichment opportunities would be maintained or improved. This has an impact on lifelong learning, engagement and future aspirations.

Our current structure of education allows children to have "three bites" at the cherry for holding positions of responsibility across the breadth of school life whether this is as a member of school council, captain of houses, leader of bands, sports teams, or main acting/singing parts in school productions. Almost half of the children at Corbridge Middle have represented the school in a sports event or competition and almost 60% have participated in a lunchtime or after school sports club. Participation and uptake of activities for pupil premium children is comparable with all other children.

All our first and middle schools offer a good education but have unique qualities. Parents therefore have the choice at first and middle school age to determine which school has the right ethos, values and educational offer for their child.

No information regarding what an 11-18 school can achieve and deliver compared to the current structure with modifications

There has been no information provided or research evidence on how the change in structure would improve the provision for the pupils in 7&8 or indeed 9.

Corbridge Middle School has never been opposed to making changes. We do believe we have played an instrumental part in the partnership work on assessment, age related expectations and continuity of the curriculum across schools. We have attempted to explore the sharing of staff with Hadrian Learning Trust as we already have experience of successfully sharing both teaching and support staff with other schools outside our partnership. We would welcome further opportunities for working together at a strategic level, as a close partnership of schools, for the benefit of the wider community.

As part of the consultation, we had expected that an improved more inclusive offer for post 16 education would have been incorporated into the plans. Given the context of our large rural catchment area, it is disappointing that for whatever reason 40% of year 11 students at Queen Elizabeth High School have to continue their education much further afield.

2. PROPOSED SIZE OF THE SCHOOL AND THE IMPLICATIONS

Currently Queen Elizabeth High School, with a KS4 cohort size of 302, has the 58th largest PAN in England.

Of those “secondary” schools with a cohort size similar or greater than the size of Queen Elizabeth High School, **29% (17) are 13/14-18 high schools**. The Hadrian Learning Trust statement on page 7 that ‘*our local three tier system is increasingly out of step... there are now only 46 13-18 high schools (1.4% of all secondaries)*’ is therefore misleading. Schools of a similar size to Queen Elizabeth High School are more likely to be part of a three tier system than the national picture suggests.

If Queen Elizabeth High School became an 11-18 secondary school with a capacity 1850 students, it would be the 71st largest (out of 4,168) secondary school in England with feeder primary schools well below the average size for England.

The Sele would be the only primary school with more than one form entry with all other feeder schools being one form entry or less.

Commentary

We struggle to understand how any organisational or physical design of a new secondary school could minimise the enormity of the transition from small primary school to large secondary school. Parental feedback (*Appendix 1*) confirms our belief that there would be serious implications for the well being and education of children moving to such a large establishment.

Hadrian Learning Trust Consultation Document Section 5. What does this mean for your child? identifies some aims for how they will be improving the educational journey for all children. They have not explained how they plan to achieve these aims and we would disagree that the aims mentioned would provide any improvement on what we currently have. Parental feedback has confirmed that:

- the current transitions are gentle and align with the physical development of our children from small first schools to a large high school
- they feel no need to align time spent in school with the key stages as long as the curriculum taught at each stage is aligned across the partnership of schools

In addition:

- there is no evidence to suggest that there is a dip in learning as a result of our three tier system, as shown by the 2017 Progress 8 score for Queen Elizabeth High School placing it in the top 12% schools nationally
- Carrying out KS2 SATs halfway through middle school is felt to reduce the stress caused by SATs being ‘the finale’ of primary school. How much preparation for KS4 exams is required? Parents already tell us that the level of testing carried out at Queen Elizabeth High School in preparation for KS4 exams is causing stress for their children
- Providing more time in larger schools does not necessarily allow pupils to take part in more “aspects of school life”. Currently students have a real opportunity to represent their school as a part of many different types of team, perform in or support school shows, be part of the school council and take part in competitions. This is all made possible because the schools are small enough to make opportunities more accessible.

Loss of parental choice for children at age 11 in rural areas with poor public transport

We have major concerns that parents would have only one choice of secondary education. Whilst the ‘Collaborative Model’ that we shared with parents has been well received, the main feedback has been on the lack of choice from age 13. This would be exacerbated if the age range was changed to 11-18. We have adapted our ‘Collaborative Model’ (*Appendix 3*) to a ‘Collaborative Pathways Model’ (*Appendix 4*) accordingly to include provision up to age 18 in the Haydon Bridge area.

Distances involved and lack of public transport within the Hexham (and Haydon Bridge) catchment areas mean that already parents have little choice but to send their child to their “catchment school”. Any choice that currently exists would be taken away. If HBHS were to close and with William Howard school instructed to reduce its PAN; NCC would still have an obligation to provide places but currently the only nearest options at year 7 would be Hexham, Prudhoe Highfield Middle School, Ponteland Middle or High School, Consett, Ryton or Blaydon.

3. INCLUSION

Attainment and progress data from Corbridge Middle School and feedback from our School Improvement Partner indicate that Corbridge Middle School provides an excellent educational experience for pupils and particularly for SEN and disadvantaged students. Parental feedback and feedback from outside agencies from Northumberland, County Durham and London education authorities is outstanding. We have not been provided with any information detailing why provision for disadvantaged students or students with Special educational needs and disabilities will be enhanced by Model B.

Any details of proposed enhanced provision, SEND support or specialist services are missing from your consultation report.

4. Managing Change

We have not had access to a risk assessment or an impact study that supports the Hadrian Learning Trust view that it has the capacity to drive the school to become an outstanding school as well as manage the significant changes should this proposal go ahead. The scale of the changes which are being proposed would require outstanding Leadership and Management

- Queen Elizabeth High School and Hexham Middle School are good schools, not outstanding schools.
- Ofsted judged Leadership and Management to be good, not outstanding
- Reducing the MAT from two schools to one school is out of step with policy of the National School Commissioner.
- Queen Elizabeth High School is not a National Teaching School or National Support School
- Hadrian Learning Trust is not an approved sponsor. It would be useful to know where this age range fits with any longer term strategic plan to expand the MAT. There has been a lack of information regarding future growth of the MAT: vertical, horizontal or geographical expansion.

At Corbridge Middle School we believe that we are an outward facing school who actively seek the opportunity to work strategically with others. We are particularly keen to work together on any aspects of Teaching and Learning and Leadership. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Hadrian Learning Trust and all other schools to work together on a vision for educational provision.

5. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

There is no financial modelling for Model B. Please see *appendix 5* for more information.

Hadrian Learning Trust achieved a surplus of £91,000 in their first annual accounts ending August 2017

Hadrian Learning Trust have shown a swing of +£500,000 in forecast year end balances by end August 2019 in the nine months between consultations.

Hadrian Learning Trust have shown a swing of +£720,000 in forecast end balances by end August 2022 when comparing both consultations.

No modelling has been provided to show the impact of becoming an 11-18 school in expenditure so we are unable to make any further judgement.

Closure of fourteen schools- has the largest impact on school closures of all three options, it is not clear how the annual loss of 9% of the total revenue income to the two partnerships from this potential model will be found in efficiency savings by closing/merging schools.

Size of school rather than phases in school

There are too many variables to state that a primary-secondary system is inherently more efficient to run. It is both the size of the school/s and organisation of schools which attracts efficiencies rather than the phases educated. With 72.9% of the income in schools relating directly to the number of pupils in the school, it is more important to achieve economies from expansion either through federation or multi academy trusts, than considering age range change.

Our geographical area does have different challenges in that only 52% of the residents of the Hexham catchment area live in the town of Hexham and only 29% of residents of Hexham/Haydon Bridge

catchment area live in the town of Hexham. Any education system being designed for our area must take into account the needs of those residents who live not only in Hexham but also in the wider catchment area.

The potential financial gain for Hadrian Learning Trust cannot be viewed in isolation but must incorporate any financial implications for the schools feeding into Hadrian Learning Trust and income into the partnership of schools as a whole. This includes the loss of lump sum funding @ £110,000 per school, sport premium funding of £16,000 per school and the potential loss of up to £25,000 sparsity funding per school if rural schools are merged to form larger schools. NCC have currently put forward a potential model of two tier education for both Hexham and Haydon Bridge partnerships which would see a loss of £1.6 million in budget share per annum for the partnerships of schools in the West. This loss in income equates to 9% of the total budget share (minus rates). We would be interested to see your modelling for this.

Minimum per student funding level

The information supplied in the Hadrian Learning Trust Consultation document is misleading.

We have received the following information from the Funding Policy Unit at the Department for Education: *It is correct that the minimum per pupil funding level is lower for KS3 only schools than it is for secondary schools which teach both KS3 and KS4. The minimum per student level for secondary schools has been set in consideration of the requirements of teaching both KS3 and KS4 students. The policy intention is that the factor provides a minimum level of funding to the school as a whole, depending on the phases of education it provides. The funding is not for the education of the individual students who attract it. This is why the minimum per student funding level for key stage 3 only schools is lower.*

Having said that, we have received feedback from several stakeholders about the size of the differential, and we are reflecting on this for 2019-20.

In 2018-19 and 2019-20 LAs can choose whether or not to implement the minimum per student funding levels and can choose to set them up to the values used in the NFF.

The funding levels published for 19/20 are under review and at present the NCC Schools Forum has used the funding provided to support the higher Key Stage 4 AWPU of £4,580 (cf £4,386 Hard NFF rate). The current 18/19 budget share for Queen Elizabeth High School, Hexham Middle School, Corbridge Middle School and St Joseph Middle School show that all schools are receiving more than the minimum per student funding level so no top up funding is to be received.

The technical guidance note confirms that the minimum per student funding level is in place for 18/19 and 19/20. There is no evidence that this per student funding guarantee will be available after implementation of the hard National Funding Formula. We also now understand that the Policy Funding Unit of the ESFA are reviewing the guaranteed levels for KS3 and 4 for 2019/2020.

If this were an important consideration for Hadrian Learning Trust, they are already in a position to combine Queen Elizabeth High School and Hexham Middle School into one school to attract the higher per student funding level for 40% of the proposed Key Stage 3 students.

6. CAPITAL INVESTMENT HAS BEEN PROMISED FOR EDUCATION IN THE WEST

Parental feedback has confirmed that they would wish for capital investment in the building stock of both Queen Elizabeth High School and Hexham Middle School and ideally a complete new build for Queen Elizabeth High School.

We understand as part of the NCC consultation into education in the west Northumberland, that NCC have set aside £45m for investment in education. It has been made clear that any investment '*relies upon a rationalisation and investment process*'. Whilst all three potential models put forward by NCC include statements regarding a new build of Queen Elizabeth High School/Hexham Middle School whether a two or three tier system is in place, it is not clear how much "rationalisation" ie schools closures would be required in order to release any capital funding. We hope that capital funding is forthcoming to provide Queen Elizabeth High School with a state of the art facility which can be achieved for far less than £50+ million without major disruption to all other schools.

In your opinion, if it is a viable option but there are change to Model B that would improve it, please outline them below

We do not view this option as a viable option for maintaining or improving the educational outcomes and experience of children within the west of Northumberland

PART 4 – YOUR VIEWS ON MODEL C

Having read the consultation document, thoroughly, I believe that Model A represents a good option for securing sustainable and viable education in the west of Northumberland. This model includes the closure or merger of several schools.

- Yes
- No
- **Don't know**

Your reasons for ticking the above

Majority decision by the Governing Body.

We do not feel that enough information has been provided to answer the question. No financial modelling or impact upon local communities has been provided. We do wish to make the following points:

1. Co-location of HMS and QEHS on one site - with a new build, this may resolve the issues of decaying building stock and surplus places at both schools whilst also allowing for both financial efficiencies (to be determined) and educational advantages from a closer proximity of the two schools.
2. Haydon Bridge High School - keeping a secondary school in the Haydon Bridge Partnership supports our view that our stakeholders view that it is important for there to be two “high/secondary” schools in the west of Northumberland to allow for parental choice, management of risk if either QEHS or HBHS failed either financially or educationally for whatever reason and the opportunity for the two schools to work collaboratively together along with Prudhoe High school.
3. Haydon Bridge High School - it is not known whether there is a potential sponsor so whether this option is viable. If it is viable it is felt that the school should have a fresh start with a new build which supports the planned curriculum offer and capacity required within the HBHS proposed model. This should remove the current surplus capacity and place the school on a sound financial footing.
4. Closure of ten schools- whilst offering fewer closures than option A, it is not clear how the annual loss of 7% revenue income to the two partnerships will be found in efficiency savings by the closing/merging of schools.
5. A two system in Haydon Bridge partnership and three tier system for Hexham Partnership could continue the current “leakage” of children from Haydon Bridge to Hexham partnership This could continue to place at risk the small primary schools in the Haydon Bridge partnership.
6. Surplus places - the closure of Haydon Bridge High School, Haltwhistle and Bellingham Middle schools would remove a large percentage of the total number of the current 50% surplus places from the Haydon Bridge partnership, however the proposed closures would still leave 30% surplus places in the Haydon Bridge Partnership and no spare capacity (-14 places) in first schools in the Hexham Partnership (Appendix 6 Education in the West and Surplus School Places).
7. Travel time for pupils in the rural parts of Haydon Bridge catchment area would increase significantly for children aged 11.

PART 5 – YOUR ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS

If you have any alternative suggestions or would like to combine elements of models A, B or C, please set out your views below

One of the complications of this consultation is that it is trying to address Hadrian Learning Trust's wish to change their age range to 11-18, the lack of sponsor and threatened closure of Haydon Bridge High school, a surplus places issue and financial concerns in some schools whilst final details of the national funding formula and future housing projections are unclear.

What has been missing in this consultation is the opportunity for groups of schools to work together, with the data required, to come up with solutions to the current challenges being faced by some individual schools. We have tried to gather views from across the Hexham Partnership regarding individuals views on:

1. What do you like about the education currently offered to your children?
2. What could be better? What would you like a new improved education to look like?
3. What, succinctly, is your dream?

We concentrated on trying to come up with a Collaborative Model (Appendix 3) where 6 individual hubs could be given the time and data to come up with an age 3-13 educational pathway, leading into a new age 13-18 high school.

Feedback from parents and colleagues widely shared the view that although they liked the idea, there needed to be a second choice of school post 13. We have adapted the model to come up with version 2; the Collaborative Pathways model (Appendix 4). We have deliberately not said whether schools are First, primary, or 'all-through' - this would be for the school leaders in the different 'hubs' to discuss. There are different needs and therefore potential solutions for the Hexham Partnership and the Haydon Bridge Partnership. The groupings of the schools is not set in stone and we already know that some schools would like to "collaborate" in different hubs from those set out.

In the Hexham Partnership where educational outcomes are already good we feel we should be able to take stock rather than rush into a solution at this stage. We are not talking about an extensive period of time to carry out this work but more time than has currently be allowed given the pressure of following a "formal" consultation process. We would welcome the support of NCC or other independent experts in carrying out this work.

We would like to see more formal collaboration between schools, both across phases and within phase. All-through collaborations, with strong leadership, from 3-18 could be fantastic.

What do you like about the education currently offered to your children? - 186 Responses

"If I was a kid again, I would have loved to have gone to the schools that my kids attend. Great teaching, led by inspirational and motivated head teachers, and a caring attitude where extra learning or emotional support is needed. Brilliant facilities at CMS across a broad range of subjects that I would have only expected at high school. The effort put into extracurricular activities. And all of this without having to travel large distances, notwithstanding that it is a rural county. "

"I like that the three tier age groupings, children being that bit older when they go to high school. I like that children in rural areas can receive an education, at least in their early lives, close to home in their community."

"Opportunity's"

"The 3 tier system works in Northumberland as it is a sparsely populated area. Good choice of schools. Children being able to go to school within their community is so important. "

"It is a system that works well in a rural environment and which nurtures children, allowing them to grow and mature naturally in a society where all too often we cry out that our kids are growing up too fast. I truly believe that the three tier system works!"

"Schools are the hubs of their communities. There's a great sense of friendship and community in schools, far more than I've encountered in other areas. Children can walk to schools safely, are taught in classes and schools which offer reasonable pupil numbers, dedicated and professional staff and have their individual needs noticed and cared for. I have worked in the three tier system in North Tyneside, and fought to keep it, around 15 years ago; it's a system that nurtures children within manageable-sized environments and allows them to mature and develop at a slower rate, rather than pushing them to grow up too quickly in a larger and more pressured environment. Staff are able to form close and positive relationships with students in smaller schools, and discipline issues can be dealt with on a case by case basis, with the challenges and circumstances of each child recognised and taken into account in finding positive ways forward. The system being proposed purports that 'bigger is better' - this is frequently not the case, and certainly not in an area as wide and diverse as West Northumberland."

"It is three tier"

"3 tiers system offers education tailored to children's emerging needs at right pace"

"The transition from First to Middle school was seamless and actually provoked excitement in both of our children. They have been allowed to develop at their own rate in a caring, nurturing environment which a smaller school can provide in a better way. We love the fact that Middle school offers specialist subjects in specialist rooms from the age of 9, moving around school from lesson to lesson which you would not get in a Primary school set up. This is so helpful when moving up to the High School. "

"The 3 tier system and the excellent education my children received in middle and first school."

"The choice. It is not a one size fits all system. And yet what school you choose for your child be it a larger town school or a small rural school the standards are extremely high."

"I like the ability to respond to the children that we have in front of us in our schools. I like the personal approach, knowing the parents and children very well. I like the amazing professional skills of all the staff within our schools and their desire to make a difference."

"Education & Nurturing is paramount & shows in the schools results & of course children. "

"The standards of education in our West Northumberland schools are amazing, providing safe and happy children who can learn confidently with support from wonderful dedicated teachers"

"I love the small passionate schools, where there's a real feeling of community and inclusion, this is reflected by the well balanced children coming out of these schools."

"The choice, care and educational opportunities above and beyond the standard curriculum. The children are valued as individuals and challenged to be the best they can be in our first school with an outstanding middle school to progress to and continue their journey. They are motivated and encouraged to be inspirational and meet their optimum standards in a nurturing environment when all children learn to be proud of their personal achievements."

"Quality teaching at each stage"

"It provides a choice of good & outstanding schools often out of catchment "

"Grouped together in sensible age range."

"It's local, of a good standard and a three tier system, with strong links to the Church and local community."

"I believe the 3 tier system currently run in Northumberland works extremely well. Children are schooled in smaller groups offering exceptional teaching and the ability to nurture children in the areas they need support. The results are clear from the high standards that come from QEHS. The first and middle schools have a great deal to do with these achievements."

"3 tier system works well good to have a middle school"

"The three tier system works best because it offers so much more to kids in all aspects"

"The 3 tier structure provides more care and assurance for pupils and parents. It enables structured and appropriate learning, and allows for pastoral care to help build confidence and awareness ahead of what is the most daunting move in education - the one to high school and impending GCSE's."

"The three tier system"

"I think my children are very happy at Corbridge first school. I believe their education is excellent and the teachers / school really care about each child."

"Small local schools, intimate and know the children well"

"The middle school and village schools forming the heart of their rural communities. They know their pupils well and nurture them."

"My child's education has noticeably advanced through the outstanding teaching and care provided at Corbridge Middle school. Three tier is absolutely essential in rural communities and offers the very best option for excellent education."

"I love the system we have now, it works well ,gets great results ,why change something when there in no need.My Child loves Corbridge , he was unlucky not to get a place in the same School as his sibling, but he was made very welcome at Corbridge by staff and pupils he has made some great friends ,which I think is down to great Teaching staff ,if it a big 11 to 18 School they Staff would not be able to get to know the Children the same ,which I think would not benefit the Children in any way."

"At first and middle school levels I like the range of options available to families with schools of different sizes and faith schools for those to whom this is important. I like the three-tier system (which is different to what I experienced) because my children have been able to go to a first school in a fantastic rural location in an environment where teachers know them well and nurture them as a whole person, not just focusing on academic results, and will be able to build on this great beginning with four years at a middle school that supports them in developing their independence without them getting lost in a huge school including much older children / young people. And we have a high school that is performing well academically that is not a huge school and for which, by the time they move to it, the children are well prepared."

"Yes"

"Varied well structured and caters to most children's needs"

"The children are nurtured and receive a very good education"

"The broad range of education at middle school. The high standards at the high School"

"Choice - certain schools suit the needs of different children and enable them to thrive (whether it be a smaller school or larger one). Choosing a school which best suits your child is so important - well being and happiness are a huge contributing factor to educational attainment so they can't be separated. There is a choice of first and middle schools in the area and this is a strength of the current system in place.

I think a 3 tier, middle school system is an asset. In my opinion it lets children grow up at an appropriate pace. Whilst a 2 tier model might work in other locations, it is not suitable in Northumberland with a large rural community. The middle schools are all doing very well, with children making good progress so why try and break something when it doesn't need fixing!

The smaller first schools are also a positive of the current system. They enable more rural children to go to a school near them and make friendships within their location (social well being is also an important part of growing up). The schools often provide facilities for the entire communities so taking this away not only affects the children at that school but the wider community."

"You get a chance to know what lessons you enjoy that may be available for GSCE."

"Brilliant"

"I like that we get food tech, practical DT and art lessons that you wouldn't get in a primary school. I like that we have lots of music and that you get to choose an instrument."

"I love the fact that when my children were little I could walk them to a wonderful school, and we got to know lots of people in our local community doing this. Then a natural progression to middle school for new challenges and opportunities."

"The 3 tier system provides the pastoral care and teaching that every child needs to achieve their potential. It provides specialist teachers but also space and time to nurture the pupils."

"Great choice of schools and pastoral care for all ages and abilities"

"Community-based"

"local schools, with the gradual increase in size, facilitates and specialist teachers (and distance to travel) from first school, through middle school to high school. Also the choice of schools nearby with different strengths so that children and schools can be matched."

"As a parent of children at the Sele First School i cannot fault the quality of teaching and staff. If my kids were to stay there an additional two years (as a primary school) i would be very happy, rather than shipping them off to Middle School at the age of nine"

"It works! The pastoral care for the children (the important part) is second to none in all the first and middle schools. Children are nurtured in smaller settings before they embark upon their GCSE years. I believe this promotes stability and confidence in children. We have seen the results of this as this system has produced excellent academic results in the long run and our children are happy"

"the broad range of education at middle school. The high standards at the high School"

"Nothing"

"Diversity of choice - not 'one size fits all'"

"Choice + 3-tier system - middle schools are a perfect stepping stone for children going through puberty, particularly girls, without the added worries of high school"

"Well established, well run schools supported by local communities."

"3 tier system. My son was terrified of the prospect of high school at age 11. So was I - sixth formers and 11 year olds mixing?! At 13 he's handled the move up much better than he would have at 11"

"It is really good Especially with my son having learning difficulties"

"That it suits the needs of children at whatever age they are at"

"Catholic education on our doorstep. A middle school where children can stay until High School age. My daughter couldn't have coped with travelling to a much much bigger school at 11. I would like the same choices for my son who is currently still at first school."

"Caters for small rural communities and offers excellent educations for children"

"That it suits the needs of children at whatever age they are at"

"Supportive teachers of high quality"

"Locality and class/school size"

"Quality education, accessible, choice."

"The three tier system, quality of education, results from these schools, serving the local community, provision for all students of all abilities"

"The 3 tier system. Small schools where the staff know the pupils well. This helps both their academic progress and their emotional well-being - crucial in today's world."

"That the level of academic attainment is excellent and that the current system caters for the unique environment i.e. rural area, widespread communities, wide catchment areas, by providing small local first schools that naturally progress to moderate sized middle schools and then a larger high school. This is a fantastic system for the children of rural Northumberland."

"A strong, 3 tier system that nurtures children at each stage of their educational development by providing supportive, skilled starts at first schools, transitioning in to more specialised yet supportive based teaching in middle schools through the transitional years and in to an excellent, high school which up until now has provided excellent GCSE courses followed by extensive choice at 6th form level. I have taught in both 2 tier and 3 tier and firmly believe in the 3 tier system in this rural county."

"I think it is excellent and of a very high standard academically."

"I like that the children in small rural schools get the opportunity to mix with more children in year 5. I like how middle school mentally prepares the children for high school. The opportunities to a wider range of subjects at the school. I also like the teaching and heads at st mary's And st Joseph's. They are very approachable and provide a very good service."

"Having brought my children from a primary school into a middle school, I have seen how much better the three tier system is. My children had a lot of catching up to do as they had not really been taught science, languages etc...on a regular basis. They have made so much progress in a middle school and are much better prepared to move on to the next stage of their education."

"I like that children can be nurtured in their own local community in a first school that is small - like a home away from home. I like that the children can start to broaden their horizons in a Middle School that can offer them a wider range of opportunities and more specialist teaching. It gives children the safety net of trying new things and developing their personality without getting lost in a crowd. Then, when all the children are ready, they can move to high school knowing who they are. As part of a large school they can feel confident in their abilities."

Teachers in all 3 schools are passionate about their school and the opportunities that children get within them. I feel in the three tier system Year 7 and 8 are given the time to enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum. Whereas if they were part of the two tier system they would just become part of the rolling stone that is the GCSE curriculum. Three tier lets children find a love of learning."

"That the children do not attend huge schools, the teachers knowing the children is key to the success of their learning. From experience, I think our current high school fails children on this. If even bigger then there's no chance. Middle schools offer the perfect set-up - small enough for the children to get the care and nurturing resulting in a well balanced education and creating well rounded, resilient children."

"The 3 tier system. I moved away from people I loved, a fantastic house and wonderful community to have my children be educated in a 3-tier system. It was worth every sacrifice. It works because the schools are smaller, much better for the mental well-being of the kids. They are taught by specialist teachers, they are known and there is no 'one size fits all' approach to their education in first or middle schools (sadly cannot say the same for QE!)"

"The middle school system - the 3-tier system. My children have benefited hugely from being in smaller schools and being taught by teachers who knew them well. This allowed them to be well-rounded, resilient individuals on their move up to QE."

"The 3 tier system. This has given our children amazing places to learn, and they have flourished with specialist teaching from Year 5, and the first and middle school environments. Coming from a very rural

home - of which there is nothing else to compare it to in England - this has been a vital part of their education, and has provided a nurturing environment for them. We feel incredibly lucky to have been part of this system, and to have had our children attend Whittonstall First and Corbridge Middle Schools, we really couldn't have asked for better teaching and leadership, or for a better place for our children to go to school."

"I love the way my children have been supported and nurtured in the 3 tier system"

"The three tier system really works in this community. I have had three daughters through Corbridge Middle School. Their time there was filled with happiness, staff knew them as individuals and enriched their skills in areas they doubted themselves. Children who are very lucky to attend the three tier system can be nurtured, guided and encouraged to be themselves. Pastoral needs are fully met and, most importantly, in the light of current society, mental health and well being needs are addressed quickly and very effectively. Why change a system that is flawless, with fantastic staff teams who strive to achieve the best in every child. CMS is almost at full capacity - this says it all - an achieving, well attended school with incredibly dedicated staff and the most amazingly supportive parents who will do everything they can to get the 'powers that be' to look at what works and gets good results."

"I like the three tier system having been in a two tier system previously. Takes the focus away from exams at the end of each of the two tiers. Instead it's about learning and personal development. They can be children for longer."

"Love the three tier system! It has the potential to be fantastic but it just needs 'tweaking'. Hexham middle lost its drive when David Watson left and it was left without a headteacher - head of school hasn't worked. My children loved their time there but the cracks were becoming clear. Needs someone with a good understanding of that age range who has a clear educational vision to drive it forward. It has some great staff, great kids and could be great again. Invest money in building and its own headteacher.

"How transition between schools is staged. For example, a gradual one at 9 yrs before a bigger one at 13 yrs, therefore ensuring that pupils are well prepared emotionally."

"Specialist teachers from Year 5 onwards. Small schools where staff know my children and know how to educate them to achieve their best."

"It is suited to rural communities.

It allows children to remain children for an extra two years.

It provides a nurturing and caring environment for our children.

The High Schools, although large, are not so large as to be detrimental to the education of our children.

The children are individuals and adults in school know and understand them well.

Our children have specialist teachers for an extra two years.

The schools are within local communities and are well supported by those communities."

"I like the fact that children can attend a local middle school. They can be educated in a nurturing environment with specialist teachers at what can be a difficult time in a child's life. The jump from a small primary school to a large high school is massive and, in my view, unacceptable. Our children should be able to celebrate the fact that they live in a rural area and not be penalised for it."

"The students and parents feel supported. All staff are devoted to providing the best teaching and learning. Why change something that isn't broken?"

"We love the personal touch the three tier system offers. My children have embraced the opportunities given to them (which we believe they would not have had in a two tier system) and have grown into self motivated, hard working and empathetic young people."

"Having experienced both teaching in the two tier system and teaching in the three tier system I can see that the only advantage of two tier schools is that they align with the 'normal' - meaning the UK national curriculum and school funding is designed for them. This is where the advantages are. The three tier system in Northumberland has a huge number of benefits.

1. Most rural populations have a very local small first school giving young pupils the very best start in education.
2. There is a broad and balanced curriculum in Y5 and Y6 often lead by specialist teachers. There is no 'teaching to the test' for KS2 SATS with pupils taken off timetable.
3. The relatively small numbers of Y7 and Y8 pupils have access to a huge range of extracurricular activities and can be taken off timetable without huge disruption to the rest of the school. In secondary schools with intake cohorts of 300-350 students this simply does not happen. Put simply, education is less fun for KS3 students when their teachers are focusing on KS4 and KS5.
4. Middle schools build the confidence of young people during some of their most formative years. In comparison to students from primary and secondary schools our nurturing environment boosts self-awareness and emotional security - they outshine their rivals in cross school competitions!
5. By only starting High School in Y9 students are not in 'exam factory' conditions for their GCSEs until they are ready.

So, we all know that Northumberland is the most sparsely populated region in the UK. We are not normal. The standard UK education system does not fit. Let us celebrate our differences and provide a tailor-made solution to give our students the best possible start in life."

"I like the 3 tier system that is offered in Northumberland. The fact that young children can attend a small first school up until year 4 and then go to a middle school where they experience specialist teachers and the independence of having different teachers. Their transition is so much easier and it makes them more set up for going up to high school. I believe in this system more than the 2 tier system and that is why I chose to send my children out of their immediate catchment area."

"I think the education offered to pupils at Corbridge middle is excellent ! Staff are passionate about teaching and providing many different opportunities. The safe and happy environment provided by this school would be so sadly missed if it were to go."

"It is local to our home, children can walk there, no buses that are cancelled in bad weather. This contributes to a shorter school day, especially for very young children. It is an Ofsted outstanding school, the school staff are excellent - teaching and support. It provides good community links across the whole community and a building that can be used for events apart from school events. It is an excellent building, fit for purpose and well maintained. My child is very happy there."

"Good teaching and great pastoral care."

"I love the family, community, feel of our first schools. The way they know children intimately and can nurture them to achieve their potential whatever their learning style!

I love that those same schools bring families and communities together playing a huge part in continuing the culture of rural Northumberland!

I love The Middle schools Which provide an important stepping stone, supporting our children at their most vulnerable time of adolescence - both academically and socially/emotionally!

I love that our children are not just a number...and that we value individual talents!"

"Tailored, nurtured, high quality"

"Outstanding teaching"

"middle school builds confidence and independence skills fitting with child's development"

"It's fantastic! Smaller schools and the middle schools offer a genuinely different model that works for our kids brilliantly and there's a real sense of being, as the old advertising line goes, 'big enough to cope, small enough to care'. No child feels like a number and teachers work so well across the partnerships to provide an inspiring education experience that is not about processing numbers but about giving children the opportunities to explore their world and discover their potential with real confidence."

"We already have good and outstanding schools in the area where children can thrive. What I love about the three tier system is that the schools are smaller and thus more nurturing. My children get to stay at a smaller first and middle school where it is possible for all the staff to know your child and what they need to succeed in their education. I love that they are older and thus more emotionally mature before they join a huge High School. At Corbridge Middle my child has been able to make his first steps into being independent in a safe environment, by walking to school with his friends."

"High expectations"

"It is varied and exciting with specialist teachers!"

"That we are fortunate enough to have Middle schools."

"The partnership work closely together which gives a real community feel through the schools. It also makes me feel my children will move through schools easily and get a great experience."

"I like the fact that my children can grow up more slowly with a more local school and benefit from a more nurturing school environment especially at an age where they need it"

"Child-friendly Middle schools"

"The 3 tier system provides many benefits to both children and community. For example, year 5 pupils and above get specialist teachers. Pastoral care is appropriate at each stage for a pupil's development. Pupils in the rural communities don't have to travel to far to their first schools."

"I like the way my child has been able to progress through different schools at an age they can cope with especially the number of children they went to school with."

"My children are currently in years 5 and 8 and so are both now at Middle School. We had never met the three-tier system until we moved to this area and are passionate converts. Key benefits for us:

1. A small, intimate, immensely nurturing and caring First School deeply woven into its community which produced hugely impressive cohorts of children: small enough that everyone in the school knew everyone else, and that any problems were quickly spotted and dealt with.
2. The benefits of specialist teaching and a focus on the distinctive pre-teen years at Middle School. Our younger son especially has come on by leaps and bounds this year, relishing the challenges and possibilities the new school offers and being able to engage in specialist subject teaching in year 5. The age groups work MUCH better than in two-tier systems - having 9 and 13-year-olds together is fine, 11 and 18-year-olds not so much. - This is before we get to the specific benefits offered by CMS's outstanding teachers."

"Small community schools for all pupils."

"I love the culture, the small, village school, the excellent teaching staff and the feeling that my children's first school is at the heart of our community. I know that when they go to CMS it won't be as big a transition for them as primary to secondary. The first schools are a wonderful, nurturing and inspiring start to education, which works so well in our rural communities. I also really love the outdoor facilities on offer by schools across West Northumberland - with fantastic playing fields and plenty of sports and other activities on offer. This is as vital for exercising young minds as text books, computers and school rooms

The nurturing environment of the first and middle schools. The breadth of opportunities that they offer that enrich the development of the children. The fact that these schools are rooted in their communities and can both contribute to and gain from them."

"It is very good"

"Tiered to help children cope better with education within a specific age group"

"Both schools were within walking distance, easily accessible"

"We live in County Durham, our son is in year 5 CMS. He is achieving far greater than he did at his previous primary school both in school and in extra curricular activities."

"They are happy. They are thriving. They have opportunities to develop at their own pace in areas that interest them."

"We believe that by starting at a wonderful small First School in Whittonstall and then moving on to a brilliant Middle School in Corbridge, our children have had an educational journey of the highest quality. They have been known and nurtured by dedicated, talented teachers. Within this system they have made great progress as pupils and, equally importantly, as people. It is heartbreaking to think that a system that works so well is now under threat. I find it appalling that the local authority is prepared to put at risk the future of so many children and the rural communities in which they live, in order to achieve some short term financial gains and the veneer of rationalisation."

"I prefer the three tier system, having taken my youngest 2 children out of 2 tier in County Durham. I feel that middle school prepares our children not just academically but emotionally for the next step to high school. At 11 our children have so much to deal with, in middle school I feel that they can develop at their own pace in a smaller more nurturing environment. If it's not broken why try and fix it it has served children for many years."

"The 3 tiered system supports emotional and educational development brilliantly"

"Excellent"

"I think many of our children are rather innocent and they are not exactly worldly-wise. We like that our Year 6 daughter is still very much a child and not striving to grow up too fast. She will be an adult for a very long time and we are delighted that, as a middle school, CMS supports her to develop at her own pace. She is far from ready to deal with much older children in QEHS and all that they bring to school in terms of their 'older' behaviour. At CMS she is cosseted while she works out which way she wants her moral compass to point."

"The middle school system and specifically Corbridge middle school, is undeniably more effective in providing my daughter with nurture, care and education enrichment that captures her at the most important age of her development and maturity. Specialist teaching, smaller cohorts than would be found in a high school, where she would be just another pupil and extra curricular activities suitable to her needs."

"My children are confident, eager to learn, surrounded with great support and flourishing year on year. They run home to tell me the experiences they've had during their day, willingly join extra curricular activities without me having to suggest it and know where they're at with their learning. It's no big secret to them, they know where they are and they know what they want (not need) to do to achieve their goals. The teachers are happy, you can't say that of all schools, they're driven to succeed and they're helping us as parents, create a generation that will be a credit to this county in the future. I feel very passionate towards the three tiered system. My youngest son has a personality where he naturally tries to copy, show off to older children, thankfully his peers at Corbridge are the children I want him to look up to. If he had gone to a secondary school aged 11, I feel it would have been detrimental to his well being and self belief and he would have been lost in the system.

Please don't close our schools, we have one of the best education systems in this country and i'm proud to say my children attend Corbridge Middle School, as are they. "

"I worry if my son (currently in year 3) stayed at his current school for too much longer, and then had to move to a big Secondary school, he would be overwhelmed."

"Specialist teachers who passionately care about their subject and a great knowledge. The care and nurturing of pupils is so important. As a teacher, most dinnertines, I am there for them. They are listened to and given time and space to expand their learning even further."

"As a teacher I can look after their mental health and well-being during the vulnerable years of development which happens around year 6,7 and 8"

"I love that the three tier system is able to nurture children according to their developmental stages: academically, socially and emotionally! In the world of significant challenge to childhood and adolescent mental health, it is imperative that our children and their families are truly KNOWN and understood by the staff responsible for their personal development!"

"3 tier system is a smaller more nurturing environment for my child. A smaller specialist environment for year 5 to 8 increases my child's feelings of safety and being known in her school as an individual. Confidence and self esteem are increased in a smaller school. Specialist subject classrooms and specialist subject teachers develop my child's skills more than primary school was able to do in year 5 and 6 with one classroom and teacher. My child copes better with very aspect of school life because of being in a smaller school for middle school years"

"I love how varied my child's education is, for example; she studies languages from the age of 9 by a specialist language teacher. She studies food tech. by a specialist teacher. This will never happen in a 2 tier system."

"Getting the school bus with other students from the same village builds up confidence in mixing with students the children might not interact with otherwise. I get the impression it builds up a feeling of "community" too."

The variety of curriculum, the enthusiastic and supportive teaching staff, the pupil age range and school and class size.

"When my children were 13, they were ready for a different, more grown up relationship with their teachers. This wouldn't have been the case when they were 11."

"Exams are not the driving focus. Primary it's SATs and secondary it's GCSEs that drive curriculum. In three tier there is a time to broaden your learning, learn to be yourselves, enjoy learning without stress of exams. I worry about in a 2 tier system they start narrowing their options in year 8 and the focus and pressure is on exams. Not what education should be about."

"Specialised subject teachers that challenges my child's abilities and engages her in her learning. She is not just a number, she is part of the school and is known by all of the teachers. The teachers passion and dedication to the school and the children's learning experiences. My daughter thrives in Corbridge Middle school."

"I went to a 3 tier system, it worked for me & I remain of the opinion it still works now. Many children come in from a rural community, often lack confidence & the Middle School approach allows children the encouragement they need to to gain more confidence. I have seen such a difference in my Y5 son since joining CMS."

"It is a more localised system at the age more suited for the children who may not fit into a much larger system because they have not yet matured"

"smaller school size develops independence in the children. both our kids have grown as a consequence of being part of a school that has a developed sense of community that larger establishments might not have"

"We started our son on the three tier system precisely BECAUSE we didn't want him to go to a huge education factory."

"Small schools mean my children are known well and this has been very important for many reasons. I am a firm believer in the 3 tier system, I think transitions are made much easier within this model."

"It's variety, depth, breadth and quality of teaching available and the extra activities that are on offer at school."

"3 tier offers children a broad and balanced curriculum so they can experience more subjects before they face the choices of GCSE education which is not for all."

"As much as it is a huge positive for teachers to be able to get to know all of their pupils in a much more personal way in a smaller school environment, it is as important that my son feels that he 'knows' his teachers and feels confident in being able to approach them not only for educational purposes but for personal and emotional reasons too."

"I loved walking my children to school when they were little. We jumped in puddles, kicked leaves and talked a lot. My children then loved feeling grown up and going on the bus on their own, moving classrooms to be taught by different teachers and playing team sport with lots of other children. Then, they loved making new friendships secure in the knowledge that they already had a few really good friends."

"The teachers have a "specialist" subject, enabling the best teaching in each subject to be provided."

"School and class size allows teachers to know my child as an individual, offering tailored teaching and pastoral support best suited to the needs of my child."

"The teachers know and understand my children not just their names and class. My children are encouraged and supported not only academically but as individuals, to be confident in themselves and their abilities."

"Less mainstream subjects are supported, with an emphasis on the individual development of the students. good support network for parental involvement"

"Children are allowed to grow at their own rate and develop maturity and kind who they are before moving on to high school."

"The small rural first schools that allow children to make friendships and not feel daunted by the amount of children there are. These friendships then last as they progress through middle school and onwards. The range of subjects and teachers and opportunities available to them in a sensibly sized middle school."

"My daughter is aware of SATS but not worried by them. She's almost looking to the chance to show what she has learnt!"

"Excellent standard , nurtured , local. Found the middle school a brilliant move from the first school"

"it is a more tailored and specialist way of education. The school offers a varied education to younger children enhancing their learning."

"Every child is known by all teachers in a middle school."

"My daughter has thrived since she joined CMS two years ago and has experienced "real" Science, Art and French lessons. She seems to know all her year group and a lot of children in other years. She is being pushed to get the most from her current abilities and offered chance to develop new skills."

"Varied structure and the chance for the children to try new things. The passion of the teachers, teaching the children."

"The school allows the children to become more independent through moving around school and taking ownership of their learning."

"I really like the variety of lessons. Proper sciences in a proper lab. Computer in ICT suite. Proper sports - rugby-football - tennis - athletics. Art and design technology with proper equipment- kilns, bench drills etc. Not just 1 teacher in 1 classroom like in a primary."

"I really like the variety of lessons. Proper sciences in a proper lab. Computer in ICT suite. Proper sports - rugby-football - tennis - athletics. Art and design technology with proper equipment- kilns, bench drills etc. Not just 1 teacher in 1 classroom like in a primary."

"Pupils have the opportunity to have specialist teachers rather than one teacher all day every day."

"Broad curriculum taught by specialist teachers"

"The style of education subtly changes as they grow and develop. Family values, nurturing and developing through first school, broad and exciting "sky is the limit" at middle school. Some excellent teachers all way through the system."

"Specialist teaching staff from year 5 onwards."

"Children are receiving specialist subject teaching from age 9."

"My children are known by every teacher treated as individuals"

"intimate friendly environment. kids treated as individuals."

"getting to know the children is vitally important. In a year group of hundreds this is not possible. You need to find out about them, to connect with them and see them as the individuals they are."

"Despite being in KS3, his lessons are not driven by the endless, monotonous treadmill of tests! Having had another child go through the 2 tier system, her KS3 years were spent improving test results with very very little enjoyment! Our son is learning and enjoying his KS3 years!"

"I love the fact that at present he will be 13 before he is part of a large school - thus being more mature and more emotionally resilient to cope with the transition."

"The enrichment opportunities- my child has an abundance of opportunities for visits, residential visits, visiting speakers, authors....it's endless!"

"The level of challenge and the detailed feedback from staff who know her really well."

"It is varied, broad and exciting! It enthuses him!"

"It's personal! My child's school knows them well because of how he is nurtured. We have chosen to live in the Tyne Valley because it meant smaller schools; we don't want our son to be part of a huge super-sized school with over 2000 on role. Currently our child has specialised teaching which he wouldn't receive in a primary setting. He is inspired; he is nurtured; he IS learning AND more importantly he's loving it!"

"I like the specialist teachers that can target the pupils to enable them to perform at a higher level."

"It challenges their abilities across a wide range of subjects, steering them towards thinking for themselves; encouraging them to challenge and question as appropriate."

"Small and intimate school, friendly and personal. Good values"

"Receiving a good Allround education meeting their needs"

"Three tier system seems to push able children and is less daunting to the less confident children."

"Personalised, not in a mega-school, 3-tier means more time to develop both socially and academically, high quality, responsive to needs of both children and parents."

What could be better? What would you like a new improved education to look like? - 156 responses

"For those that hold the purse strings to realise that investment in education is not wasted. Many of the children in this area will leave education to well paid jobs, and some will be 40% tax payers. Their future is

a good investment. In practical terms, decent buildings for QEHS. Breadth and depth of opportunities at high school level (and beyond) so that both the academically able and the more practically minded are encouraged to find a niche that's right for them. The world needs thinkers and doers! "

"Investment in school buildings, investment in teachers (that is a national issue I suppose). I'm sorry but I don't have any earth-shattering proposals. I would just like all families to have access to good schools where children are happy and reach their full potential."

"Teachers teaching and making sure teachers are spending one to one time with students especially those in foundation subjects "

"Smaller class sizes in some of the larger schools. More teaching staff/ classroom assistants. Funding into improving buildings especially qehs."

"I accept that better buildings would be a massive bonus, but let's not forget that it is the teaching that is important."

"Some of the schools within the group require investment to renovate buildings, improve resources and facilities and reward staff with pay increases which have been stalled for some time."

"If middle school was better"

"funds to make Hexham High school building sound enough to continue to provide education for the next generation in their high school years"

"We are all for QE striving to improve conditions/standards for all pupils but not at the expense of closing some of their feeder schools. Why not amalgamate QE and HMS onto one site? This makes sense. They share a Head teacher who is responsible for the budget and standards in both schools. The other Middle schools should be sharing resources and best practices if they are not doing so already, perhaps even teachers!"

"That QE takes a lead from middle schools. At parents evenings I wonder if many of the teachers even know who they're talking about. First and Middle schools knew my kids which resulted in happier, better educated and resilient children. Also lose the whole 'executive ' part of school leadership- unnecessary and costly."

"The high schools. They need investment in bricks and mortar. The teachers are excellent, the system works but the buildings are crumbling around them."

"I would like to see a much wider offer for students at pre and post 16."

"For Beaufront School nothing - If it's not broken don't fix it."

"That our rural schools to be saved (or helped to stay open!) where needed and the schools that are in financial deficit (namely the high schools!!) to have money to provide older students with new school builds and better facilities."

"I would like the new offer not to be based solely on money."

"Facilities and buildings. Wider choices should be offered to enable all of our learners access to education in the partnership when moving to the High School."

"Children treated as individuals not numbers, tailored education to their needs, nurturing environment with small steps to independence as they mature, great teachers recognised and rewarded"

"Existing first schools to remain "

"I'm happy with the current set up but would like a greater teacher pupil ratio."

"As similar as possible to is what is offered currently, a local, good standard, three tier system which the church and community are closely involved with."

"I would definitely be in full support of remaining with the 3 tier system. However it is understandable that changes need to be made with regards to HBHS and a great deal of investment made to improve the building and facilities of QEHS. I propose that funding is invested either in improving the current QEHS building and facilities or building a new school. This accommodating a merge with QEHS and HBHS for pupils 13-18 years. The first and middle schools remains as they are. Once the new improved High School is up and running (attracting new families to the area) this should in turn help all the schools in the area. If a new school were to be built could the old building be sold to raise funds to spread between the schools to improve their facilities individually?"

"Upgrade QEHS buildings, cleaner schools."

"Upgrading of school buildings"

"Joined up thinking and planning across a range of associated requirements, which may drive efficiency and cost-effective delivery across the region. All schools should have their own identity and culture, but with a common theme across the region, that puts children first, and NOT budget management. I appreciate the Western region needs to invest in facilities, and assistance should be sought from central government to work with NCC and other stakeholders to achieve this, but this need not necessarily impact a three tier system which is delivering real results in academic achievement. "

"Equal accessibility to good education in rural communities"

"I wish class sizes were slightly smaller or teachers had less paperwork and assessment of children so they can just teach. "

"Improved facilities at high school"

"A system that isn't driven purely by league tables and results. Currently pupils are forced down one route as soon as they reach High School. We need to acknowledge that children develop at very different stages and should therefore be allowed to keep their options open and pursue subjects that motivate them.

The current average point system at QEHS, in determining pupils' A level choices at High School IS UNACCEPTABLE. We had to battle for our child to be allowed to pursue his A level preferences, being told that he was destined to fail as proven by statistics! He actually achieved well beyond their expectations!

The Head Teacher needs to have a higher profile at each individual school. The school ethos is lost with a Head Teacher managing more than one establishment.

Pupils who are border line are not currently given the benefit of the doubt with subject choices. They are not currently encouraged to follow their dreams and, consequently can become very demotivated."

"Investment in school buildings and infrastructure, ending failed outsourcing initiatives and putting education not cost cutting first."

"To upgrade the buildings of QE which is needed, but not at the expense of closing our middle Schools."

"I would like to see a choice at high school level with a high quality alternative for those children who want to pursue a more vocational route through education."

"I think the high school needs vast capital investment into the actual buildings"

"More funding for schools so that all children have access to the support they need."

"One that keeps the children at the forefront and continues to give them all the opportunities for them to develop their education as individuals ."

"Upgrade of buildings at High School"

"I do acknowledge the buildings (especially QEHS) need renovating and more money is required. The education itself is great - the buildings (of many schools, not just QEHS) need improvement but changing the education system to get better buildings is not the answer. I would like to see more money being used to improve the buildings but leaving the education system as it is. It is not broken - the first and middle schools are a huge asset."

"Nothing, no change is needed"

"I would like to do a school play every year."

"I think that the school buildings need investment, especially at QEHS. However, this must not be at the expense of all the other wonderful schools in the area."

"Small schools available across the county"

"More sports facilities 3G pitch for all weather conditions "

"More investment needed in buildings- apart from, obviously the need for more money in the system overall."

"two tier system with increased/better funding and new facilities"

"Better funding for equipment and buildings."

"I would like there to be more opportunity for all children post GCSE. All students who are capable being able to do A levels at their own school as well as options to take less academic courses. The physical buildings of the high school need to be improved but apart from that I'm pretty happy with the way it is."

"Upgrade of buildings at High School"

"To keep things the way they are"

"More money from the DofE for both QE and HB High School buildings"

"More subject options for GCSE, more security for staff and pupils, repairs to the beautiful existing buildings such as Hexham Middle School's Fellside Hall, rather than selling it off. Fewer executive members of staff eating into school funds, a more welcoming environment at school so parents feel more inclined to

volunteer. Schools to make more use of the buildings to give income streams as community venues (all weather football pitch at QEHS could be rented out to local clubs)"

"Increased funding of infrastructure"

"More funds to keep the sites where they are but build new Hexham high school behind the old one like Prudhoe have achieved

To help children instead of it all been about numbers in system and to learn them about things they are going to use in Everyday life"

"There are quite a few schools that need money for building improvements, school budgets are very tight
I wouldn't change anything other than to upgrade our current high school"

"More central government understanding of the needs and priorities of sparsely populated counties like Northumberland. An improved education would be one that has the needs of children, parents and community at its heart, not money and cost saving."

"There are quite a few schools that need money for building improvements, school budgets are very tight"

"To carry on as it is"

"Buildings need investment"

"More funding for maintenance of buildings "

"Investment in building infrastructure for the existing schools"

"I don't think there is sufficient choice available in this area for post-16 education. A High School that could offer more than just a limited number of A-level courses would be good."

"Hexham High School needs investment in its infrastructure"

"Better facilities and investment in to buildings and resources at all levels

Overall in Tynedale I think the Haydon Bridge parents have experienced a raw deal. I think NCC has a responsibility to support the community there and the children."

"I would like the buildings at QeHs to be improved, that the number of subjects on offer increase and they offer all children the opportunity to take the a levels they wish rather than cherry picking the best."

"Better communication within and between schools. Improved buildings and facilities."

"Money needs to be invested into the buildings at all levels. Changing the age ranges would have no impact on those buildings."

"I would like to see the High School work closely with the current system - they put themselves out on a limb and do not integrate in the same way the middle and first schools do."

"That QE stop being so selfish - this has been driven by them wanting what they want. This is NOT about the education of the children and it should be. Our system isn't broken - it works. I have 2 children in the system as well as 4 nieces/nephews and countless numbers of children of friends. Give QE the investment it needs. It used to be an amazing school in the 80s/90s - when it was run by passionate Heads like Mr Eavis

and Webster. Not run like a business as it is now. Take back your 'Executive Head' - the children don't know him and he doesn't know them. He cannot make strategic decisions on behalf of parents or children he does not know and a community in which he has lived for only a couple of years!"

"Investment in buildings. For NCC to look at the bigger picture and see how their decisions will impact the children for many, many years to come. To not be so short-sighted as to think that two-tier will solve their problems. Lack of investment in many schools lies at the root of these issues. Do not let our first and middle schools be held responsible for NCC failings. Northumberland is not like any other community - you cannot apply a 'one size fits all approach!'"

"Hand on heart, nothing could be better than what we have at the moment."

"Hadrian Learning Trust don't seem to be a fan of middle schools yet they have one. Why not defederate , build a fantastic 13-18 school with an amazing 6th form centre for HLT and let someone as passionate as Mrs Kennedy or Mrs Conley run Hexham Middle School?"

"An new education in the West would be successful in creating new buildings and highly skilled and qualified staff. Schools should be looking at post 16 options for apprenticeships and areas for those children who may not wish to take the academic route. Building huge building to accommodate over 2000 children would be daunting for some and longer journey times for very young tiresome and frightening. Look at what we have, work with the community, parents and county officials to bring about a change in Northumberland that would be to the benefit of the next generation of pupils in rural communities instead of looking at numbers and figures. Support schools to put into place budget measures and fundraising efforts to keep schools going and bring families to the area not push people away."

"Keep the system but need better facilities especially at the QEHS. All middle schools are run together-academy?"

"To stay as three tier. Investment in the buildings, headteacher at HMS, provision for the less academic at QEHS"

"More options at GCSE and post-16"

"I would like it to stay as it is - three cheers for three tiers. Build a new High school at Hexham, just like they did at Prudhoe , without any fuss!!"

"We need to be even more inclusive, by providing facilities, resources and appropriate support for many more children within mainstream education, from nursery to sixth form.

More opportunities for music, sport, art..... due to the rural nature of Northumberland many children do not get the extra curricular opportunities they should. For example children have to travel to the Morpeth area to play in county orchestras, an expensive and time consuming journey. Our more rural schools cannot get peripatetic music teachers to attend and certainly the more unusual instruments are not taught in the West. Same applies to sport. "

"There seems to be a growing number of children with additional needs and a wide range of issues for school staff to deal with, ranging from mental health , physical difficulties and learning issues such as autism. Support for these children needs to be far more localised. Every child matters and the services they require should be far more accessible and not dependent on budget."

"Everything is excellent. You just need to look at some of the middle school numbers of students attending our middle schools."

"We would like the 13-18 age range to stay at QEHS but there is a desperate need for better facilities, the building is decrepit and in dire need of repair. Our children have had excellent provision at Corbridge Middle and they deserve this to continue at high school."

"Smaller class sizes.

Outside learning.

More visitors to schools to share their experiences.

Higher funding per student - and therefore help for SEN pupils.

More options at QEHS at GCSE (e.g., food tech) and A level (English Language)"

"Money invested into what we have already to make it a better education system. More provision for 16+."

"I hope that the views of the parents, teachers and wider community be seriously considered in this improved offer."

"I'd like it to remain 3 tier but for HMS and QEHS to move to better, or invest in their current, buildings."

"Investment in facilities and equipment long overdue. I'd like to see proper a set up that allows for proper investment in education."

"We need to improve the physical structure of schools, without compromising quality of education. I would like to see the three tier system continued, for there to be School counsellors spending time in all schools and supporting vulnerable students and their families. I believe this would improve overall results as it would let teachers focus on what they do best!!"

"I would like to see a high school that maintains a larger percentage of its students post-16!"

"More outdoors/about experiences"

"Small transition steps (three tier works love HMS Orchard block)"

"Investment in current middle and high school buildings"

"Facilities in many cases are not ideal. I'd love to see an investment in the environments, where needed, to create the right spaces for teachers and children to get the very most out of the educational opportunities. I'd like to see children given more opportunities to get out of the classroom and explore the world around them. I'd like to see everyone given the right opportunities to find a path through education that suits them - not everyone is academically minded and we need to ensure everyone has the chance to discover their own potential. I'd like to see less of an administrative burden placed on teachers and governors so that a real focus can go on the quality of educational experience."

"Nothing except staying exactly as it is e.g. 3 tier."

"Better physical premises"

"More options available to pupils at 16"

"Keeping the three tier system"

"Sports facilities are very poor and need looking at. 30 year old sports halls no 3g in area."

"A more inclusive education system, especially for children aged 16 plus that meets their needs. It is not all about university."

"Improved buildings/facilities"

"Provide more facilities and opportunities on an extracurricular bases. Sports, media etc."

"I would not change it except invest the money into building an improved High School that benefits all children in the area and not just the Academy"

""In my view many of the concerns about the disruptions around transitions in the three-tier system could be addressed by closer liaison between schools during the handover periods. The recent 'taster days' for our year 8 son at QEHS have been helpful but even so the abruptness with which subject choices have had to be made has left him feeling that he is not able to access all the advice and information he needs to make highly consequential decisions.

And the whole thing could do with being better resourced. But a caring community and outstanding teaching matter much, much more than snazzy buildings."

"No school closures."

"More choice at a secondary level is what I hear from parents with children in this age group. Apparently the number of subjects on offer at GCSE and A-level is quite limited at QE and there are not enough vocational subjects. Possibly an opportunity for Haydon Bridge? And as always, give the teachers the funding and resources they need to allow our schools to thrive. Keep them at the centre of our communities so that the students and their families feel ownership and want to contribute to their continued success. Protect them against short-termist and politically-driven policies and agendas"

"Consideration for those children who are going to be going through the system while all the changes are made. It is likely that my daughter's high school years will consist mainly of temporary accommodation, moving into a new building for her upper sixth year. Could be fantastic once completed but the children going through it only have one chance at this stage of their education - please don't mess it up."

"More money spent on the building (holes in roof fixed etc.) "

"I want it to remain the way it is. Corbridge Middle is a fantastic school who get great results"

"Better facilities, especially for the high school. More opportunities and better conditions for the school."

"I don't want to change anything!"

"Less pressure to make subject choices for HS / GCSEs so quickly. First class facilities for all of our children regardless of the "system" they are in."

"The best use of resources would be to build on what we already have in the three tier system, supporting our small rural First and Middle schools. Economies of scale can be achieved by schools working together in partnership or as Federations. Resources and expertise can be shared, to the benefit of all of the children and their communities.

I accept that the High School needs to be a building priority too but in my view the local authority's attempt to justify closures of other schools by pointing to the need to finance such re-building is completely disingenuous.

Closing good schools which are financially sound is a terrible idea: morally, economically and politically."

"I don't think it will be better how can the proposed massive shake up of our education system be an improvement, it will affect our children's future going forward."

"Smaller classes, more staff, more arts subjects"

"QE High school needs a new building"

"We would very strongly prefer a three tier system. With child mental health and well-being being so high up on the national agenda, it is foolhardy to throw away the three tier system. It is a much stronger way in which to scaffold the children because the teachers know them so well. They would never get the same level of attention and superb teaching in the two tier system."

"Current SEND provision without the Lea is hardly substantial for schools at present. Early intervention is lacking. A secure future for my child's education! Where the individual is at the centre of the schools ethos, not money!"

"I would like these proposals fully dropped. I believe none of the three systems offer a practical approach and will not save the council money in the long term. Please leave our schools alone. This is the only cause for concern our children currently have, the uncertainty is starting to worry them and is totally unnecessary."

"Use a percentage of the available funds to further promote the use of technology to enable true Martini-learning: any time; any place; anywhere."

"Separate bus services for middle and high school children"

"Honesty from councillors. How can they justify closing smaller rural schools that are financially secure and are running with good numbers and excellent teachers."

"There is vast room for improvement in the physical facilities, access to broader scope of sports (gymnastics, lacrosse,) and extra curricular activities-cookery, Chess, martial arts! I believe QEHS needs to provide post-16 education for all..not just the highest achievers within the community!"

"Smaller classes and more opportunities for parents to attend events such as special assemblies. Provision for children to remain at school after hours where one child attends a school run activity that the other does not."

"Someone just give QEHS the money they need to improve their estate - that's what this is actually about. The system as is works fine (HBHS utilisation aside) and QEHS attempt to leverage cash through threats to the entire system is disgusting and unnecessary."

"It works. It's successful. Why change it?"

"More options for pupils at 16 - why not work in cooperation with local businesses so pupils have a choice when they've completed GCSEs?"

"de-centralise the system so that schools more freedom, and at the same time are more accountable.reduce the emphasis/importance given to result driven testing to give the children more independence as they learn. stop educational testing being such a tick-box exercise!"

"Time spent on developing life skills and practical abilities rather than just moving from one type of academic testing to the next."

"I want the vast majority of 16 yr olds to be able to continue to go to their local school until they are 18."

"If it ain't broke don't fix it. There are few things wrong with the current system. Perhaps wrap around care or, better transport. The children are happy and confident."

"Focus on children, their education and development rather than budgets and politics."

"All our schools have modern up to date facilities. We are like poor cousins to city schools."

"Better facilities for our young people - sports, music, media...."

"Worry that local high school is not inclusive at 6th form"

"A separate sports hall to improve even further the sports facilities. It could also improve local community links."

"Would prefer that the children didn't have to spend a year or two in portacabins while QEHS is rebuilt."

"I want education to be as broad as possible for absolutely as long as possible. Choosing what subjects never to learn again aged 12? Not for me!"

"I would like my son to have more options locally for Year 12 and 13. I don't think QE offer enough at this age."

"Sometimes feel don't get enough notice to of events happening at school if written notes aren't produced in a timely manner! I CAN'T see this would be better if the school size increases as would happen if QEHS grew to 2250 pupils!"

"A system which caters for all - not just the academic. For example, there's a need to extend opportunities for our young people at 16. What happens to my son if he does not achieve the expected average grade scores at 16? Does he the have to travel 25 miles to further his education??"

"Schools working together with continuity between transition years where teachers have teaching timetabled to spend time working with feeder schools."

"To consider ALL the schools in our area not just the high school. This is about more than a new build (although that is needed but not to the detriment of a fantastic education for ALL ages)"

"I want all teaching to take place in the school day at high school/secondary school. No drop ins which rely on there being public transport or the taxi drink parent."

"Children with special educational needs (not high needs) are able to stay in a local school to 18. They don't have to leave at 16 if they can't manage 8 good passes at gcse"

"Catchment boundaries need to better reflect geography and population; a simpler, more human, involvement required."

"Share the 52 million around to improve infrastructure"

What, succinctly, is your dream? 160 responses

"What parent doesn't dream for an (even) better future for their children than they have had for themselves? We don't have to stay in the Tyne Valley. We do stay because we like it, and we like what it offers our children. I don't have a dream because I'm happy with the reality. Please don't change it."

"To have the choice to have your child educated locally in a school with successful outcomes."

"To keep the 3 tier system. Not close rural schools which are the heart of their communities Improve school buildings. Have a second high school that offers more vocational options as not all children are academic."

"To have things stay as they are. It works, it's not broken and doesn't need fixing. I have a child in year 4 and the thought of his education and that of his peers being adversely affected through the transition period is actually a nightmare. I want these children to matter, not be written off as collateral damage."

"A three tier system that offers choice. Cutting schools and subjects means children are short-changed, their opportunities limited and inevitably, they're disadvantaged. The proposed system favours the more able, rather than giving all students a range of opportunities to succeed. I have heard ideas such as coordinating rural schools into 'hubs', working together for the benefit of their staff, students and parents; the idea of Haydon Bridge being developed to offer vocational courses at post-16 level - ideal for the range of skills required in a region such as West Northumberland; and recently, the idea of creating a new, maintained high school, independent of the business-oriented, money-preoccupied learning trusts hell-bent on turning every school into an academy focused on business rather than education. My dream is for all children to be treated as individuals and not taught or disciplined under blanket policies, rules and sanctions, for their education to be people-centred rather than focusing on how much MORE money is always needed. Education is not provided by buildings and flash facilities; those things are icing. It's people who make education - and we have so many people dedicated to providing the best education possible. Renovations are necessary at Queen Elizabeth High School, and some others, but no one school should dictate the fate of so many others in the county for its own gain."

"To have a 3 tier school while I'm in education "

"retain 3 tiers system - it works, don't meddle with it."

"To keep the current 3 tier system; it works but the children deserve a High School that is fit for purpose which currently QE isn't. There needs to be real capital investment in the building to bring everything up to date."

"For a broad, balanced education system within a 3 tier model to nurture and care for our kids"

"I want my boys to receive the best education possible. They are 7 and 4 and so will be caught right in the middle of any reorganisation. I do not believe bigger is necessarily better and I want to be able to have a choice as to the educational path they follow. At the moment I feel that choice is being taken away."

"My dream is that children learn how to learn, skills to help them throughout their life whether that is vocational or academic or a mixture of both. I dream that every child is highly valued and that they in turn learn to value themselves and all others that come into contact with in their school community."

"Beaufront school to continue."

"To keep our 3 tier system and for our children's education to be at the forefront of any NCC decisions."

"To continue with the successful rural school model that works for our area."

"To provide high quality education for all, with choice and individual opportunities. To ensure buildings and facilities are enhancing the educational offer. To ensure all children and young adults recognise their worth and achieve their very best."

"Education stages that match children's development needs -nurturing and personal expanding to gradual independence, small steps progress, social and emotional needs addressed not just high educational attainment, choice and partnerships"

"To continue the rural first schools providing good & outstanding care"

"Ideally smaller classes with more one to time available."

"As close as possible to the current situation with new investment in the Queen Elizabeth's High School buildings and Infrastructure."

"For the first and middle schools to remain as they are (especially Beaufront First School - this is a truly unique school that has exceptional teaching along with outstanding ofsted and top 5% KS1 stat results)"

"To keep Corbridge first and middle schools they are, with QEHS being the high school choice"

"to not change what isn't broken"

"I dream of an education system for my children, that provides the environment and opportunity for every child to understand their capabilities, build their confidence and have the ability to deliver to their potential, whatever their passions. This will ONLY come if child learning, welfare and character building is put before such objective measures as meeting budgets."

"To keep schools in rural communities"

"Whatever is decided, it is not dragged out. I would like a decision made as soon as possible and for the decision to be final once made.

Children to get a well balanced disruption free excellent education"

"To have an education system that meets the needs of individual pupils, ensuring that they achieve their potential.

Keep Corbridge Middle Open and maintain and invest in 3 tiers as this is absolutely key for our children's effective education and the health of our communities."

"To keep our middle Schools for our rural community's, why change a system which is working well and give good results, there is no evidence that 2 tier is better."

"A continuation of the three tier model we currently enjoy with improved choice at high school level."

"To keep the three tier system with lots of small primary schools servicing outlying rural areas so young children do not have to commute large distances."

"That the three tier remains in place."

"That the 3 tier system remains and the children receive first class education like they deserve ."

|"For the precious first schools to remain open contributing to the charm and personality of the region but invest in the High School to maintain existing standards"

"For the 3 tier system to remain in place but buildings improved. For children to enjoy their education - to want to go to school and thrive and be happy. To keep the diversity of choice which we currently have so the education system encourages and works for the child and not become a one size fits all. For those in positions of influence or power to realise education is not just about attainment but helping children to be the best they can be and that happiness and well being is critical to the educational journey. To take account of our geographical location - a 2 tier system may work in some areas but Northumberland has a large rural population and the changes simply don't suit this area."

"To experience more closely a path of work i want to go down"

"For the system to remain"

"For my middle school to stay open for my brother and for generations to come."

"An upgrade of the school buildings but absolutely no change to our current partnership of schools."

"Specialist teachers who know every child inside out"

"Happy well educated children"

"Continuation of village First Schools, new super school replacing QEHS and Haydon Bridge plus boarding facilities not really for west Northumberland but education as whole, less testing (and therefore teaching to testing), education based on what is best for the children - not what can be afforded. Schools where pupils are people (children when they start and young adults when they leave) - not another bean with an attached income."

"A well funded two-tier system (primary and secondary) in line with the rest of the country, not the unsustainable and antiquated 3-tier system that is struggling with old dilapidated buildings and serious funding deficit issues"

"3 tier system"

"Funding invested in a new school with better facilities and more inclusion in 6 th form."

"For the precious first schools to remain open contributing to the charm and personality of the region but invest in the High School to maintain existing standards"

"cost of education is great, but the cost of ignorance is greater' - MORE MONEY FROM DofE"

"That the government funds our schools in this region properly and fairly rather than selling us off to the highest bidders to make profit from our community assets"

"I have yet to see a concrete plan that offers my children the standard or security of education that they currently have, so currently my dream is the status quo."

"To keep 3 tier in Tynedale"

"For my kids to have a good chance in life and for them to have a good education"

"Local schools that are fit for purpose but easily accessible for local children."

"Catholic first and middle school followed by a local well provisioned high school."

"Schools with the children and their communities at their heart"

"Local schools that are fit for purpose but easily accessible for local children."

"The dream would be to keep these schools as they are, an integral part of the community that gives all children an holistic approach to education."

"A new night school and middle school in line with other towns in the country - serving local children in clean and rust/decay free pleasant surroundings - whilst young children can go to a local school when they get tired easily and are going through such massive life changes which exhaust them enough without a high travel time on either end of the day"

"Maintaining 3 tier to support rural villages and keeping historic buildings up to date and in the public domain as an asset for all. Schools used by more than pupils also venues for clubs and sports."

"For my children to feel happy, engaged, motivated during their learning years, and to be given every opportunity and inspiration to follow their dreams"

"I want my child to not just do well at school, but to enjoy his school years and feel supported, valued and safe whilst he is being educated. In my view this can only happen in schools that are well-staffed, properly funded, not too large, and where the focus is on the WHOLE child and not just their results."

"That my child can progress through the three tier system to an excellent high school that is still achieving great results by the time she gets there (she is currently in reception)."

"For schools to work together to provide the best possible education, not to be driven by finance or at odds with each other and to ALWAYS put the excellent education of our children first, every time!"

"For my daughter to start at Corbridge Middle this year in September and continue on her education there. She has received an offer of a place which we have accepted and we'd be over the moon if the schools future remained secure. And for the three tier system to remain."

"The smaller first schools be combined as I think it gives the children more opportunities. The middle schools to remain and QE open their sixth form admissions policy to be opened. QEHS to be rebuilt quickly to provide a better learning environment for them. I don't think they should merge with Hayden Bridge. I think Hayden Bridge should merge with Shaftoe's instead."

"Three tier all the way. Education for our children based on what THEY need rather than because of a

business plan."

"That the education and well-being of children and staff comes before money."

"For my children and other children in West Northumberland, to get the education they deserve under the 3 tier system and for changes not to be driven by finance and greed."

"To stop running our local high school like a business. Get rid of unnecessary hierarchy and invest in teachers who KNOW THE KIDS and can educate them accordingly. Leave the system alone - it works perfectly."

"To continue with our 3-tier system, to provide the children of our county with the best education"

"For the 3 tier system to continue."

"That all kids have a fantastic education with amazing, happy, inspiring teachers."

"My dream, a rural community that is able to say that we stood up for what we truly believed in to get the very best education for future generations of children in the West of Northumberland. Dream, believe, achieve!"

"Keep rural village life alive with village schools and make all middle schools as good as CMS is reputed to be! It seems to meet the needs of its pupils."

"Our education system should suit our rural lifestyle choice. Local schools with choice - always good for standards! I would also like to see a provision for all our children from 4-18 locally. It saddens me to hear my friends children unable to get into sixth form at local school."

"That ALL children can be educated where they live until they choose otherwise, ie, not being forced to travel out of the area because they are not academic enough"

"Retain all first schools and let them feed into our wonderful middle schools . Dont let out villages die - schools are the lifeblood of our unique villages and our way of life."

"To see fully inclusive schools where all children have equal opportunities to grow and become the adults they deserve to be."

"I want children to be nurtured and able to enjoy their education in local three tier schools."

"My dream is for education to continue in the same way and for the council to support the schools not the academies. Why bail out QEHS?"

"Our dream is for the three tier system to continue so our grandchildren and their children can benefit from the wonderful educational/personal experience this model has to offer."

"To send my children to a school where they are filled with wonderment and awe each and every day. To ensure that they embrace a life-long love of education and learning. To inspire this generation of children and prepare them for the future. "

"I want future children to experience what past and present children have experienced with the 3 tier

system."

"For all schools to prosper and receive the funding and support they deserve."

"To keep the local rural schools open in order to maintain close communities across the wide expanse that is west Northumberland. These schools provide so much more than an education to children. They span communities of all age ranges, provide spaces for community events, allow residents to gather. Closing so many as proposed in the 'consultation document' (sounds like a done deal to me), would decimate rural communities. Young families would not settle there as there is no community to join, no education for their children. There's been no detailed thought into any of these closures, some are C of E schools and their funding is guaranteed in the near future. How has this consultation even come about?! I haven't heard one voice in support of it."

"New build secondary school in Hexham, which can be run more efficiently and set up to create a brilliant learning environment, allowing the teachers to teach."

"My dream is for West Northumberland to be brave and bold, to strike out and recognise that we can be different...because we are successful! To expand its educational offer so that all Children can find a setting where they thrive...be it a mainstream class, special school, or somewhere in between! Let's Lead ...not follow!"

"That all children get to reach their potential be unique not a number "

"First school can carry on building my child's confidence and happiness to develop love of learning and curiosity"

"Three tier system is a success, it is not broken does not need fixing. Protect rural communities."

"A school system that people talk about with passion, enthusiasm and pride many, many years after they've left. A system that genuinely inspires and caters for pupils on an individual basis, not as a mass-processing plant. A system that is designed to that meet the genuine needs of children at every stage of their development and strengthens the fantastic local communities and plays a powerful and active role in community life."

"For things to stay as they are and not subject my children, or any children to a horrendous amount of change over 5 years of their education as proposed in model B. How is that going to benefit my child? It's only going to disrupt their education in a negative way."

"11 to 18 qehs new build"

"For the government/council to recognize that schools like Corbridge Middle are providing an exceptional level of education for our children and provide a nurturing environment in which they can thrive."

"To have the best and most enjoyable education experience for my children."

"To have a local school as near as possible to me for my children at an age they can cope with."

"A school system that provides all pupils with the knowledge, opportunities and experiences they need to thrive in the world around them. I believe the 3 tier system, especially for this community, is the best way of delivering this vision."

"To keep the 3 tier system"

"A system which offers the benefits of three-tier education (caring community, a real focus on what's best for the distinct age-groups, relatively small schools, schools rooted in localities, resisting the false allure of 'economies of scale'), whether in its current form or some other. And political / educational leadership which is willing to face down immediate financial or bureaucratic crises in order to take a child-centred view of the problem."

"My dream is for my children to grow up in our rural community and progress through the three-tiered school system. I hope the schools they attend will be adequately funded and continue to deliver outstanding results. I hope the council and other bodies responsible for decisions that impact our education system will be consistent, will protect our schools, our way of life, our communities and think of the long term before making any disruptive decisions to benefit their bottom line. My broader dream is that education and healthcare will cease to be party political"

"First and middle schools stay the same. Investment in QE so that it can improve in terms of its environment and what it offers."

"To leave what isn't broken alone & fix other non achieving schools"

"Good facilities. Less fixation on data. More opportunities for children with learning difficulties. A school within a local community."

"3 tier system to remain in place. We've tried the 2 tier and didn't like it. We moved our son cause we believe a 3 tier system is better for his education."

"To have children continue to be nurtured within the middle school system and continue to have access to specialist teachers for subjects like music, art, pe and technology."

"Seamless, personalised education system with high aspirations for ALL our students regardless of perceived ability."

"A plan for the future in which our rural communities are not robbed of the chance for children to learn close to where they live, in small thriving schools. A plan which truly puts the welfare of our children first. My nightmare is that our children are shipped off at a young age to a large bland education factory, for a 'one size fits all, sink or swim' experience and that this comes to pass because those in power were not brave enough to stand up for us."

"To keep the 3 tier school system"

"To keep the 3 tiered system"

"The 3 tier system to remain"

"We dearly want an outcome that sees CMS's future secure for generations to come. It is a beacon of teaching excellence and we should be lauding Mrs Kennedy and her staff, not placing it under threat."

"Leave CMS alone! A thriving school, outstanding in our eyes and is at risk due to the faults of others. Unfair. Also that QEHS remains in the three tier system with normal transition into year 9. Trying to fix something that is not broken is ludicrous, and my child's future suffers as a consequence! The 3 tier system

works. Period."

"Please leave our schools alone!"

"Save our education system! Middle Schools are very unique and precious."

"I believe in a three tier system of education. My children have both benefited from being a part of wonderful first school, followed by the specialist education they receive from year 5 . They would not get this in a two tier system. Also they would feel a bit out numbered in a massive school from year 7. At the moment they feel part of their school community. All the teachers know all the children. This is in danger of being lost."

"An education system where children are recognised as individuals and feel part of their school community. A system where children are offered specialist teaching from year 5. I believe a three tier system is the only way this can be achieved."

"Children to be happy & attend a school where they can flourish both socially & academically. I believe the current proposals will create a vast high school where children's individual needs will not be met"

"A three tier school system to remain and for my children to experience the special and caring education that Corbridge Middle School provides. To be able to join high school at age 13 when they are confident and ready to go - not to go to secondary school at year 7!"

"To keep the 3 tier system that we believed would provide the best learning environment for our children with small first schools and middle schools. I believe that a focus on an improved high school facility with an integrated approach to moving in to higher education is needed. I believe time and effort should be spent on how to improve our high schools rather than looking at our first and middle schools that are already providing an excellent environment for our children."

"I want my children to have an environment that cares with a of strong sense community. I want the 3 tier system to stay in place this provides a nurturing environment, smaller class, smaller school sizes so my children are seen... not lost, listened to... and heard, confident... not scared, allowed to be individual. HAPPY and wanting to come to school."

"All schoolchildren in our area to have modern & up to date facilities - other areas in the country have fantastic facilities yet we are always lagging behind. Better option choices at GCSE level, excellent IT facilities & the best opportunities possible. There's nothing wrong with the system as it is, it just needs modernising with extra cash, no different to what other areas have had!"

"I dream that Northumberland County Council should value the rare and special landscape — physical and human—that draws so many to live here! That they celebrate small community schools for their central role in creating and glueing communities together! That they use the funding available to improve a valued and incredibly successful 3 tier system, rather than deconstruct it! And that they further value the uniqueness of the individual children it is their duty to serve!!"

"That every child is given chance to try a bit of every subject and not forced to one area that may not suit or interest them long term. I feel children have to choose their options too early in life before they have chance to work out what would suit and interest them for a life of work."

"Community-based schools that give kids the best possible opportunities to grow as people"

"To maintain a 3 tier system. To better meet children's emotional needs when transitioning to year 9. To have my child feel in year 9,10,11 like a valued individual not a number in a faceless academy. For my child not to drown in a high school of 2200 pupils. To improve the nurturing environment at QEH."

"to develop a schooling system that encourages community, both for the children, and for the community at-large, to include teachers, parents and local groups. what is great about Corbridge is that it has local support as many people have been involved in one way or another"

"That my children will not be taught in prefabs for three years and can remain in their existing schools. Temporary accommodation for schooling is not in the children's best interest"

"I dream that young children are taught to read and write in small local first schools then when they are ready to spread their wings they move to middle school where they can safely learn to be independent, explore and develop a love of learning, be nurtured until they are ready to move to high school to follow their passion and dreams. Where they can experience success and become adults we are proud of."

"For children to be rooted in their community throughout their schooling"

"not to mix small children with teenagers as this would daunt them, there would be more bullying"

"That my child's education is not disrupted during the crucial years 9-11. Maintain the three tier system."

"To give future pupils the same opportunity that past and present pupils have had."

"Well resourced, well run schools that treat and teach my children as people, not numbers or resource to generate income to meet budgets. Schools that are the heartbeat of their communities now and into the future."

"To have smaller class sizes. To continue to build on the successes that are already strongly in place."

"To give my children the best opportunities with a varied and targeted education which I believe 2 tier will not give them."

"My dream for my children is to have a well rounded safe environment in which to learn and fulfil their dreams and make a success of their lives. I want them to be able to make friendships that they will have throughout their lives. I want them to be safe and happy."

"Keeping my child's childhood for as long as we can, keeping them individual, quirky, opinionated little people. Mixing an 11 yo with 17/18 yo adults is not how this is done."

"That every small Northumberland Village has a small, nurturing First School within it, where parents can put down roots, confident that their children won't be bussed all over the county. This would allow small villages to survive for all who live there rather than the villages who lose their schools gradually disappearing"

"For my child (and other children who find school a struggle) to have the support and care he received at middle school at QEHS. This hasn't happened- teachers don't know him, make assumptions about him and

don't cater for him. They'll sit in their offices making decisions about whether or not he's good enough to fit in with their 'high achievers' in sixth form. He is. QE have just never taken the time to find out."

"keeping smaller community orientated schools, where children can be individuals and thrive with knowledgeable staff and better education because the staff now the children they aren't just a number and statistic. 3 tier systems work better for many children."

"For children to be able to go to their local school, be valued as individuals, encouraged to make mistakes, to learn for them, build confidence and resilience from their successes and failures. Most of all, to feel valued, safe and develop respect for themselves and those around them."

"A high school that is inclusive - more options available to those other than the more able at Year 12 and 13"

"Great education, delivered by passionate education professionals who know and care about what motivates their pupils. A system that values quality of service delivery over quantity of pupils crammed into a year. Schools that children can feel safe, valued and confident within. The current system?"

"A new school for Queen Elizabeth High which does not affect catchment areas, existing middle schools, current age range or any moving of children from existing schools during the building process."

"Want the best for my children so that they can achieve their potential in a nurturing environment in which they are accepted for who they are regardless of their academic abilities"

"An update to the facilities at CMS. A new QEHS built as a high school only, the transition done in such a way as not to impact on the children's educational needs."

"To be able offer my children an education, and education system, which is world-class. We need to be able to compete with countries like South Korea, Japan, Singapore, etc."

"To offer a wide range of opportunities for our young people within the area and to recognise the capabilities and achievements of less academic pupils"

"To stay a middle school. My dream is to be the year 8 teacher to our present year 5. I want to see them thrive here; I want to see them grow up. The three tier system is an all nurturing success that need to remain!"

"to provide a learning platform that encourages independence and confidence in young adults, with a strong emphasis on moral values and community."

"For my child to have a fantastic school experience in schools that are fit for purpose, well run and where staff know the children well."

"To build on what is already successful."

"3 tiers -schools in towns and villages and a new build high school no bigger than 1400"

"I want an educational environment where my children want to learn, gain a love of life long learning and can look back and say they were some of the best times in my life"

"Maintain the 3 tier system"

"I would like there to be a 9 - 16 or 18 school in Corbridge. Serving our immediate local primaries."

Amanda Spielman, HM Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, at the Festival of Education 23rd June 2017

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/amanda-spielman-s-speech-at-the-festival-of-education>

Ofsted's Chief Inspector talks about a review of the curriculum and the importance of recognising leadership challenges and valuing management.

“One of the areas that I think we sometimes lose sight of is the real substance of education. Not the exam grades or the progress scores, important though they are, but instead the real meat of what is taught in our schools and colleges: the curriculum.”

“Yes, education does have to prepare young people to succeed in life and make their contribution in the labour market. But to reduce education down to this kind of functionalist level is rather wretched. Because education should be about broadening minds, enriching communities and advancing civilisation.”

I have seen GCSE assessment objectives tracking back into Year 7, and SAT practice papers starting in Year 4. And I've seen lessons where everything is about the exam and where teaching the mark schemes has a bigger place than teaching history.

That is not what will set our children up for great futures. Nor will the growing cannibalisation of key stage 3 into key stage 4. Preparing for GCSEs so early gives young people less time to study a range of subjects in depth and more time just practising the tests themselves.

All children should study a broad and rich curriculum. Curtailing key stage 3 means prematurely cutting this off for children who may never have an opportunity to study some of these subjects again.

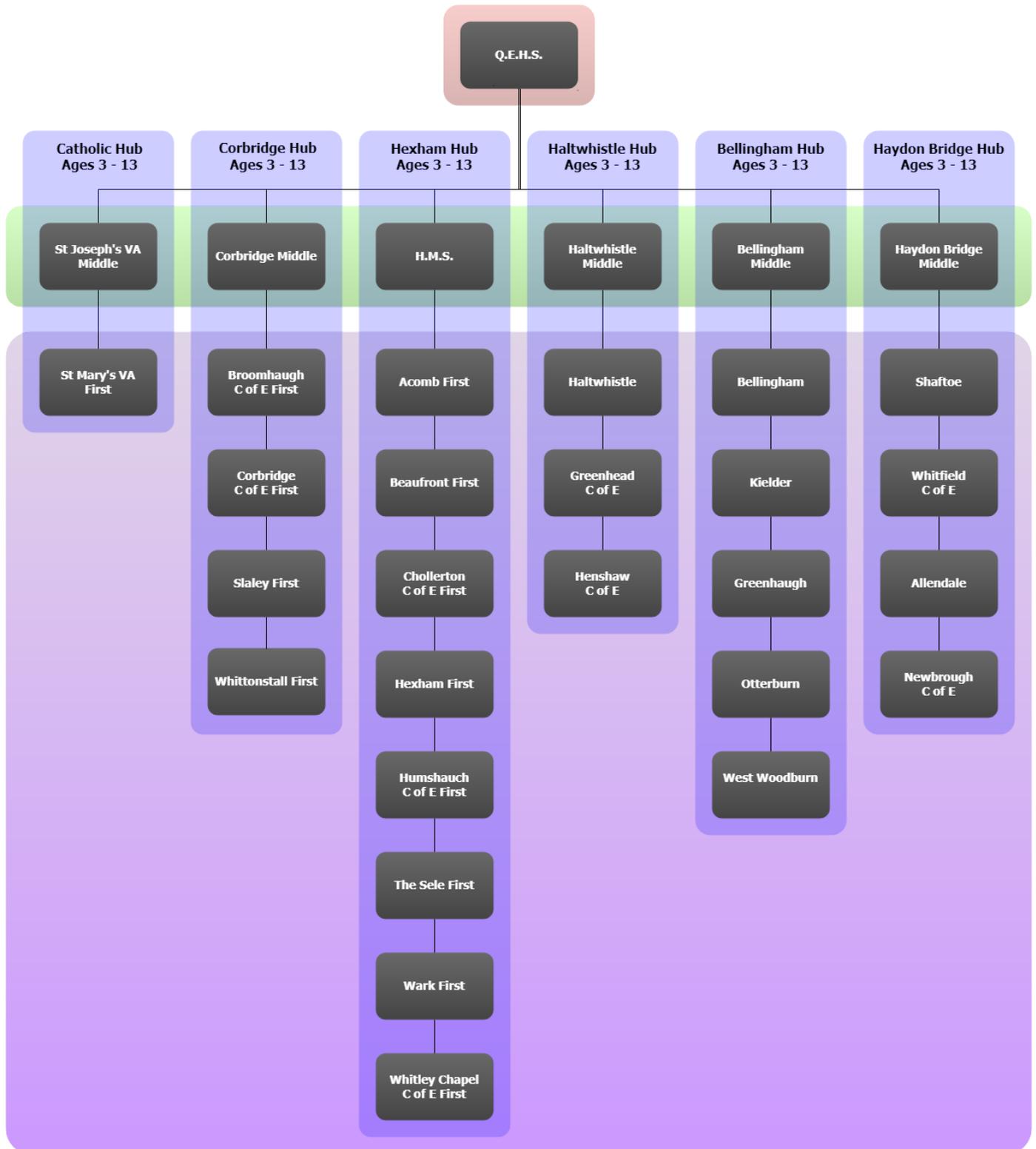
Again, if you are putting more resources into providing exam scribes than in teaching your strugglers to read and write, or scrapping most of your curriculum through Year 6 to focus just on English and maths. If you are doing any of those things then you are probably doing most of your students a disservice.

“This all reflects a tendency to mistake badges and stickers for learning itself. And it is putting the interests of schools ahead of the interests of the children in them. We should be ashamed that we have let such behaviour persist for so long.

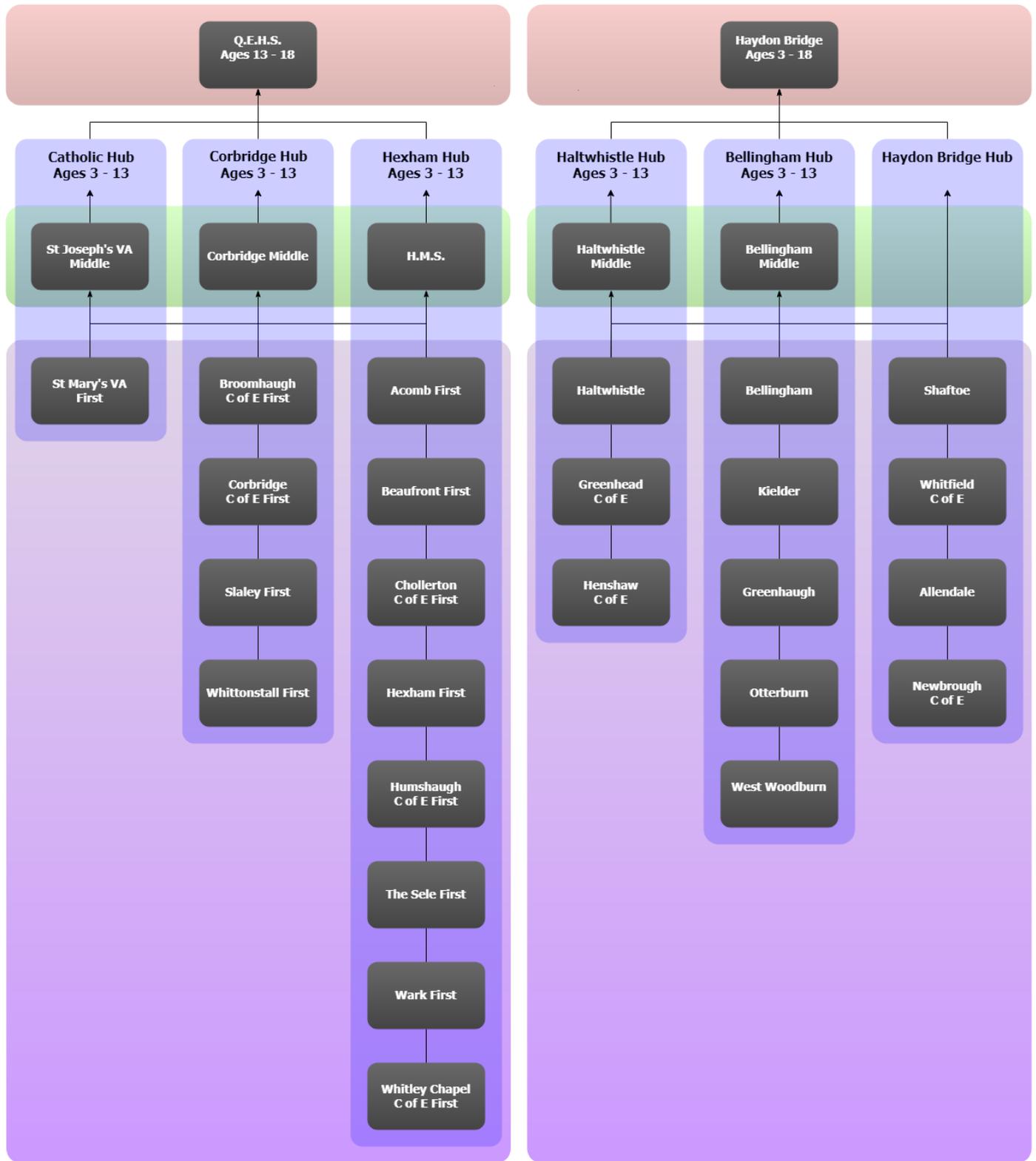
But unacceptable though they are, these behaviours are easily explained. We have a highly transparent system and performance data is valuable for many purposes, including holding schools to account. But most of us, if told our job depends on clearing a particular bar, will try to give ourselves the best chance of securing that outcome.

And that is why leadership and management are so important. At a time of scarce pupil funding and high workloads, all managers are responsible for making sure teachers' time is spent on what matters most. This means concentrating on the curriculum and the substance of education, not preparing your pupils to jump through a series of accountability hoops.”

Appendix 3 - the Collaborative Model



Appendix 4 - the Collaborative Pathways Model



An alternative model - COLLABORATION HUBS

The vast majority of our schools are currently providing an excellent education in a financially sustainable way. Do so *many* schools need to close? Shouldn't our schools be given the opportunity to work together first to try and solve any educational or financial challenges in our localities by collaborating? Can we create more *all-through* collaborations from age 3 to 13, 3 to 16 or even 3 to 18?

Before any major change is made to our current successful education offer we propose that by "hub", the following is explored and developed:

Challenges for us:

- large area, sparsely populated makes collaboration more challenging
- poor transport system
- few very large local employers
- static population with a lack of clarity for housing and population growth projections
- poor school building stock along with surplus capacity
- making National Funding Formula work for us
- education provision for 16 – 18 year olds; too many have to leave area to study
- results at Key stage 2, 4 and 5 are variable across the two partnerships
- mixture of academy and local schools makes change and collaboration increasingly difficult

Opportunities:

- even stronger collaboration amongst the few schools we have to develop excellent teaching in all our schools
- new stronger leadership and governance model across our schools to further support educational improvements and financial sustainability
- fully inclusive provision in our area
- bespoke Special Educational Needs expertise and provision for our needs
- make National Funding Formula work for our unique situation
- understand how to make our education provision work with the transport networks we have
- look to the skills required for employment and training in rural Northumberland and Newcastle to drive our curriculum offer

Each hub to identify issues pertaining to:

1. educational outcomes and achievements
2. retention and recruitment of staff
3. condition of school buildings
4. pupil projections and surplus places
5. catchment areas and impact of transport, local geography
6. financial sustainability

Each hub to consider opportunities for:

1. expanding current innovative practice
2. further streamlining of curriculum
3. formally sharing staff
4. identifying support required from or offered to other hubs
5. a bespoke Hub Special Educational Need provision
6. amending catchment areas
7. forming hard federations to enable even stronger leadership, governance, staff development and financial gain
8. forming an "all-through" or same phase multi academy trust
9. joining existing MATs in the area
10. making the most of the National Funding Formula

Further collaboration can be explored and take place:

- horizontally across the same phase
- vertically across multiple phases
- incorporate Church of England partnership working

Appendix 5 Education in the West and Financial Sustainability

ARGUMENT FOR SCHOOL RATIONALISATION (CLOSURES) AND AGE RANGE CHANGE

1. FUNDING REMAINS VERY TIGHT FOR EDUCATION

- National funding pot for education has increased but so have the number of pupils to be educated and the cost of staffing schools
- Historically rural local authorities like Northumberland have been severely underfunded compared to London and other metropolitan authorities
- Fewer, fuller schools are more cost effective than the current school structure in the west of Northumberland
- Schools with a greater number of pupils receive more income enabling them to spread their fixed costs across that income
- Capital investment in new-build, cheaper to run school buildings will only be available if the current school system is rationalised and schools are closed

2. FUNDING FOR YEARS 10 and 11 and SIXTH FORM IS NOT ENOUGH

- the high cost of running KS4 and 5 needs to be offset by the “cheaper to provide” three year groups of KS3
- more funding is provided for years 10 & 11 but it is not believed to be enough to support: the broad choice of GCSE options, the smaller class sizes, more expensive STEM subject provision
- the new National Funding Formula will reduce the amount of money (AWPU) for each year 10 and 11 pupil by £194 (equivalent to a loss of income to QEHS of £117,370)
- secondary schools use some of the funding received for years 7, 8 and 9 to supplement the underfunding for years 10, 11 and the sixth form

3. TWO TIER SYSTEMS ARE DEEMED TO BE MORE COST EFFECTIVE THAN THREE TIER SYSTEMS

- It is thought that adding two more years onto first schools and high schools makes the schools more financially viable
- Schools will receive £2747 for primary age pupils, £3863 for years 7, 8 & 9 pupils and £4386 for years 10 & 11 pupils under the new National Funding Formula in April 2020
- the increase of just 111 pupils for QEHS by changing age range provides much more money than meets the eye
- Pupils in years 5 & 6 attract less funding than years 7 & 8
- for QEHS by losing 233 “less valuable” year 5 & 6 pupils and gaining 344 “more valuable” year 7 & 8 pupils, Hadrian Learning Trust will receive much more funding
- the proposed, though not fixed differential in, minimum per pupil funding level for key stage 3 in middle and high schools supports the financial argument for the formation of 11-18 secondary schools

ARGUMENT AGAINST SCHOOL RATIONALISATION (CLOSURES) AND AGE RANGE CHANGE

QEHS educational outcomes are amongst the top 12% in the country, Sunday Times places them 22nd non-selective school for 2017 and 4th out of 55 “similar” schools for Key Stage 4. There is no need for change to improve outcomes at QEHS.

Financial measures for school rationalisation should not be the driver but a consideration when the education offer does not meet the requirements or expectations of Ofsted, LA or local community.

- The proposed closure of schools will reduce the national funding formula budget share into the schools in the west of Northumberland by between £1.2 million to £2 million per year equivalent to 6 – 9% of current income
- Without financial modelling of any rationalisation, it is impossible to know if any proposal will produce the savings required to offset any income drop
- The expansion of QEHS cannot be viewed in isolation without the necessary modelling and impact on all partnership schools
- The HBHS proposed model of education allows for fluctuations in pupil population to ensure a quality education offer at a sustainable price, this needs close financial scrutiny to ensure it is sustainable
- Federations of small schools with larger schools enable “support” costs and activities to be more effective rather than federations of just small same size schools
- National funding formula has been designed in such a way as to protect small rural schools through the use of lump sum and sparsity funding to cover support costs and variations in pupil numbers year on year

CHILD CENTRED ALTERNATIVES

1. CREATE ONE AGE 9 – 18 SCHOOL FOR ACCOUNTING PURPOSES

- Receive extra top up funding NOW for HMS year 7 & 8 pupils
- Hadrian Learning Trust has the ability to merge Hexham Middle and Queen Elizabeth High School into an age 9-18 school, recouping the loss of lump sum funding through the minimum per pupil funding level guarantee
- Allows Hadrian Learning Trust to access the higher minimum per pupil funding level guarantee for the 245 pupils currently in their years 7 & 8
- ethos of each school can remain unchanged
- able to direct the curriculum from year 5 upwards and continue with specialist teaching in years 5 & 6, directly responsible for 40% of all pupils age 9-18

2. EXPAND HADRIAN LEARNING TRUST TO INCLUDE OTHER MIDDLE SCHOOLS

- these schools could either remain as schools within schools in the Trust or form one school across multiple sites
- “one school” on multiple sites would be able to access the minimum funding level top up fund and gain educational synergy
- allows necessary overhead cost to be spread over more schools

3. LOBBY THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS FUNDING AGENCY TO REVIEW THE MINIMUM PER PUPIL FUNDING LEVELS FOR SECONDARY PUPILS

- the oversimplification of the minimum per pupil funding level guarantee for secondary schools does not support the principle of ensuring schools have the right level of funding for each phase of education i.e. KS4 is more expensive to deliver than KS3, so in secondary schools the minimum per pupil funding level guarantee should be differentiated (higher than £4800 for KS4, lower for KS3)
- the National Middle Schools Forum are meeting with the Funding Policy Unit to discuss this as a matter of urgency

THE FACTS

Nationally: A new “hard” National Funding Formula comes into force in April 2020. A two year period of transition will take place from April 2018 to allow for local adjustments within each Local Authority Schools Forum to allow schools to plan for the change to their income (budget share)

Government is making available more funding for schools but the funding is led by pupil numbers in schools. If a school forecasts a reduction in or static pupil forecast, then the income received will not meet future expenditure. On average 72.9% of school income is used for staff expenses.

Northumberland: has been one of the most poorly funded local authorities in the past. The National Funding Formula is partly set on the basis of historical funding so Northumberland is still affected by poor funding.

West Northumberland: NCC consultation document⁵ highlights predicted financial deficits across many schools with Haydon Bridge High School showing the largest deficit. Currently the Hexham Partnership of schools excluding Hadrian Learning Trust are predicting a surplus of £175,216.

Hadrian Learning Trust: The latest audited financial statements⁶ for the period ending 31 August 2017 do not seem to indicate any financial concerns for the Trust:

- The financial statements show a surplus of £91,000 (page 12 - Financial Review).
- The financial statements were prepared on a going concern basis, based on a ‘reasonable expectation that the academy trust has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future’.
- The risk matrix on page 14 of the financial statements shows that the Trust only deem the risk ‘Trust runs unsustainable deficit budget’ as ‘moderately likely’ as opposed to ‘very likely’ or ‘extremely likely’.

The trustees’ report⁶ does not allude to the fact that an initial consultation was undertaken on age range change during 2017 in part due to future financial unsustainability.

However, the current March 2018 consultation document⁷ includes financial projections which forecast a different position and show significant losses from 2020/21 onwards. It is difficult to appreciate how the Trust’s financial position deteriorates so significantly in the absence of any explanatory information or assumptions in the consultation document.

Furthermore, the forecast revenue balances deviate significantly from the figures which were provided in the initial HLT consultation some nine months ago:

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Revenue balance £000s					
Per initial consultation dated 26.06.17	(100)	(200)	(500)	(1,000)	(1,500)
Per second consultation dated 02.03.18	199	297	(34)	(378)	(781)
Fluctation	299	497	466	622	719

These material variances over such a short time period are concerning and it is therefore difficult to have confidence and trust in the financial forecasts being prepared by Hadrian Learning Trust in support of an age range change to 11-18 years.

1. EFSA School Capacity Report Commentary SFR07/2018 15 March 2018
2. EFA School Capacity (SCAP) survey 2014 guide to forecasting pupil numbers in school place planning
3. SFR07/2018 Main tables
4. DfE Opening and closing maintained schools April 2016
5. A Consultation about Education in the West of Northumberland
6. Hadrian Learning Trust Annual Report and Financial Statements for the period ended 31 August 2017
7. Building a better future for our children 2 March -29th March 2018

Education in the West and Surplus School Places

ARGUMENT FOR SCHOOL RATIONALISATION (CLOSURES)

1. Fewer, fuller schools nationwide would release lump sum funding (£110,000 per school) for the funding of the remaining schools in the system (nationwide)
2. The school building stock needs to be cost effective i.e. full to capacity.
3. The fixed amount of nationwide funding for the maintenance and upkeep of school buildings is used to support fewer schools therefore more money available for the schools left
4. Schools with a greater number of pupils receive more income and are able to spread their fixed costs across that income
5. Difficult to maintain appropriate curriculum offer for key stage 4 and 5 (GCSE and A level) when too few pupils in a school
6. Difficult to maintain appropriate primary education and experience in very small first/primary schools

ARGUMENT AGAINST SCHOOL RATIONALISATION (CLOSURES)

1. Surplus capacity does not take into account the provision of nursery places, wrap around care and community use of school buildings in rural locations^{2&3}
2. There is a presumption against the closure of schools classified as rural schools in order to protect communities and reduce travel time for children to school⁴
3. Closing or extending the age range of rural first schools to create primary schools or “fuller” schools has a negative impact on
 - the educational offer for years 5 & 6 when changing from first to small primary versus the experience in a larger year 5 & 6 in middle schools offering specialist teaching
 - rural communities where younger families are unlikely to move to communities without a school
 - children, who will need to travel further to their school if their local school is closed
 - children, who will have to remain in a much smaller school for longer than in the current three tier system
 - parental choice, who will need to consider the educational and social experience of small primary schools vs current local first then larger middle schools or larger primary schools
 - families, as schools reach capacity, more chance that there will be no space at local village school and a need to travel much further afield
4. National funding formula has been designed in such a way as to protect small rural schools through the use of lump sum and sparsity funding
5. By investing in new smaller schools in those areas needed (Queen Elizabeth High School, Hexham Middle School, Haydon Bridge High School, Haltwhistle and Bellingham), surplus capacity could be removed without wholesale change to the structure of education in the West.

THE FACTS

Nationally: The annual statistics on school places, unfilled school places, pupils over capacity, pupil number forecasts and place planning in England have recently been published¹. Key points from the national report:

- 825,000 mainstream school places added since 2010
- the number of schools at or over capacity relatively stable in recent years, with a slight increase in 2017
- demand for secondary places continues to rise

9% (13) of all local authorities have > 15% surplus places in their primary schools³

63% (95) of all local authorities have >15% surplus capacity in their secondary schools³

Northumberland: has been identified as having an issue with surplus places in its primary schools³ with 16.5% surplus places affecting 112 schools at primary level across the county; Northumberland is 6th in the national league table for the highest number of primary surplus places³. At secondary level there are 19.2% surplus places affecting 33 schools in Northumberland, but the county appears no different to the majority of local authorities with surplus capacity.

West Northumberland: NCC consultation document⁵ highlights surplus places as an issue for the Haydon Bridge and Hexham Partnerships with an overall surplus capacity of 30%.

This top line summary figure hides a wide variance in surplus capacity across the area. The majority of the surplus places are at Haydon Bridge High School, Hexham Middle School, Haltwhistle Middle School, Queen Elizabeth High School and Bellingham Middle School, accounting for 1156 (60%) of all surplus places in the West.

Data to support this statement is as follows:

	NOR	Capacity	Surplus places	Surplus places
National data for Northumberland Primary SFR07/2018³			3498	16.5%
National data for Northumberland Secondary SFR07/2018³			5720	19.2%
NCC consultation summary data for Hexham and Haydon Bridge⁵	4896	6942		30%
Hexham Partnership total ⁵	3549	4109	560	14%
Haydon Bridge Partnership total⁵	1389	2758	1369	50%
Hexham Primary ⁵	1139	1355	216	16%
Hexham Secondary ⁵	2410	2754	344	12%
Haydon Bridge Primary⁵	778	1314	536	41%
Haydon Bridge Secondary⁵	611	1444	833	58%

WHY IS KNOWING THE SCHOOL CAPACITY AND SURPLUS CAPACITY IMPORTANT?

At national, regional and local level, there is a need to know whether there are enough good school places available for the forecasted population. Accurate and consistently derived forecasts of pupil numbers are also essential in providing the Department for Education with information to support basic need allocations¹. This ensures the local authority receives a fair level of capital funding, to help meet future demand for additional school places. As a result of the forecast surplus capacity information; school building programmes are put in place, or, if there is under capacity; rationalisation programmes (school closures) are encouraged where there is overcapacity in order to make best use of the education funding pot available at national level.

DEFINITIONS:

Capacity – number of pupils that can theoretically be educated in a school based upon the floor plan of the school for year groups Reception to year 14. Does not include nursery places.

Forecast pupil numbers – based on a variety of sources information including GP surgery birth data, cross border in/out flows, historical uptake data for children living in catchment, housing development projections, use of private education and school closures, age range changes

Pupil admission number (PAN) – the number of pupils that can be admitted into each year group without the need for appeal, used as part of the admissions policy for each school

Number on roll (NOR) – total number of pupils attending a school. Data used in all official publications and for calculating the school's budget share (income). Does not include nursery

Surplus places – capacity of school minus the number of pupils attending the school (NOR)

Unfilled places – a school is deemed to be under capacity as soon as has one identified place in a school is unfilled

Middle deemed secondary – our middle schools are defined as secondary schools when categorised as either primary or secondary. Surplus capacity is included in the secondary school figure