



Hetton School

Technology College



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Head Teacher: Mr. S. Haigh B.Sc.

Dr Helen Paterson
Director of Children's Services
Sunderland Local Authority
Civic Centre
Burdon Road
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SR2 7DN

6th October 2009

Dear Helen

Re proposal of Houghton Kepier Sports College to increase their upper age limit to incorporate sixth form provision.

I would like to raise our objection to the proposal that has been published. If Houghton Kepier were to be granted it's own sixth form it would be to the long term detriment of the learners of the coalfields area and potentially damaging to Hetton School in particular. It also has the potential to destabilise the strategic provision in place across the city.

Post 16 provision is already in place with a strategic partnership as part of the Sunderland model for tertiary education. The Headways Sixth Form is a formal partnership that Houghton Kepier School has an open invitation to join as a full partner (without any reservations). The Headways operates with tutors from the partner schools delivering pastoral guidance and post 16 courses (vocational, AS & A2). In September 2010 local delivery is planned for most courses, and with the addition of Houghton Kepier to the partnership this would further strengthen the offer. Where minority subject are not viable students will have access to courses at the Bede Sixth Form with all transportation provided. In this way The Headways will be able to offer the widest possible range of courses to the learners from the coalfields area. In addition it is envisaged that where particular strengths lie within partner institutions they may take a lead in delivery for The Headways students.



Where Quality Counts

This partnership offers the best option for developing post 16 learning in the area. It is predicated on what is best for the learners, which will then define the operation and structure of the provision. The students will see the consistency of approach from some of their familiar teachers with tutorial and pastoral care being provided by staff they know and trust. This would allow Houghton Keping to meet the aims that they have used to justify their proposal. It will also provide greater choice and diversity for the learners in the coalfields area as the widest possible range of courses would be available. Smaller sixth forms provide a limited range of courses (the examples in the feasibility study conducted is misleading, as only viable courses would run – this answer was given in the public meeting I attended). Students would inevitably choose from a smaller range, because that is what is available, thus leading to some students making inappropriate decisions. Having an additional post 16 provider in the Coalfields area will have a negative impact on the viability of local courses on offer at The Headways, thus limiting local choice still further.

Hetton School thrives in spite of being geographically isolated because of partnerships with the local community and the schools in the city. A neighbouring school becoming an 11-18 institution will have a destabilising impact on the partnerships that currently exist. To address key 14-19 educational issues in this area requires collaboration not competition. Other partnerships across the city could also be destabilised threatening the principles of the Sunderland Model of collaborative skills centres and strategic sixth form partnerships.

I respectfully request that the Local Authority declines to grant the proposal to increase the upper age limit at Houghton Keping School. I would be delighted to explain my objections in person if that were requested.

Yours sincerely



S. Haigh
Headteacher