

Principal Angela O'Donoghue B.Ed. (Hons)

Date 8th October 2009

Helen Paterson
Director of Children's Services
City of Sunderland
PO BOX 101
Civic Centre
Sunderland
SR2 7DN

Dear Helen

Re: Houghton Kepier Sports College – Sixth Form

City of Sunderland College opposes the development of a Sixth Form being developed at Houghton Kepier School.

As part of the 14-19 strategy in the City to increase post 16 participation and provide a focus on the Governments 14-19 agenda, within what is a 'tertiary' City, the College and the Local Authority have committed themselves to the development and investment in genuinely shared sixth forms across the City. The development is now almost complete with the establishment of Bede Sixth Form Academy, Usworth Sixth Form College, St Peters Sixth Form College and the newly established Headways Sixth Form College for the Houghton/Hetton area of the City. This model is developed, in partnership with the sixth form provision at St Aidan's, St Anthony's and St Robert's and provides the City with a planned sustainable, cost effective provision at all levels of learning. Significant numbers of students from Houghton Kepier School (134 Year 12 pupils in September 2009) already attend the College undertaking a range of programmes including 'A' level provision. We do not believe the development of a Sixth Form at Houghton Kepier School will improve or increase student choice at 16. It is not a collaborative model and we do not believe it will promote impartial advice and guidance and may result in restricting choice.

The college has significant experience of successfully delivering post-16 education both through a number of sixth forms in partnership with local secondary schools as well as two college centres offering a wide range of vocational delivery. The experience gained leads us to the conclusion that the curriculum offer proposed by Houghton Kepier School is not deliverable or sustainable with the predicted numbers. This will result in very small class sizes, particularly for 'A' Levels, providing poor value for money but more importantly restricting student choice and the ability to meet individual need, providing a poor educational experience. Recent research carried out has shown that achievement is far lower in small sixth form provision, particularly those with fewer than 200 students.

We have been working with Hetton School in the area and have already established (Sept 2009) The Headways Sixth Form College. We did try to engage Houghton Kepier School in this development but they have chosen to opt out of the 'Sunderland Model'. We have however engaged Seaham School in the development, The Headways Sixth Form has recruited 122 students in September 2009 and is located at Bede in the First Year while we identify appropriate suitable accommodation to provided a 'local' offer. Transport is being provided from both schools for all students as part of the Headways Development.

The college has a proven record of delivering high quality provision with high achievement rates well above national benchmarks for both academic and vocational provision. The very wide curriculum offer provides opportunities and choice to all young people across the City.

We would be happy to work in partnership with Houghton Kepier School at any stage to further develop and enhance the high quality sixth form arrangements already available, and would again invite the school to join Hetton, Seaham and the College in the development of a joint sixth form providing real choice and diversity for young people.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Angela O'Donoghue".

Angela O'Donoghue
Principal