

Our Ref: AT1/EJ

Your Ref:

Direct Dial Telephone: 0191-2450832



31 October 2018

Dear Beverley Scanlon,

Formal response to consultation on the closure of South Shields School

In response to the consultation on the proposal to close South Shields school I would like to provide a formal response on behalf of UNISON.

As you will be aware a number of meetings have been held with members and throughout the process a number of key concerns have been raised which UNISON feel must be raised and addressed through this process.

In terms of the potential closure of the school, members have raised a number of concerns in regards to the availability of information throughout the consultation process. As you will be aware, on a number of occasions, UNISON have requested the options provided to the local authority to potentially avoid a school closure. These options were formally provided to school governors by the local authority, but not recognised trade unions, which is disappointing as UNISON feels this could have been beneficial to the process. Although UNISON recognises that the authority has agreed to circulate these options later in November, as consultation will have closed at this stage, the information will not be able to be used to inform a meaningful consultation process, which is disappointing.

UNISON would also note that the timelines deployed by the local authority for the consultation process have not been constructive to finding a sponsor for the school. The immediate move by the local authority to consult on the closure of school has created further difficulties in finding potential sponsors for the school and UNISON would ask that should a potential sponsor become available for the school that the local authority show flexibility with timelines and work with all parties involved in order to allow the school to remain open.

UNISON are aware that a key barrier to the school remaining open has been the schools Ofsted rating and have been clear throughout the consultation process that members believe it would be helpful for Ofsted to conduct another inspection. UNISON were grateful to the leader of the council and portfolio holder who met with UNISON and NASUWT and heard our views on this issue and agreed to work with us on this moving forward.

Should the consultation process conclude that the school will close, UNISON would seek assurances that all measures would be taken to reduce the implications of this for staff. UNISON would suggest that all avenues were explored for suitable employment opportunities within other schools in the local authority for members that wish to continue their employment and that schemes such as guaranteed interviews are explored. UNISON would also seek assurances that should the school close over a prolonged period of time, no member of staff would be put at a disadvantage because of this in terms of a redundancy payment. Talks in regards to these areas have been of a positive nature so far and UNISON hopes to continue to work in partnership with the local authority to achieve the best outcome for its members.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emma', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Emma Jenkinson
UNISON REGIONAL ORGANISER