

**Secondary School Review – West Gateshead  
Consultation meeting**

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**Meeting:** Staff consultation

**Date/Time:** Tuesday 13 July at 3.30pm

**Venue:** Ryton Comprehensive School

<b>Present:</b>	<b>Cllr A Douglas</b>	<b>Portfolio Holder for Housing</b>
	<b>Margaret Whellans</b>	<b>Group Director Learning &amp; Children</b>
	<b>David Mitchell</b>	<b>Director Learning and Schools</b>
	<b>Peter Crabtree</b>	<b>Headteacher Hookergate School</b>
	<b>Steve Williamson</b>	<b>Headteacher Ryton School</b>
	<b>Adrian Hinchcliffe</b>	<b>Chair of Governors Ryton School</b>
	<b>Paul Carvin</b>	<b>Head of Raising Achievement Service</b>
	<b>Sandra Punton</b>	<b>School Organisation and Development Manager</b>
	<b>Sandra Hewson</b>	<b>Senior HR Adviser</b>
	<b>Dilys Cowper</b>	<b>Financial Support Services Manager</b>
	<b>Anita Dowson</b>	<b>Note taker</b>

**Attendance:** 120

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Steve Williamson, Headteacher at Ryton Comprehensive School opened the meeting and thanked those present for attending.

Introductions were made by representatives from the Local Authority.

David Mitchell gave an overview on progress since informal consultation in 2009 and highlighted issues regarding recent announcements by Government indicating that BSF projects in Gateshead have been suspended.

The following questions and comments were raised by members of staff at Ryton Comprehensive School.

- Given the process is about raising standards in the West, what is being done to ensure teachers at Hookergate don't get jobs elsewhere?
- Staff believe that the two schools can work together but parents don't believe this is possible. Need to get the message out into the community to help parents make the right decision about where to send their children to school. Hookergate parents want their children to remain at Hookergate.
- Have there been any thoughts on how to join parents up from the two schools?

- If staff leave how will it possible to teach lessons?
- Do you think the transition plan will increase in time i.e. get longer if the new school is being delayed?
- Worst case scenario money will not come through, what plans are in place?
- If the money isn't forthcoming what assurances can be given that the money will be found?
- Will we be in a position where there are extra demountables/temporary classes for the next 7-12 years, can any guarantees be given from the Council about timescales?
- Concerned about potential new site in light of financial constraints it seems at odds to think of purchasing a new site when there is currently a wonderful site at Ryton. Money could be spent on current site rather than build new infrastructure. All other rebuilds i.e. Lord Lawson, Thomas Hepburn, Cardinal Hume were all built on their existing sites. Staff would be delighted to have amalgamation happen at Ryton, there is no animosity between staff. New site is only 500 yards away from current site.
- From small estate in Chopwell children travel to Ryton, St Thomas More and Ovingham and they aren't affected by attending different schools. What is the difference of new school being on current site to being built on a new site?
- Possible site has been identified, what is the estimated cost to buy the site?
- Hope that as a taxpayer purchase of new site is not just for the sake of symbolism and not just for hearts and minds. Already have a beautiful building.
- What happens to infant and junior school if current Ryton site isn't used? Do they move too? What will happen to the site if something new is built? Ryton site must be worth lots of money and would want to know if something else was to be built on the site. Parents and staff at Junior and Infants have been asking what will happen to them.
- Why has that site been chosen when it's near a busy by-pass? Why haven't residents been told when it affects them?
- Hear that it's a new beginning, new home. What is wrong with the current home? Have an excellent reputation, why move site when current site is perfect and people know about it?

- There is a risk of alienating people though planning disputes and people not wanting a new school in their backyard. Planning issues in Consett caused delay for new school there. Durham followed same process and still hit issues over planning. Issues will be created within the Ryton Community at planning stage – vision is not right!
- Can Council clarify they are in consultation with the landowners, and if they buy the site and don't get money through BSF will Council money be wasted if the land is bought now?
- What if Hookergate parents decide to send their children to Kingsmeadow. Would Hookergate parents feel more comfortable sending their children to Kingsmeadow?
- What can Council do to assure parents' trust? Staff need to get a strong message across.
- Students from both schools will need to help get parents on board. Will the Council put money into Hookergate and Ryton for accommodation/temporary accommodation for the interim?
- Chicken and egg situation regarding site purchase, why not write to parents and ask them "yes" or "no" if they agree to new site?
- If Government is not forthcoming with the money will the council put up the money?
- Everyone is saying that everything will be alright – struggling to share the optimism.
- Kids will suffer if accommodated in demountables.
- Parents want the very best for their children.
- Feel very strongly about site and want to remain on current site which serves a very broad community. Parents who choose Ryton currently should promote the school as it is a fantastic site. No idea if new site will be adequate, why build on a green field site?
- LLoB wasn't closed just rebuilt.
- Referring back to Consett – uncertainty goes on for years and years, parents could send children to Prudhoe. Extra buildings could be used on current site, already has excellent sports facilities.
- By 2012 all should be on new site at what point does Council decide to have temporary buildings at Ryton or build a proper building at Ryton? Can't go on forever saying "if we get the money" why not invest in site

now?

- How long will Council wait? 1 year? Have to appreciate that there may have to be a final point.
- Assuming alternate provision wasn't forthcoming would that mean becoming something similar to an academy?
- Heard that a deposit of £50k has been made on land are Council dead set on that site?
- Have other sites been considered of just one?
- Is the current school site one of the 8 sites considered?
- Staff are aware that lots of negativity was generated when Hookergate and Blaydon merged. Have Council done research on amalgamations elsewhere which have been successful. Staff at Ryton feel confident that they will ensure the merger would be successful, need to put a positive spin that Ryton is a fantastic school with fantastic staff. Shouldn't base new site on negative feedback from Blaydon/Hookergate experience, whole of Ryton Community will be upset if green belt is used.
- If the Council is aware of problems in a merger what steps will be taken by the Council to bring the Communities together?
- Could clarification be given that all Hookergate primaries that they will be attached to Ryton?
- More detail needed for the interim. Children in Learning Support already cramped as are other areas of the school. There is no space to accommodate more pupils. Hope that interim facilities won't be penny pinched. More space is needed. Generous accommodation is needed as cramped circumstances will increase an already stressful situation.

Margaret Whellans thanked those present for their questions and comments and reiterated that members of staff can also send in their comments and questions using the form in the consultation documentation either individually or as a group.

The meeting closed at 4.35pm