



 **growing church bringing hope**

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Our Ref: PTR/ST

11th June 2018

Dear Parents,

As you will know, the past six months have seen a great deal of uncertainty over the future of educational provision in the West Tyne and this has impacted directly on our Church of England schools.

Throughout the recent consultation exercise run by the County Council, I worked extremely closely with your Headteachers and Governors to support their response and ensure we continue to have vibrant, successful schools achieving excellent outcomes for our children.

At the start of the consultation process, I advised our schools that there are challenges ahead. School finances are increasingly hard to manage and there are greater expectations on how we deliver a broad and balanced curriculum to meet our children's needs. At the same time there is the national difficulty of recruiting new teachers and Headteachers.

This week, I met with Headteachers and some chairs of governors to discuss how to move forward with the challenges we face. In the final response to the consultation, the Local Authority made it clear that they want us to explore ways in which our schools can form partnerships, possibly as hard federations or multi academy trusts. The Diocesan Board of Education has a statutory duty to work with schools strategically to make sure they remain both distinct and rooted in their community, as well as being excellent places to learn and develop. To this end, we will be actively exploring opportunities for our schools over the coming 12 months. I have discussed our intentions with Dean Jackson – Service Director, Education and Skills Northumberland County Council who has replaced Andy Johnson and he is keen to work with the Diocese as a 'partner' as we consider how best to support our schools.

As parents and important members of the community, I want to assure you that you will be given the opportunity to contribute to the discussions about the future – your voice will be heard. In the first instance, I plan to discuss with our schools ways in which we can work more strategically to deliver an exciting future for our children in the West Tyne. Once these discussions have taken place, I or the school will write to you again to invite you to discuss any proposals we may formulate.



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Please be assured that we remain absolutely committed to ensuring our children are given the best possible education and we continue to recognise the important role your school plays in the local community.

Yours sincerely

Paul Rickeard
Diocesan Director of Education
CofE Diocese of Newcastle