

## The newsletter of the Partnership between Gateshead Council and Hookergate and Ryton Schools

### Dear Parent,



We are rapidly approaching the deadline of Friday 30th July 2010 for you to respond to the Council's proposal for the future of schools in the West of Gateshead.

Thank you to everyone who has given us their feedback so far. However if you have yet to respond to the consultation please read the Consultation Document at [www.gateshead.gov.uk/secondaryreview](http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/secondaryreview). You can give us your feedback by completing the online questionnaire or by completing the questionnaire at the back of the booklet and returning it to us free of charge using the Freepost address provided. We encourage all stakeholders to take part and appreciate your valuable feedback on these proposals.

### Summary of the Proposal

- That there should be a single secondary community school that offers the highest quality educational opportunities for 11-19 year olds in the West area.
- The school will retain and build on the strengths of Ryton Comprehensive School and further develop its offer to the whole community by incorporating the best features and many strengths of Hookergate School.
- A new building is to be built on a new site that will be designed to the highest standards of environmental sustainability, reflecting the strong rural character of the area.
- Existing students at Hookergate will transfer to the existing Ryton School on a phased basis between 1st September 2011 and 1st September 2012.
- The catchment areas for all the primary schools currently linked to Hookergate be included in the catchment area of the new school, together with all of Ryton's existing linked primary school catchment areas.

### Building Schools for the Future Funding

The statutory consultations on the closure of Hookergate School are continuing as planned despite the Government's decision to stop Building Schools for the Future funding. Most aspects of the proposed transition plan to merge Hookergate and Ryton can still be delivered (subject to consultation), and we are continuing to consult on how we can deliver the best educational outcomes for children in the West of the Borough. We are consulting on whether people share the Council's vision for the "Best for the West" and the ambition to build a new school on a new site.

The Department of Education's website stated that the proposed closure of Hookergate is 'stopped'. This statement related only to BSF funding not the closure proposals. This list has been reposted to accurately reflect the current position.

The Education Secretary has announced a complete overhaul of capital investment in schools, including the end of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. This does not signal the end of capital investment in secondary schools. The Education Secretary has announced a review of how such projects are procured, and to identify which projects are high priority, will offer value for money and raise standards. The review group includes representatives from the public and private sectors, and is expected to report in September to inform the government's spending plans for 2011-12 and beyond.

### Consultation Events

We have completed a series of consultation events for parents, staff, governors of each school and a number of drop in sessions for parents from the primary schools and the wider community. Notes taken at the consultation events provide a summary of the issues that were raised during the meetings and the views of those present. These are also available on the website at [www.gateshead.gov.uk/secondaryreview](http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/secondaryreview) together with a list of Frequently Asked Questions.

### New identity

The Governing Body of Ryton Comprehensive School is committed to developing a new identity independent of any new build. They are in favour of developing a new name and new uniform from September 2011 for the School and will consult widely on this change

## Transition

The transition plan has been developed by the Headteachers of both schools and aims to ensure that all students receive good quality teaching and support throughout the process. The 'phased' transition factors in the critical timing of options and exams and the opportunities for students to access a wider curriculum on the Ryton site.

It has been highlighted that there is no mention of 6th form in the transition plan within the Consultation Document. We confirm that there will be sixth form places at Ryton for all Hookergate students who will have access to the full range of courses on offer. There are also opportunities in other school sixth forms and FE colleges.

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## New Site

Eight sites within the Ryton / Hookergate catchment areas had been identified as possible locations for a new school in the West. Each of these sites has been examined by officers, and the Schools steering group against a standard set of criteria, which includes size, location, accessibility (pedestrian, public transport & vehicular), topography, known ground conditions, current use and ownership. 7 of the sites are considered to be unsuitable to explore further due to one or more factors such as accessibility, known ground conditions, topography, multiple ownership & current use. The proposed site identified north of the Ryton/Crawcrook bypass at its junction with Woodside Lane provides the best match to the criteria, bordering the built area with good accessible road networks and maximising the opportunities to walk or cycle to school.

A traffic survey has been commissioned to assess the impact on the increased traffic to this area and also to re-assess the effectiveness and safety of the staggered junction arrangement.

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## Transport

The Council has already commenced preliminary discussions with Nexus in relation to the development of the transport arrangements from throughout the Hookergate catchment area to both the proposed new site and the existing Ryton site. The aim is to have an effective service which not only provides a service to and from the site at the beginning and end of the school day, but adequately serves the community through and beyond the school day.

Students who will attend Ryton who live more than 3 miles away (based on the shortest available route) will be entitled to free travel passes. If your child has free school meals, or you are eligible for maximum Working Tax Credit for the relevant period you may be eligible for a free travel pass for over two miles.

## Parental Involvement

Parents from both schools have told us they want to be actively involved in discussing the transition arrangements and future planning. Parents from Hookergate would like the opportunity to visit Ryton and similarly parents from Ryton want to work in close collaboration with parents from Hookergate as equal partners in improving learning outcomes for their children.

Subject to the outcome of this consultation, we will be contacting all parents in both communities to ensure active participation in the development of the Best for the West proposals. There will be invitations to visit Ryton Comprehensive School and view the facilities and the Friends of Ryton Comprehensive School would like to issue an open invitation to all parents in the community to the next meeting at Ryton Comprehensive on 21st September 2010 at 7.30 p.m. at Ryton Comprehensive School.

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## Next steps

1. Consultation deadline 30th July 2010.
2. The results of this consultation will be discussed and reported to Cabinet in September 2010. The main focus of the report will be the proposed closure of Hookergate School. This is a public meeting held in the Council Chamber at Gateshead Civic Centre.
3. If Cabinet decides to proceed with closure a statutory notice will be published.
4. You will again have an opportunity to make further representations over another six week period before a final decision is made before the end of the year by the Council.