

Dear Parents,

While the Council's consultation moved to a second stage in the Haydon Bridge partnership, only recently concluded and awaiting outcomes, in the Hexham Partnership we have enjoyed a few weeks of relative calm after some incredibly challenging months.

While much was made of the way information was presented and arguments made during the consultation process, there is no doubt that the reality is schools face tough times ahead.

We have a fantastic school in Riding Mill, but we can't ignore the impact of external pressures and challenges ahead. School finances are increasingly tight and there are increasing expectations on the delivery of the curriculum in order to meet all our children's needs. In this context, it is vital that our Governing Body explores any viable option to allow flexible and innovative responses to these challenges.

You may well have seen in the Council's consultation report that while it made the decision not to close many of our small rural schools it also expected to see progress made by schools in building what it called 'resilience' by exploring ways to work closer together.

The Hexham partnership of schools has a long history of very effective collaboration and this is very much one of the strengths of the overall educational offer in our area and how this supports children on their journey.

We need to explore what opportunities may exist in the future to help protect and develop all our schools, and of course, most importantly from our perspective, Broomhaugh.

Attached to this email is a letter from Paul Rickeard, the Director of Education at the Diocese. I think it's fairly self-explanatory, although I suspect it may raise more questions than it provides answers at the moment – but we will be continuing to work closely with Paul to get these answers.

As a C. of E. School we have always benefited from the support we receive from the Diocese in many different ways. Paul and his team worked very hard with us and on our behalf during the consultation and their influence at a strategic level should not be underestimated.

As a Governing Body we have expressed our commitment to working with Paul and his team to explore options in the coming months to see what is possible, workable and desirable.

While the Diocese has a clear responsibility with regards to C. of E. schools, it is our understanding that their intention is to try and find ways to work as much as possible as an entire partnership of schools and we fully support this principle at this stage.

The Diocese, as you will see from Paul's letter, is working to establish a partnership approach with the Council and this is welcomed. We need to be joined up in our thinking as much as possible. As we saw with the consultation while all schools have their strengths - the partnership (across heads, schools, Governors, parents and the community) is what really makes us strong.

No doubt there will be plenty to discuss over the coming months and I would like to reiterate Paul's point that we will absolutely ensure that you all have a voice in these discussions. We will arrange opportunities with you at key stages of the process.

The Governing Body has always been open and honest. On behalf of the Governing Body I'd like to ask for your trust and support that over the coming months we'll continue to work

hard and in what we believe are the best interests of the school, the children and the community and involve you wherever possible.

Managing communication, as and when there are updates, is not always simple when you consider the complexity of organisations involved – not least many schools, the Diocese and the Council!

We'll do our best to get it right, but with so many other parties potentially involved in discussions we can't know what others may choose to say or when.

If you ever have any questions or concerns then please don't hesitate to contact us.

Thanks,

Jen Stephenson and Dom Aldred  
On Behalf of the Governing Body