



Explore, Learn and Grow Together

Brewery Road
Wooler
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Friday 24th November 2023

Dear Parents/Carers

Welcome to the second half of the Autumn term. Apologies for the delay in getting this letter out to you all, I had intended to get some of the information below out to you all last week but the call from Ofsted for the First School inspection consumed a lot of time. As you may know inspection findings and outcomes have to remain confidential while Ofsted check, quality assure and then finally publish their report letter. However, I am able to share with you all that it was a very positive day with the two inspectors and we are looking forward to be being able to share the outcomes with you all soon. Ofsted aim to publish inspection reports in 30 working days from the date of the inspection. Hopefully it will be sooner but you can expect to receive a copy of the report in early December.

Attendance and Punctuality

I am happy to report that our attendance figures for the start of the year have risen back to pre-pandemic levels with both schools being over 95% for last half term. This is great but I have noted a number of children arriving after the school day has started. This is very disruptive to their learning and to school routines at the start of the day. Children at Wooler First School should be here by 8:55am and children at Glendale Middle by 8:50am. I will be monitoring this over the coming weeks and will follow up directly with families on an individual basis should it be necessary. The Local Authority has also updated its guidance regarding term time leave of absence communications. Our systems remain the same with any term time leave requests being completed on the relevant form (available from the school office). These request forms, either approved or not approved are now accompanied by a letter home too. Absence during term time should be avoided and headteachers are unable to authorise any term time holidays.

Safeguarding note

Mr Pearse and Mr Johnson undertook their first aid refresher training last week and there was an item of note that I feel should be shared with everyone. The course leaders shared that there has been a significant rise in injuries linked to device chargers, particularly in children. This happens when device charging leads (from mobile phones, tablets etc.) are left plugged in and switched on. Children (and pets) have suffered significant burns from the ends of these leads, particularly if they are put in their mouths. I will be speaking to the staff and children here in school this week about this and I would recommend that everyone checks this at home too.

Berwick Partnership Consultation

Please read the information on the second page of this letter before completing and returning this reply slip – thank you. At this point these are proposals for consultation – none of this is as yet decided or certain.

The governing body would like to understand parent and carer views on school catchments as outlined in the current NCC Consultation About Education in the Berwick Partnership. Catchment areas are defined by the Local Authority and determine where a child goes to school. At the moment our schools are within the Berwick catchment so the children would normally be expected to move from Glendale Middle School to Berwick Academy with funded transport provided by the Local Authority for this. If we were to change catchment in the future children would instead move from us to The Duchesses High School in Alnwick and transport would be provided to there.

Berwick Partnership Consultation – school catchment question reply slip

I would prefer our school to be in the: (please circle your preference and note your child/children’s year group)

Berwick Catchment Alnwick Catchment No preference

My child is in Year _____

Berwick Partnership Consultation

This consultation is very, very important to our schools and I hope that you all have taken the opportunity to read the consultation document from Northumberland County Council. Phase 2 of this consultation is open now and runs through to 3rd March 2023. The consultation document proposes significant changes here in Wooler with the First School expanding its age range to become a primary school and Glendale Middle School closing.

As the consultation runs its course this uncertainty regarding our future presents challenges for us all. It is vital that you understand what is being proposed and share your views on all of this with the Local Authority now. The consultation document is a lengthy 52 pages long but I would encourage everyone to read it thoroughly, paying particular attention to the sections noted below:

- Potential models (p23)
- Potential timelines for implementation (p29)
- Impact of proposal on school catchment and transport eligibility areas (p39)
- How will views from consultation be gathered? (p50)

The Local Authority will also be holding a public drop-in event here at our school (proposed for Thursday 12th January 2023 – further information to follow). There will also be meetings for our staff and our governing body. This is a very uncertain time for us all here in our schools, and our governing body, while expressing a preference for the primary/secondary model of organisation, are very aware of the challenge that this potential change will bring. The governing body met on Monday night last week and the consultation was a large part of their discussions. The question of school catchment area was discussed as the proposals for our school identify two possible options:

Model A (Revised 3-tier system of schools in Berwick)

- Wooler First School would change its age range and become a primary school and become part of the Alnwick Partnership. Glendale Middle School would close and pupils in Year 7 and 8 would transfer to The Duchess High School in Alnwick.

Model B (2-tier (Primary/Secondary System) of schools in Berwick)

- Wooler First School would change its age range and become a primary school and remain in the Berwick Partnership. Glendale Middle School would close on 31st August 2026 and the children in Years 7 and 8 would be educated at Berwick Academy.

The proposed time lines for changes to begin in either of these possible models would see changes starting to be made from September 2024. This time line presents particular difficulty for our schools with regards to school budgets and our current class/year group structures across our two schools. The governing body and I are acutely aware that making changes to how we operate over the next 12 to 18 months would cause significant disruption to the education of the children and the wellbeing of the staff. With these two worries firmly in mind the governing body has determined not to make any changes to our class and year group structure at either school at the present time even though this will be difficult financially. This means in practical terms that we intend to keep everything stable across our schools this year and for the 2023-2024 academic year. We will then, once the consultation has concluded and decisions have been made by the Local Authority, be able to plan and respond accordingly. If you have any question please come and ask...I will try to answer as best I can!

M.Deane-Hall
Executive Headteacher