

Southmoor Community School
*Mathematics and Computing College
and Bede Sixth Form Academy*

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'A Good and improving school with Outstanding aspects'
- Ofsted, December 2008

8th October, 2009

Dr. H. Paterson
Director of Children's Services
Civic Centre
Sunderland
SR2 7DN

Dear Dr. Paterson,

I would like to offer the following in response to the proposal by Houghton Kepier Sports College to raise their upper age limit in order to provide Sixth Form education. I object to the proposal on the following grounds:

1. Current arrangements for the provision of Sixth Form education in Sunderland are already working very well, allowing the widest possible range of courses to be offered to the greatest range of students. Should individual schools open their own Sixth Form this will not only represent a waste of resources, it will also detract from the offer to students since individual schools can in no way replicate the breadth of choice currently offered by COSC.
2. In a situation of falling rolls and a broader context of tightening budgets, it makes no sense to splinter what is on offer. I do not believe that HKSC will offer anything different or add anything new to what already exists and this will be achieved only at some cost.
3. The proposal threatens to destabilise existing working arrangements within schools in Sunderland which have been very beneficial to young people. Having served as a Headteacher in another Local Authority I can tell you that I was very pleasantly surprised with the collaboration which exists between schools. Such collaboration is actually quite unusual. The effect of allowing a single school to open their own Sixth Form represents a real danger. This would be an enormous shame given that the Sunderland model has already survived the opening of three academies and an additional faith school in recent years. Allowing HKSC a Sixth Form would be a self inflicted wound. When a school opens a Sixth Form it is my experience that this gives it an advantage over other schools in terms of pupil and staff recruitment whilst adding little of benefit to the area as a whole. I have no doubt that this proposal would lead to the disintegration of existing provision and an attempted free for all from other schools who would be understandably reluctant to allow a competitor such an advantage. The result would not be beneficial to young people in Sunderland as resources would be squandered on duplicated courses, class sizes which were not viable and Sixth Forms who could only offer a very narrow range of options duplicated across the city.

'Outstanding for the enjoyment of Learners' - Ofsted, December 2008

It may be that this proposal has supporters within this school (and a small minority beyond who might like to follow their example) but for the majority of Headteachers in Sunderland who think beyond their own individual school and put the broader well being of local young people first, this proposal represents a real danger. I would therefore like to call on the School Organisation Committee to reject the proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Philip Ingram
Headteacher