



# Northumberland

County Council

Families and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Date: 7 March 2019

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## **Schools Resilience Programme in the west of Northumberland - an update**

Report of the Executive Director of Adult and Children's Services, Cath McEvoy-Carr

Cabinet Member for Children's Services: Councillor Wayne Daley

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### **Purpose of report**

To update members on the progress being made in establishing a resilience programme in partnership with schools and academies across the west of Northumberland.

### **Link to Corporate Plan**

This report is relevant to the priority "We want you to achieve and realise your potential", included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2018/2021.

### **Recommendations**

#### **It is recommended that:**

- 1) Members note the progress made so far in enabling schools and academies in the west of Northumberland to become more resilient and the support provided from the local authority
- 2) Members note that although progress has been made some schools and academies in the west of Northumberland continue to need significant support to secure their sustainability in the long term.

#### **Key Issues:**

- At the request of the schools in the west the Cabinet agreed to initiate an informal consultation on the structure of schools in the west in 2018.
- Bright Tribe Academy Trust had withdrawn from their bid to act as a sponsor for Haydon Bridge High School, which is a school subject to special measures.

- The Hadrian Learning Trust had carried out its own informal consultation on its structure and potential age range changes
- Several schools had predicted serious financial difficulties in the short and medium term.
- The Department for Education had challenged the authority about its statutory duty to ensure there was no over-capacity of school places in Northumberland
- The physical state of a minority of schools and academies required improvements to be made.
- Transport arrangements in the west are complicated and costs are high
- As a result of the formal consultation the Cabinet agreed the following actions:

1. Haydon Bridge High school would remain open as an 11-18 secondary school on its current site. A funding support package of £1.54m was agreed to support the school to become an educational and financial sustainable school between 2018 and 2021. The school would remain a maintained school until an academy sponsor was sought by the Regional School Commissioner (RSC). A new interim executive board (IEB) would be established by the Local Authority. They would work with senior leaders to restructure the curriculum and staffing at the school. A capital investment plan would also be developed that would invest circa £4.6m in the school estate. From September 2020 there will be one intake into Year 7 of 120 pupils, which is an overall reduction of 65 students into the school when there was a Year 7 and 9 intake.

2. The schools listed below would extend their age ranges from age 3 or 4 to age 9 to age 3 or 4 to age 11 and hence become Primary schools from September 2019.

Bellingham First School

Kielder First School

Otterburn First School

Greenhaugh First School

Wark CE First School (Authority supported the Diocese)

3. Bellingham Middle School would close with effect from 31 August 2019. This decision has subsequently been challenged and it was the decision of the Schools Adjudicator that the school should remain open. The correspondence in relation to this decision is found in the Background Papers.

4. A decision regarding West Woodburn First School was delayed so that officers and governors at the school could investigate further options and choices.

5. There would be no changes to school organisation in the Hexham partnership.

6. Officers would work with leaders of the Hadrian Learning Trust to investigate the potential for capital investment in the schools.
7. A review of home to school transport would take place for any children impacted by the changes and this would be done on a case by case basis.
8. A resilience programme would be established that would encourage the formation of a hard federation or federation of schools that would ensure small rural schools are both financially and educationally viable.
9. The Local authority would work in partnership with a number of organisations to establish a trust that may become the vehicle to offer to schools so that they could become members of a multi-academy trust (MAT). The members of the trust would have to apply to the Department for Education to establish this entity and if successful a further report would be made available to Cabinet in September 2019.

## **1. Background**

The organisation of schools in the west of Northumberland has been discussed extensively. Minutes of the Cabinet meeting of 8 May 2018 and 10 July 2018 are available on the NCC website at <http://committee.northumberland.gov.uk/Meeting.aspx?MeetID=9116>

## **2. Impact of actions taken by the Local Authority and other partners to enable school governors to establish a more resilience approach to the challenges they face:**

### A. Haydon Bridge High School

Please note due to the extensive nature of this action a more detailed report was presented to the Family and Children's Scrutiny committee on February 11 2019. However in summary action taken by the IEB and NCC has resulted in:

- Improvement to the Human Resources (HR) provision
- Consolidation of leadership by the appointment of a substantive headteacher and an assistant headteacher
- Improved teaching and learning in Mathematics
- Improved pastoral support
- Improved level of challenge from the IEB to leaders through a rapid improvement group led by the ex headteacher of Prudhoe High School
- Restructuring of the leadership team to provide greater capacity and clearer lines of accountability and faculty system
- Better use of Pupil Premium funding to ensure disadvantaged pupils benefit
- Enhanced middle leadership through the introduction of a training programme
- Better use of data to improve assessment of pupils' progress

- More challenge in lessons and better marking
- £4.5m will be invested by the LA in the rationalisation of buildings at Haydon Bridge High School which will assist the school in reducing its fixed costs and thereby its deficit budget. This work is due to begin in Summer term 2019.

The local authority action plan has been deemed fit for purpose by Ofsted. Although absence rates have decreased and behaviour has improved, at the first monitoring visit it was judged that it was too early to see the impact of some of the above actions on outcomes for children and therefore the school would remain in special measures. It is the ambition of the IEB that the school be removed from special measures by the end of 2020. The inspector noted that the newly formed IEB have worked swiftly to get to grips with the areas that need the most attention in the school. They are in a strong position to use their skills shrewdly to hold leaders, at all levels, to account and effect change. The proposed removal of the middle schools in Haltwhistle and Bellingham (later rescinded) would assist the school in recruiting more pupils into years 7 and 8 and enable it to be more financially strong. The school was predicting a very significant financial deficit, circa £600k per year and this has been brought back under control with a target that it will come back into a positive balance by the financial year 2021.

#### B. Bellingham Middle and First Schools

The first and middle schools in Bellingham are federated and have one governing body. Each school has its own headteacher. The middle school had 95 pupils on its roll (October 2018 census) and was judged by Ofsted to require improvement. Bellingham First School had 55 pupils (October 2018 census) and was judged by Ofsted to be Good. In July 2018 the Council approved the closure of Bellingham Middle School with effect from 31 August 2019 and the extension of the age ranges of the remaining first schools in the Haydon Bridge Partnership to primary schools with effect from 1 September 2019. In October 2018, following an appeal from the Governing Body of the Bellingham Federation of Schools, the Schools Adjudicator notified parents and relevant parties of his decision to reject the Council's proposal to close the middle school and therefore it will remain open for the foreseeable future. An investment of circa £912k was planned to include relocation of the Children's Centre and rationalisation of buildings. The NCC project director will work with the school to identify any potential support that can be provided to the school and seek to clarify how governors of the federation will work together to sustain the future of the middle school.

#### C. Haltwhistle Middle and First Schools (part of WISE Academies Trust) and Haydon Bridge Shaftoe Trust Primary Academy

The two schools in Haltwhistle were originally sponsored by the Bright Tribe Trust. Haltwhistle first school had 206 pupils on roll (October 2018 census) and the middle school had 142 pupils on roll (October 2018 census). At their latest inspection the middle school was placed in special measures and the first school was judged to

require improvement. The RSC has re-brokered the schools to the WISE academy trust. The Trust consulted on closing the middle school with effect from 31 August 2019. An extension of age ranges at the first school would enable the trust to establish a primary school that would ensure children have a smooth transition at the end of key stage 2 to Haydon Bridge High School. The WISE trust has an excellent educational track record of success and continues to closely collaborate with the local authority. Discussions are underway about how the school buildings in Haltwhistle can be enhanced to provide the best possible educational opportunities. An update for parents written by the Chief Executive Officer of WISE is contained with the background papers. The resilience and long term future of the schools will be determined by the WISE academy trust, NCC remains determined to assist the trust where ever it can. The WISE trust have also successfully taken over three schools within the Blyth partnership.

No changes were planned at the Haydon Bridge Shaftoe Trust Primary Academy and its long term resilience will be managed by the trust. It had 127 pupils on roll (October 2018 census). NCC is committed to working alongside the trust wherever it can to support the well respected and successful WISE Trust. The school received £130K for roof replacement works.

#### E. Whitfield CE VA Primary Academy.

This school is part of the Good Shepherd Multi-academy trust. No changes were planned at the academy and its long term resilience remains in the hands of the MAT. NCC is committed to supporting the trust wherever it can. The academy has yet to be inspected under the new arrangements as an academy but its predecessor school was placed in special measures. The school had 35 pupils on roll (October 2018 census) and the trust therefore has a very challenging position to support the school both financially and to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum. NCC will offer support to the trust where ever it can to aid its resilience, however unless numbers of pupils grow it remains a very challenging situation.

#### F. Henshaw CE and Greenhead CE Primary Schools (The West Tyne Federation)

The two schools are in a federation and overseen by one governing body and one executive headteacher. The governing body has stated that it recognises that Greenhead school's budget is in significant deficit and has held an informal consultation with parents to discuss the possible closure of the school. There were 34 pupils on roll (October census 2018) at Greenhead and 60 pupils (October 2018 census) at Henshaw. Both schools were judged to be good at their last Ofsted inspection. Feedback from parents strongly indicated that they would like to see the Greenhead school continue. The Newcastle Church of England Diocese Board also recognised the financial difficulties faced by the school. NCC recognised that the school's deficit budget arose primarily from a number of external factors including the need to address staff redundancies and that the budget had been well managed within the context of the school. Therefore it was proposed that the council support the governing body to implement a three-year recovery plan. The proposed removal of the middle school in Haltwhistle will enable Greenhead school to retain pupils in

years 5 and 6 which should have an impact on its ability to remain financially viable and offer a broad and balanced curriculum in key stage 2.

#### G. Newbrough CE Primary school.

No changes were proposed at this school. The school had 73 children on roll (October census 2018) and was judged to be good at its last inspection. The school is not predicting a financial deficit. The Newcastle Church of England Diocese continues to support its church schools in the west of Northumberland and continues to encourage them to forge partnerships with other schools to enhance their resilience.

#### E. Wark CE VA First school.

The governing body submitted a business case to demonstrate how the school could be organised into an effective primary school and have both financial stability and deliver a broad and balanced curriculum. The school had 30 pupils (October 2018 census) and was judged to be good at its last inspection. The school is not predicting a financial deficit. An investment of £10k was planned to facilitate minor internal refurbishment. Governors were to work with the Diocese to investigate the potential for the school to join a federation of like-minded schools or a multi-academy trust.

#### F. Greenhaugh First School

The governing body submitted a business case to demonstrate how the school could be organised into an effective primary school and have both financial stability and deliver a broad and balanced curriculum. The school had 23 pupils (October 2018 census) and was judged to be good at its last inspection. The school is not predicting a financial deficit. A capital investment of £366k is planned to include classroom extension, that recently achieved planning permission. Governors were to investigate the potential for the school to join a federation of like-minded schools or a multi-academy trust.

#### G. Allendale Primary School

No changes were proposed at this school. The school was judged to be good at its previous inspection and had 114 pupils on roll (October 2018 census). The school is predicting a financial deficit. The governors of the school were expected to investigate the potential for the school to become more resilient by joining a federation or multi-academy trust.

#### H. Kielder First School

The governing body of the school wished to extend the age range of the school to become a primary school. The school had 12 pupils on roll (October 2018 census) and was judged to be outstanding at its last inspection. The school is predicting a financial deficit, which the school expects to change with Years 5 & 6. The

governors of the school were expected to investigate the potential for the school to become more resilient by joining a federation or multi-academy trust.

#### I. Otterburn First School

The governing body of the school wished to extend the age range of the school to become a primary school. The school had 35 pupils on roll (October 2018 census) and was judged to be good at its last inspection. It was predicting a financial deficit. A capital investment of circa £360k was planned to include toilet and cloakroom provision. In addition the school will receive £30k to upgrade kitchen ventilation. The governors of the school were expected to investigate the potential for the school to become more resilient by joining a federation or multi-academy trust. The governors have been in discussion with the governors of West Woodburn First School.

#### J. West Woodburn First School

It was originally proposed that the school became a primary school. However after discussion with governors it was decided that this should be contingent upon the school joining a federation or multi-academy trust. The school was judged to be good at its last inspection and had 16 pupils on roll (October 2018 census). The number on roll currently (February 2019) is 8 and predictions indicate 6 children will attend the school in September 2019. The school is predicting a financial deficit. The school does not have a substantive headteacher and the headteacher of Otterburn First School has been overseeing the school as a temporary measure. The governors have been in discussion with the governing body at Otterburn First School to examine the potential for the schools to work more closely together. The consultation closes on March 4<sup>th</sup> and governors will meet on March 12<sup>th</sup> to decide on future arrangements.

#### K. Queen Elizabeth High School and Hexham Middle School (Hadrian Learning Trust)

It was agreed that NCC would notify the RSC that they could not support the proposed changes to age ranges due to the lack of support from other local schools and the wider community. The trust decided to withdraw its proposal to extend age ranges. It was also noted that the buildings of the Hadrian Learning Trust required significant capital investment and the Trust felt it would face very significant financial challenges over the next three years. Circa 1290 pupils (October 2018 census) attend the high school including 384 in the sixth form and 419 pupils (October 2018 census) attended the middle school. The Outline Business Case for new school building for Hexham Middle School and Queen Elizabeth High school has been approved by the Council's Cabinet and procurement has started on 25 February. It is predicted that new school building will be complete for September 2021. The High school continues to be very high performing in terms of academic outcomes and popular with parents. Both academies were judged to be good at their last inspection.

#### L. St Joseph's Middle School and St Mary's RC First School.

No changes were proposed at the schools. The Middle school had 332 pupils (October 2018 census) and the First school had 100 pupils (October 2018 census). Both schools were judged to be good at their last inspection. The Middle school is not predicting a financial deficit, however, the First school is predicting a financial deficit. The Roman Catholic Diocese may be consulting on the benefits of becoming academies with schools across the region and at this point the governors will be involved in making choices for the future.

#### M. Corbridge Middle School

No changes were planned at the school. There were 354 pupils (October 2018 census) and the recent inspection found it to be good with outstanding features. The school is predicting a financial deficit. Given these factors the school remains in a relatively strong position. The school will receive £150k for a flat roof replacement and £50k for a fire alarm upgrade. Governors are keen to forge partnerships with local schools.

#### N. Corbridge CE First School

No changes were planned at the school. There were 155 pupils (October 2018 census) and the school was judged to be good at its last inspection. The school was not predicting a financial deficit. Given these factors the school remains in a relatively strong position. The CE diocese will continue to work with the school to develop strong partnerships with other schools in the area. There is a shared leadership role with Broomhaugh C E First School.

#### O. Whittonstall First School

No changes were planned at the school. There were 68 pupils (October 2018 census) at the school and it was judged to be good at its last inspection. The school was not predicting a financial deficit. Despite being relatively small the school remains in a strong position. The school is already federated with Broomley First School and shares a headteacher and back office costs. This provides an effective model for other schools to consider.

#### P. The Sele First School

No changes were planned at the school. As an outstanding teaching school with no financial deficit it is in a very strong position. There were 441 pupils (October 2018 census) on roll. The school has received £220k for window replacement work and £140K for boiler replacement. NCC would encourage governors at the school to consider supporting other small schools via federation or the establishment of a MAT.

#### Q. Slaley First School

No changes were planned at the school. It was judged to be good at its last inspection. There were 48 pupils (October 2018 census) at the school and it was not predicting a financial deficit. Despite its current strong position NCC would strongly recommend to governors that they consider the benefits of joining a federation or MAT to ensure the long term future of the school.

#### R. Hexham First School

No changes were planned at the school. It was judged to be good at its last inspection and had 126 pupils (October 2018 census) on roll. It predicted a financial deficit but a recovery plan was in place. NCC would strongly recommend to governors that they consider the benefits of joining a federation or MAT to ensure the long term future of the school.

#### S. Acomb First School

No changes were planned at the school. It was judged to be good at its last inspection and had 54 pupils (October 2018 census) on roll. The school was predicting a financial deficit over the next three years. NCC would strongly recommend to governors that they consider the benefits of joining a federation or MAT to ensure the long term future of the school. The school is situated less than 2 miles from its nearest neighbouring school. Governors have indicated that they now expect their budget to be in balance, but significant cuts will have to be made to staffing and services

#### T. Beaufront First School

No changes were planned at the school. It was judged to be outstanding at its last inspection and had 73 pupils (October 2018 census) on roll. The school was predicting a financial deficit over the next three years. NCC would strongly recommend to governors that they consider the benefits of joining a federation or MAT to ensure the long term future of the school. The school will receive capital funding of £22k to replace emergency lighting. The school is situated less than 2 miles from its nearest neighbouring school.

#### U. Chollerton CE First School

No changes were planned at the school. It was judged to be outstanding at its last inspection and had 36 pupils (October 2018 census) on roll. The school was not predicting a financial deficit. NCC would strongly recommend governors and the CE diocese investigate the potential benefits for the school if it were to join a federation or MAT.

#### V. Whitley Chapel CE First School

No changes were planned at the school. It was judged to be good at its last inspection and had 34 pupils (October 2018 census) on roll. The school was not predicting a financial deficit.

NCC would strongly recommend governors and the CE diocese investigate the potential benefits for the school if it were to join a federation or MAT.

#### W. Humshaugh CE First School

No changes were planned at the school. It was judged to be good at its last inspection and had 41 pupils (October 2018 census) on roll. It was not predicting a financial deficit. NCC would strongly recommend governors and the CE diocese investigate the potential benefits for the school if it were to join a federation or MAT.

#### X. Broomhaugh CE First School

No changes were planned at the school. It was judged to be outstanding at its last inspection and had 72 pupils (October 2018 census) on roll.. It was predicting a financial deficit in the next three years. the school had 65 pupils on roll. NCC would strongly recommend governors and the CE diocese investigate the potential benefits for the school if it were to join a federation or MAT.

### **3. Transport**

The area covered by the greater Haydon Bridge Partnership catchment area is the largest in the county at 642m<sup>2</sup> and therefore the time taken for children to travel to and from school was a significant theme raised during consultation. Had the Council's proposal to close Bellingham Middle School not been rejected by the Schools Adjudicator, pupils from the age of 11 in Year 7 in the Haydon Bridge Partnership would have travelled to Haydon Bridge High School (subject to parental preference) from September 2019, two years earlier than would have been the case in any event. Children who remain on roll at the primary schools (as they will be) from September 2019 will be able to remain within their communities for an additional two years and will have shorter journeys to school, although this will have a negligible impact for children on roll at Bellingham Primary.

The submission of the appeal against the closure of Bellingham Middle School by the federated Governing Body meant that during the time that the Adjudicator was considering the details of the proposal, parents were having to submit their preferences for places at middle or high school for their children for 2019. To assist parents who were unsure of which choice of school to make, the Council extended the deadline for submission of preferences for middle schools to parents of children in Year 4 in the relevant first schools by 2 weeks to November 16th, by which time the Adjudicator's decision had been received. Furthermore, as a result of the uncertainty over whether or not the middle school would remain open, the Council has agreed a one-off exception to the Home to School Transport Policy, whereby for those Year 4 children whose parents submitted a preference for Bellingham Middle

School by November 16th 2018, transport will be provided (subject to meeting the eligibility criteria) for the time that they attend that middle school.

School Transport Officers are also working with transport providers to review routes with the objective of reducing journey times overall for pupils attending Haydon Bridge High School from the North Pennine and Redesdale areas.

#### **4. The development of a multi-academy trust**

4.1 Northumberland is a great place to live and work. It has many outstanding schools and we are proud of the work done by educational professionals and governors across the county. However there are also significant challenges, including driving up achievement in some secondary schools, enhancing social mobility particularly amongst white working class boys, recruiting and retaining high quality teachers and leaders and ensuring very small schools remain financially viable and are able to offer a broad curriculum.

4.2 There have been many changes to the educational landscape both nationally and locally since the introduction of the academies programme. Since the introduction of the academy system, a high proportion of Northumberland's secondary schools have decided to convert to academy status. A smaller but growing number of primary and first schools are joining MATs, for example in Ponteland and Prudhoe. These schools are doing this because they feel it is the right direction to tackle the educational and social challenges faced by our children and young people. However some of our smaller schools face the same challenges but do not feel they have the capacity to establish a MAT or federation. A group of like-minded individuals and organisations are considering setting up a Northumberland MAT with a shared ethos and common values. This would offer opportunities for schools to join a structure that is right for them and fits into the wider context of Northumberland. The Local Authority has been invited to be one of 7 members of the Trust.

4.3 It is important to remember that the members of the potential trust, if established, are not imposing a one-size fits all solution but are offering a potential solution for schools who feel they do not have the capacity to establish a MAT for themselves. Of course many alternatives exist, some schools may decide to form federations and others may feel that they can remain as independent stand-alone entities without structural change.

4.4 Members of the trust will be meeting in March 2019 and it looks likely that they will agreed a period of informal consultation and awareness-raising. This will be useful to help develop and research the potential for the development of such a multi-academy trust (MAT). Members recognise it is vital to have a well thought out strategy in place, developed through consensus, that will allow the possible transition of schools to academy status if or when required, rather than it be the knee-jerk reaction to external influences or an imposed solution.

4.5 The potential members and organisations are:

- Sir Alan Craft - The Northumbria Healthcare NHS Trust
- Professor Diane Ford - The University of Northumbria
- Sir John Hall
- Wayne Daley - lead member for Children's Services - Northumberland County Council
- David Hall - Active Northumberland
- Alan Ferguson CBE - Fergusons Transport
- Dr Alan Lowdon - Port of Blyth Authority

4.6 The members will potentially draw on the strengths of each partner organisation to build a multi-academy trust structure. If the informal consultation received a positive response this would then encourage schools to join the trust. These schools are likely to be relatively small and challenged by rural isolation. They may be a mixture of First, Primary, Middle, Secondary or Special schools. Ensuring and extending good leadership and teaching to ensure children and young people achieve excellent outcomes is at the heart of the members vision.

4.7 Members have identified a set of guiding values:

- Inclusion - a voice for everyone
- Focus - on educational outcomes and social mobility
- Partnership - in everything we do, to avoid competition
- Quality – educational excellence achieved through research, innovation and creativity
- Integrity - fairness for all and a transparent approach to governance

They believe that schools are stronger if they work together.

4.8 It is important to say that simply joining a multi-academy trust structure will not result in automatic improvement. It will be the impact of the changes that will produce results, not the structure itself. However, here are some possible benefits:

- Headteachers would share expertise and plan to tackle initiatives and challenges together
- Schools would have shared accountability for outcomes throughout age ranges and any sense of competition to attract pupils would be removed and outcomes would improve
- Those responsible for governance would cooperate more effectively to share skills, work strategically and support each other
- Sharing staff and resources would offer schools different ways to use expertise, foster staff development, plan for the future and solve recruitment challenges;
- Groups of schools would source and fund specialists and support curriculum enrichment;
- Shared professional development would be facilitated (coaching and mentoring can develop expertise within and across the different phases of education);

- Transition from the first/primary/middle level to secondary would be made seamless;
- Co-ordinated provision would be put in place for educational welfare, family support and special needs provision.

4.9 At the core of the vision is the need to enhance and support educational leadership across Northumberland's schools and academies, so that in turn the quality of teaching and learning improves and outcomes improve.

4.10 However it is clear that attracting high quality existing MATs with capacity to support particular schools in Northumberland remains a challenge and therefore the establishment of a 'home-grown' Northumberland MAT is a possible solution. Before this can be done members believe they must :

- Foster strong relationships with schools, academies and regional partners
- Focus on the context and place in which it is embedded and take into account contextual factors and the local vision for education – Northumberland.
- Have clear priorities and clarity about roles and responsibilities
- Be supported by a number of good or outstanding schools who have the ambition, capacity and resources to help support others
- Be guided by a moral purpose to support the most vulnerable and not leave anyone behind
- Base decisions on evidence-based research and impact of actions

4.11 The Trust, if established, would generate income in its own right and enable schools to share services and bring about economies of scale. It would also provide significant opportunities to maximise the use of finances due to economies of scale. Hard-wiring a partnership like this provides a greater chance of sustainability and should endure beyond the personal relationships that already exist between some schools. It also removes competition between local schools and offers more credibility and impartiality in decision making. Schools should have a clear stake and ownership in the Trust from the beginning and shape what it looked like. If schools do not share the vision of members then they will not be forced to enter into any form of agreement.

4.12 Establishing a small MAT of successful schools with the capacity to expand across age ranges will be a first step. It may be that at a later stage that members look for sponsor opportunities for schools that are not yet good.

4.13 Governing boards of schools in the west of the county may not wish them to convert to academy status at this time. They may wish to consider joining a federation or indeed may feel that for them 'no change' is the best option. We already have schools happily working together who are good and outstanding and who are providing an excellent education for their pupils. However for some schools the time might be right for them to take the step towards academisation or federation.

4.14 Governing bodies who feel that the time is right to convert to academy status can pursue this option, knowing that there is a structure already in place to meet their needs. The Trust will allow for a more effective and efficient centralised service towards making the transition to academy status smooth and efficient. Issues such as financial, legal, human resources, access to capital funding and other national resources can be dealt with by an experienced central service.

4.15 A discussion document will be widely distributed across the county. Members hope that governing boards will have separate meetings to discuss this option and in addition headteachers and senior leadership teams will also engage with the question of Academy conversion and the benefits of joining a MAT.

4.16 If the Governing Body of an individual school thinks it necessary, they may define a timeframe for initial talks with the Trust and subsequently with parents and the community served by their school. Individuals and especially parents and pupils should be encouraged to submit their considered responses to any proposals from governors.

## **5. Conclusion**

The Resilience initiative was established in July 2018 with a three year time frame in mind. There have been some notable positive steps made in the last 6 months. They can be summarised as:

- The position at Haydon Bridge High School is much more stable and real progress is at last being made towards the school being removed from special measures.
- Queen Elizabeth High School academy continues to be a very high performing and popular school and the council is working closely with the Hadrian Learning Trust to deliver new school buildings for September 2021.
- The partnership of schools in Hexham can now plan and move forward on a clear understanding that a three tier system will be in place for the foreseeable future.
- Haltwhistle schools now have a strong sponsor in the form of the WISE academies trust.
- A high proportion of schools in the west still maintain or have enhanced their good or outstanding status, a notable example being Corbridge Middle school.
- Otterburn First School and West Woodburn First School are working towards a federated structure.
- Whittonstall First School continues to be federated with Broomley First School and this provides a significant degree of resilience under the guidance of one Headteacher, a single Governing Body and shared back-office costs.
- Henshaw CE Primary and Greenhead CE Primary Schools (The West Tyne Federation) continue to work together to secure a better financial position through its federation.

- Whitfield CE Primary Schools continues to be part of the Good Shepherd Trust and reap the benefits that working as part of a MAT brings.
- St Joseph's RC Middle School and St Mary's RC First School continue to work closely together. The Roman Catholic Diocese may be consulting on the benefits of setting up a MAT across its area. This may add further resilience.
- Some of the larger schools remain strong stand-alone entities, including Corbridge Middle School, the Sele First school, although the Local Authority would encourage them to consider if they could offer more support to other local schools in the form of a federation or MAT.
- The conversion work in changing the physical structure of First schools planned to become Primary has progressed well and building work at Otterburn First School is on schedule to be completed by September 2019, while works at Greenhaugh First School will begin following the completion of Otterburn First School.
- The review of home-school transport continues to be undertaken by the schools transport team with each families needs being looked at individually.
- The proposed MAT may offer schools new support structures when it is established.

However many challenges remain in terms of the financial and educational future of small schools. They can be summarised as:

- The Church of England Diocese has been proactive in encouraging its schools to consider federation or becoming part of a MAT. These schools include - Newbrough CE Primary School, Wark CE VA Primary School, Chollerton CE First School, Whitley Chapel CE First School, Humshaugh CE First School and Broomhaugh CE First School who are particularly vulnerable due to having small numbers of pupils on roll (less than 75). As far as the Local Authority is aware none of these very small church schools have taken these ideas forward and therefore concerns remain about future capacity.
- The Local Authority has been proactive in encouraging its schools to consider federation or becoming part of a MAT. These schools include - Greenhaugh First School, Kielder First School, Slaley First School, Acomb First School, and Beaufront First School who are particularly vulnerable due to having small numbers of pupils on roll (less than 75). As far as the Local Authority is aware none of these very small schools have taken the ideas forward and therefore concerns remain about future viability.
- It is part of our ongoing work to support Bellingham First and Middle School in the light of the school's adjudicator's decision and as yet it is too soon to predict an outcome of this work.
- The decision of the schools adjudicator has made it impossible for the Local authority to address the over-capacity of school places in the county. Officers will continue to work hard to ensure that the pattern of school places across the county offers the best possible educational and financial solution to schools.

## CONSULTATION

None required for this report

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet Paper 8 May 2018

Cabinet Paper 10 July 2018

Report to FACS re Haydon Bridge High School February 2019

Haltwhistle Middle School - [update for parents from Zoe Carr](#)

Towards an Academy Strategy – from members of the Northumberland Education Trust

Letter to Schools - Resilience Programme Questionnaire

## IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

<b>Policy:</b>	There are considered to be no implications arising from this report.
<b>Finance and value for money:</b>	Investment in schools in west
<b>Legal:</b>	There are considered to be no implications arising from this report.
<b>Procurement:</b>	There are considered to be no implications arising from this report.
<b>Human Resources:</b>	There are considered to be no implications arising from this report.
<b>Property:</b>	Rationalisation of the school estate
<b>Equalities:</b> (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Risk Assessment:</b>	There is a risk that schools might be rated inadequate by Ofsted or fall into deficit budget positions
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder:</b>	There are considered to be no implications arising from this report.
<b>Customer Considerations:</b>	There are considered to be no implications arising from this report.
<b>Carbon Reduction:</b>	There are considered to be no implications arising from this report.
<b>Wards:</b>	All in West

**Report sign off.**

Finance Officer	N/A
Monitoring Officer/Legal	N/A
Human Resources	N/A
Procurement	N/A
I.T.	N/A
Executive Director of Children's Services	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Portfolio Holder(s)	Wayne Daley

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