**Broomhaugh & Riding Parish Council**

Response to Hadrian Learning Trust consultation

1-3 Identity questions – Name, postcode, representing

4. Proposal 1: Do you agree that Hexham Middle School and Queen Elizabeth High School should be amalgamated and expand to create an 11-18 secondary school?

**NO**

5. Give reasons

This proposal appears to have very little regard for the Hexham Partnership of schools. Our understanding is that these schools do not support the changes. Government guidance to academies states “Where local provision is organised in three tiers and the aim is to move to two tier age range, the department expects schools to work together to ensure an appropriate co-ordinated implementation, and will only approve any individual proposal in that context.”

This does not appear to be being adhered to.

Further, in response to your three stated reasons for change:

* Improving educational experience and outcomes

Whilst appreciating that there are very few areas of the country still offering a three-tier education model, in rural Northumberland this model has been shown to work successfully and the educational outcome of schools in the Hexham Partnership is excellent. Children in Years 5 & 6, being taught by subject specialists, appear, to us, to be at an advantage compared to their peers in primary education. With this model, newly formed small primaries would have to take on Year 6 SATS with mixed age classes. Are we really likely to see an improvement in educational experience? We consider that unlikely.

* Financial Sustainability

We appreciate a three-tier system is generally more expensive to operate. However, the forcible introduction of this system will be to the financial detriment of small feeder schools which may be forced to merge and which this proposal seems to ignore. There are no overall financial models for the changes. Will it deliver financial sustainability to all the area’s schools? We have not been provided with sufficient details.

* Capital Investment

The Parish Council wholeheartedly agrees that there should be investment in the buildings, facilities and infrastructure in the schools in the west of the county. Fully costed models of the proposals should be forthcoming. If Hadrian Learning Trust received funds for a new school, what guarantees would be offered to the community with regard to the future admissions policy of the school? Would only the academically elite be selected for its sixth form? If yes, then the funds should be directed elsewhere.

6. Proposal 2: If a decision is taken by NCC/Dept for Education to close Haydon Bridge High School, do you agree that QEHS should expand to provide places for children from the Haydon Bridge Partnership from September 2019?

Yes

7. Give reasons.

This is a qualified YES. We believe it would be in the interests of pupils for a high school to be maintained at Haydon Bridge perhaps offering more vocational type courses and will be lobbying the County Council accordingly. However, if the school is closed then the only course of action would be for HLT to provide places to the children in the Haydon Bridge partnership.

8. Alternative suggestions

We are concerned about the devastating impact these changes could have on small rural communities. We encourage Hadrian Learning Trust to explore further options with schools in the Hexham Partnership to find a consensus as to how to move forward. Options proposed by other schools should be explored to see if the necessary financial sustainability can be achieved by less destructive changes.