



# Consultation Document Outlining the Proposal to make a Prescribed Alteration to Newcastle CE Primary School

Published to all Interested Parties on Friday  
3<sup>rd</sup> March 2023

Concludes on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

The Governing Body of the Blue Hills Federation presents this document for consultation. The four-week consultation period is your opportunity to let us know what you think about the proposal. Please take time to read this consultation proposal carefully, attend a consultation meeting and have your say on the proposal. The outcome of the consultation on this proposal will help to inform the final decisions affecting educational provision for the children of Newcastle CE Primary School.

## **This paper contains:**

1. An explanation of the proposal.
2. The rationale behind the recommendations for the changes to education for Newcastle CE Primary School.
3. A response form for all interested parties to complete and return to us, letting us know your views.
4. Details of 'surgery style' meetings for parents/carers and the wider community that have been arranged to help the consultation.

## **Circulation:**

Parents and carers across The Blue Hills Federation

Staff across The Blue Hills Federation

Children across The Blue Hills Federation (via a simplified explanation)

Governors across The Blue Hills Federation

Hereford Diocesan Board of Education – Andrew Teale - Diocesan Director of Education

Sian Lines – Deputy Diocesan Director of Education

Shropshire Council – Tanya Miles – Executive Director of People

David Shaw – Assistant Director of Education and Achievement,  
Learning and Skills, People Directorate

Newcastle Parish Council

Bettws-y-Crwyn Parish Council

Llanfair Waterdine Parish Council

Clunbury Parish Council

Bucknell Parish Council

Clun Parish Council

Local Shropshire Councillors - Nigel Hartin, Ruth Houghton

Philip Dunne MP

The wider communities of each school

Newcastle Children's Centre

Newcastle School Charity

M&J Travel

School websites

Other local schools – St George's CE School, Clun; The Community College, Bishop's Castle; Ludlow CE School; Wigmore School Academy Trust; John Beddoes Campus, Newtown High School.

## **The Proposal:**

**To make a prescribed alteration to Newcastle CE Primary School. The proposal is to educate all children on another site within the Federation.**

**Important:** It is the governing body's intention that this proposal will maintain high quality education for the current pupils from Newcastle and surrounding areas. This initial proposal is a significant change (or 'prescribed alteration') to a maintained school and will follow statutory Department for Education regulations for making such changes. In this instance the proposal is to transfer education to a new site. The regulations require that such proposals will be subject to a statutory representation or formal consultation period.

It is important to understand that it is unlikely that it will be possible to maintain viable and sustainable education provision on the Newcastle site into the future, primarily due to the fall in pupil numbers. There is sufficient demographic data on forecast pupil numbers to suggest that this will not change or improve in the foreseeable future.

As a consequence of this, the governing body has taken the decision to also put forward a second proposal to the Local Authority, Shropshire Council, that a separate consultation should take place on the closure of the school site which will be informed by, and take place after, the outcome of this prescribed alteration consultation has been determined.

## **Which Site Would Be Used For The Prescribed Alteration?**

Governors propose to transfer education provision to the site at Clunbury CE Primary School where there is capacity, with the opportunity for parents to opt to have their children educated at St Mary's CE Primary School, Bucknell should they prefer. Parents may, of course, secure education provision in another school.

Should the proposal be agreed, governors would encourage parents to visit both sites in the Federation or other schools in order to make an informed choice based on the needs of their child / children.

## **Why Are We Recommending One Of The Other Sites In The Blue Hills Federation For The Prescribed Alteration?**

The three schools have worked closely together since 2016. This working partnership became formal when the schools federated in September 2017. The Federation had been proactively sought by the governing body of Newcastle CE Primary School, on the recommendation of the Local Authority, after appointing an acting headteacher in September 2014. The purpose of the Federation was to secure education on the Newcastle site, to allow it to maintain and develop its good educational provision for the children who attended. Our shared vision is led by our strong, single governing body and our senior leadership team consisting of our Executive Headteacher, Deputy Head of Federation and Lead Teachers. The senior leadership team led, by the Executive Headteacher, work closely together to support staff in providing high quality education and driving standards.

Central to our vision is the education of our children and a belief that all children should have the opportunity to thrive and flourish. The Federation has built on previous good practice by encouraging opportunities to share expertise, provide enriching opportunities which enhance the children’s learning and experience of the world and an opportunity to develop relationships, work alongside and interact with a wider group of peers, thus preparing them for the next phase of their education.

All three of our schools are Church of England schools. Our close partnership has ensured that we share a distinctive Christian vision, ethos and values. Each school in our Federation values its relationship with the church and community. We are inclusive schools which offer education equally for families of children from any faith and of no faith. We respect other faiths and the right to hold no religious beliefs at all.

Like Newcastle, Clunbury CE Primary School and St Mary’s CE Primary School, Bucknell have been judged good by Ofsted and SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) inspections, validating the quality of education provided. Unlike Newcastle, the other two schools in the Federation are able to offer education provision from the age of two years old. St. Mary’s CE Primary School, Bucknell has a pre-school, which is part of the school and Clunbury has a maintained nursery. Therefore, these two schools are able to offer continuous education to pupils from the age of 2 until they leave primary school at the age of 11.

### **Why Is This Proposal Being Made Now?**

Due to the demographics, Newcastle CE Primary School has had low numbers for several years. The number of children available in the catchment area has dropped significantly and the school has relied on attracting children from outside the catchment area for a number of years. Demographics within the whole area show a decreasing number of children, which is having further impact on Newcastle.

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Percentage of children from out of catchment area</b>
2020-2021	56%
2021-2022	58%
2022-2023	50%
2023-2024	44%

The school has managed to continue to provide a high quality of education through careful financial planning despite the number on roll at the school remaining in the twenties. However, a change in demographics has resulted in the numbers decreasing, and projections over the next two years forecast a further drop in numbers, potentially dropping below 20. This decline in numbers will have a serious impact on the school’s budget position and its ability to continue the quality of education it currently offers. The leadership of the school are also concerned that the decline in numbers would also impact on the quality of social and emotional interaction with peers that can be offered, and that is essential for primary pupils to thrive and flourish.

In recent times, the children of Newcastle have enjoyed excellent opportunities and we wish this to continue and to improve further. As always stated, leaders firmly believe that children have only one opportunity at education and deserve excellence. Without making cuts to current provision, it would not be possible for education to remain as it is now.

Changes to the way that we run our schools will secure provision of the highest quality education for all children of the Federation. Governors have a vision for the future which aims for excellence and high standards for all our children.

## **What Are The Benefits Of This Proposal?**

The governors believe that the proposal and follow on benefits of pupils moving to the Clunbury site (or Bucknell) would be highly beneficial to the pupils and their families in the following ways:

- Children will know the staff, children and sites so that transition will be much easier.
- The vision and values of the schools are the same resulting in an easier transition.
- Improved social interaction and opportunity to make friends.
- Increased opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively with their own age group and to demonstrate excellence in all areas of the curriculum particularly creative and sporting activities, and greater opportunities for extra-curricular activities for children.
- Continued opportunities to share staff expertise and resources across the curriculum.
- Continuing to provide a wide range of off-site visits and residentials, which provide practical learning for children. Shared costs allow exceptional opportunities, and we believe that these improve life chances for all children.
- Nursery provision on the same site.
- Before and after school care.
- Ability of governors to recruit and retain high quality teachers and support staff.
- Improved resources for all children to access the curriculum at the highest standard.

## **When Might Children Move Site?**

Governors propose to continue provision on the Newcastle site until the end of July 2023. We believe to begin at the start of a new school year on the new sites would be beneficial to the children. It is also important that the children remain in the school until the end of the current academic year in order to provide continuity of education and to ensure the transfer takes place in an ordered and managed way. Governors will endeavour to make the transfer as smooth as possible and the impact on teaching and learning to the absolute minimum.

## **How Will Children Travel To The Clunbury Site And Who Will Pay?**

In the event that the transfer of education provision from the Newcastle site is approved for September 2023, following this consultation, Shropshire Council's School Transport Policy

will provide for free transport to Clunbury CE Primary School or St Mary's CE Primary School, Bucknell for children currently living in the Newcastle CE Primary School catchment area. This provision will remain in place through to the end of any in-area pupils' primary phase education as long as the pupil's circumstances remain unchanged.

The Blue Hills Federation will be responsible for any additional costs for home to school transport resulting from this prescribed alteration. If a decision is taken to close the school, the local authority will become liable for these additional costs in line with the School Transport Policy in place at the time.

Where pupils do not currently qualify for free transport on catchment or distance grounds, on receipt of a parental application their case will be assessed on an individual basis to see whether there are any other grounds that the Local Authority may be able to help with under the current School Transport Policy.

### **What Will Happen To The Newcastle Building And Site?**

Following this proposal for a prescribed alteration, the governors have put forward another proposal to the Local Authority that the Newcastle school site should close. Subject to the outcome of the consultation on the prescribed alteration, and the separate statutory consultation on the closure of the Newcastle site, then the school buildings and the land would be sold.

### **How Would the Proposal Affect Admissions To Primary And Secondary Schools?**

The proposal to transfer school provision for September 2023 will not affect school admissions. Newcastle pupils will remain on roll with the school until such time that a decision is made about the school site. The admissions policy will remain the same.

In future, should the proposal to close the school be taken, the catchment area would need to be reviewed, as pupils in the current Newcastle CE Primary School catchment area would need to have a catchment school. In accordance with the School Admissions Code, a separate formal consultation on proposed changes to the designated catchment area would need to be carried out.

In early September 2023, parents of Year 6 children will receive information regarding applying for transfer to secondary school for September 2024. Their applications will be processed as part of the normal admissions round and notifications of the allocated secondary schools will be made on 1 March 2024.

Pupils who move to Clunbury CE Primary School and state a preference to attend The Community College, Bishop's Castle would not be affected as both Newcastle CE Primary School and Clunbury CE Primary School are feeder schools. Pupils who move to St Mary's CE Primary School, Bucknell would not be in a feeder school for The Community College, Bishop's Castle as the school is a feeder school for Ludlow CE School. However, the child may still be in catchment for The Community College, Bishop's Castle, depending on their home address.

## **How Will The Proposal Affect Staff Members?**

The governing body and leadership of the Federation would, wherever possible, find alternative employment on one of the other sites in the Federation. All decisions with regards to employment will be made in accordance with the guidance of the Local Authority Human Resources department.

## **How Will The Proposal Affect Access To Breakfast And After-School Clubs?**

Currently the children at Newcastle have access, if they wish, to a breakfast club five days a week and after-school clubs three days a week. Under the proposal, parents would still have access to breakfast club from 8.00am Monday – Friday (on both Clunbury and Bucknell sites). Parents would need to provide their own transport for this. A full range of after-school clubs would be available, Monday – Friday until 5.00pm at Clunbury and Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday at St Mary’s, Bucknell until 4.30 p.m. Parents would be responsible for transport after clubs. After-school clubs provide excellent learning and social opportunities.

## **What Will Happen About School Uniforms?**

If the proposal goes ahead, it is expected that children who transfer to the Clunbury or Bucknell site have a choice to continue to wear the Newcastle uniform. If, in the future, education should no longer be provided at Newcastle CE Primary School, the pupils will wear the same uniform as the school to which their parents have chosen to send them. Measures would be put in place to phase in any proposed changes to prevent unnecessary costs and waste. However, it would be reasonable for children to continue to wear the Newcastle uniform for as long as parents wish.

## **How Will The Proposal Affect Traffic And Parking At The Clunbury Site?**

We plan to work with our provider to arrange arrival and departure times to minimise impact. We do not envisage that the number of private vehicles would increase significantly, therefore keeping congestion outside of school to a minimum. However, there will be additional minibuss transport and consideration of this would need to be made on the Clunbury site for minibuss parking.

## **How Will The Proposal Affect Other Local Schools?**

Providing education on the Clunbury site should not have any negative impact upon other local schools, as all of the children are within our existing Federation. A number of children in the catchment area of St George’s Academy, Bishop’s Castle Academy and Knighton CW Primary School currently attend Newcastle.

## Who Will Make The Final Decision And When?

Although this proposal has been made by the Governing Body of The Blue Hills Federation, in consultation with the Local Authority and Hereford Diocese, the final decision will be made by Cabinet of Shropshire Council. They will take into account your views, our financial and educational planning, and the impact upon other local schools. Shropshire Council Cabinet will make their final decision on 7 June 2023 based on the outcome of this consultation.

## How Do I Find More Information Before I Make My Decision With Regards to This Proposal?

During the consultation you will have the opportunity to ask questions and governors will try to provide as much additional information as they can. You can do this in person at community or staff consultation meetings (dates shown below). You may also email or write to governors (details shown below).

## How Do I Let Governors And Shropshire Council Know My Views With Regards To This Proposal?

Once you are sure that all of your questions have been answered, it is vital that you make governors aware of your views, as they will inform Cabinet's final decision. Please complete the form attached to this document. All members of the community are able to submit their views, but anonymous or unsigned forms will not be accepted. If both parents from each family share the same views, please could both sign the form. If parents have different opinions, please request an additional form from the school office.

## Current Numbers On Each Federation Site

School	Age Range	Number on Roll
Newcastle	4 - 11 years	22
Clunbury	2 - 11 years	68
St Mary's, Bucknell	2 - 11 years	67

## Timeline For Proposed Prescribed Alteration

3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2023	Consultation period begins
7 <sup>th</sup> March 2023	Staff Consultation meeting at Newcastle School 3.45 – 5.00 p.m.
8 <sup>th</sup> March 2023	Drop-in Consultation meeting 3.30 – 5.00pm at Newcastle
9 <sup>th</sup> March 2023	Drop-in consultation meeting 3.30 – 5.00pm at Clunbury
31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023	Consultation closes at 12.00 noon
4 <sup>th</sup> April 2023	Presentation of responses from public consultation to all governors.
7 <sup>th</sup> June 2023	Report on outcome of the statutory consultation undertaken by the Blue Hill Federation presented to Shropshire Council Cabinet and a decision taken on whether to proceed.
September 2023	If proposal approved Newcastle children to transfer to either Clunbury or Bucknell sites.

### How Do I respond?

The governing body of The Blue Hills Federation would really like to hear your views. If you have any questions or comments, please let the governing bodies know by the deadline of 12:00 noon on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

You can share your comments by:

- 1) Completing the attached questionnaire or writing a letter and sending it to one of the following addresses:

Prescribed Alterations, Newcastle CE (VC) Primary School, Newcastle, Craven Arms, Shropshire. SY7 8QL

Prescribed Alterations, Clunbury CE (VA) Primary School and Nursery, Clunbury, Craven Arms, Shropshire. SY7 0HE.

Prescribed Alterations, St. Mary's CE (VA) Primary School and Pre-school, Bucknell, Shropshire. SY7 0AA.

- 2) By emailing your comments to any of the following:

[cosgrove.d@bhf.shropshire.sch.uk](mailto:cosgrove.d@bhf.shropshire.sch.uk) (Vice - Chair of Governors – currently acting chair)

[head@bhf.shropshire.sch.uk](mailto:head@bhf.shropshire.sch.uk)

[deputyhead@bhf.shropshire.sch.uk](mailto:deputyhead@bhf.shropshire.sch.uk) (lead on Newcastle site)

[nigel.hartin@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:nigel.hartin@shropshire.gov.uk)

Responses will then be shared with the governing body, Shropshire Council and Hereford Diocese.

## Response Form

**Proposal: To make a prescribed alteration to Newcastle CE Primary School to educate all children on another site.**

Responses must be received by 12.00 noon on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

If both parents from each family share the same views, please both sign and send in one form. Should views differ, please request an additional form.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Should you require a response, please complete your details below:

Phone number:

Email:

- 1) I am a: (please tick box as appropriate)

Parent/Carer of a pupil at Newcastle CE Primary School	
Parent / Carer of a pupil at Clunbury CE Primary School	
Parent / Carer of a pupil at St. Mary's, Bucknell CE Primary School	
Member of staff at Newcastle CE Primary School	
Member of staff at Clunbury CE Primary School	
Member of staff at St. Mary's, Bucknell CE Primary School	
Other interested party (please state) .....	

- 2) What is your view of the proposal to educate the children of Newcastle CE Primary School at Clunbury CE Primary School and Nursery, with the option to send children to St Mary's, Bucknell CE Primary School?

I/We support the proposal		
I/We do not support the proposal		
I/We am/are not sure		

- 3) Please share any comments that you may have about the proposal (Use overleaf if required)

Please send your response to any of the schools (details above). Please note that your responses will remain confidential to the Governing Body.

Thank you for your response.

The Governing Body of The Blue Hills Federation.