



Northumberland County Council

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to update you on the latest progress on Northumberland County Council's £50m investment in schools in North Northumberland.

As you are aware, following two years of consultation, we have been tasked with restructuring the school model in the Berwick partnership of schools. This will involve expanding the area's first schools and Berwick Academy into primaries and a secondary school.

It's our ambition to develop first-class facilities for all learners in the Berwick Partnership which will support education in the area for generations to come.

We are really excited to be able to move to the next steps and see these plans start to take shape.

The Council has appointed technical advisors to support in developing and delivering the plans for the schools.

Architects have created a series of designs for the first schools and a new state-of-the-art Family Hub facility at the new Wooler Primary School.

Following our work with schools to develop designs for their new facilities, there was a need to provide additional funding to deliver the schemes and a further £2.4m was approved on 9th October which takes the overall budget for investment in Berwick partnership of schools to over £50m.

The procurement of contractors to carry out the works at the first schools is now underway and planning applications are being submitted.

Next steps include expanding specialist provision including a new SEN Unit at the site of Berwick St Mary's Church of England First School with 30 places for children diagnosed with special educational needs, primarily those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), Speech Language and Communication (SLCN) and Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) with effect from 1 September 2025.

An outline business case for the project to develop the Berwick Academy buildings will be brought to the Council's Cabinet for approval in the near future.

Northumberland County Council aims to support the retention of affected school staff within the new schools over the next two years. If this is not possible in all cases, recruitment, redeployment and retraining to other suitable posts in Northumberland will be offered as appropriate.

There has been extensive engagement with schools and all trade unions to develop a recruitment and placement process to appoint middle school staff into new roles.

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These consultations have been positive and a process is in action. Multiple posts have already been filled and more are about to be offered.

As a result, we are surprised that despite the progress being made, the unions involved in industrial action decided to go ahead with the current round of strike action. We will continue to work with all partners to mitigate the risk of further action.

We are committed to supporting all school staff, along with pupils and their families, during this transition process as the partnership of schools and the wider community moves forward together onto this exciting next chapter.

I look forward to bringing you more updates as the projects progress.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Street', is positioned below the text 'Yours sincerely,'.

David Street
Director of Education, SEND and Skills