

South Shields School - Responses received during Representation period

Respondent 1

I read the press releases with complete disbelief that the council can still report on dropping numbers within the school when they themselves triggered this. I really don't know how they think they are competent enough to make decisions on behalf of children and their futures. They should be completely ashamed of themselves and once all the information i.e minutes of meetings are available I hope if not me someone will initiate the action to have the councils decision making legally investigated.

Respondent 2

I understand that this has to be done & as a parent who has fought from September to try & make a difference to keep this school open, I now understand that this is a very pointless exercise & this consultation period is purely a tick box exercise by yourselves so that the legal process has been completed. My concern now though is after attending the drop in on Monday night the lack of any form of organisation & complete naivety that you expect all year 7&8 pupils to stay in the school until 2020. I now want answers as to what guarantees you can give me to my daughters future. So far you have let her down on all possible fronts & what is to stop that happening again. Yes Beverly has said she will speak to me when the outcome is decided but I can guarantee there are a lot of parents so are in the same position & havent had any such guarantees. So please have some decency & acknowledge this email & have something in place for January so we know what is in place for those of us who will be moving schools then.

Respondent 3

Hello i would like to enquire about a theory that parents are looking into.

Throughout the country there is sectors that require skilled workers. The fact is vocational courses are becoming more accessible to young students. Now bearing in mind the demand in sectors such as construction and care and a lot more, there is room to look into a basis of vocational training being rolled out within South Shields school aiming at the age range of 14-19 yrs old. South Shields school has a state of the art facility meaning there is possibility to extend the curriculum to vocational courses.

Vocational courses could play a pivotal part in saving South Shields school. If we look at the care sector, there is a major shortage in this sector from health care assistant to care in the community to also nursing. If market research is correct then bringing vocational qualifications into schools could be of interest to larger and local companies that are prepared to invest in training students up into that sector, therefore theoretically allowing more doors to be open for those that do not wish to follow the academic route of uni or could be a pathway to our youngsters following the path to uni. Even the social work sector many more can be explored.

South Shields school could play a leading role within our borough to specialise in the care sector and many more eg mechanics. There are many options of trades. Maybe even working in partnership with

a college or the chamber of commerce. It is possible if correctly thought out and implemented. But will also increase the viability option depending on the intake and funding per vocational course. These course could differentiate in many ways emergency service sector could also be explored the list goes on and on.

I would like to know if this option could be explored and whether it would be an option southtyneside council would look into. The inadequate rating doesn't count in this email due to the fact that can be rejustified had ofsted been given enough time. The issue is fall in numbers however that is the councils fault due to its proposal and where necessary should take responsibility for doing so. Numbers can be increased depending on the out come and what the school has to offer so therefore the vocational path is actually an interesting and possible viable option.

I have done some research into this and believe care companies may be interested in this avenue, however this route has never been done before from what research I have done in the time I've had. Just because something hasn't been done before does NOT mean that it shouldn't be looked into. The council provide care in our community and I would love to gain there opinion on training students in vocational such as the care sector.

Respondent 4

I strongly believe the proposals made by South Tyneside Council will have a detrimental effect to this local area. In the Governors report it states that the generation of Children in the school will be failed by the education system. Closing this school will only gain the council financially, at the cost of the pupils education.

Councillors have laid back and let this happen and on approach have turned parents, pupils and residents away when asking about the subject. This is a disgrace. A local councillor should act as a bridge to the people and the council, not turn their backs in a time of need.

We have also put forward a vocational option to the council, we have had interest from FE colleges which would allow an increase in pupil numbers. An increase in pupil numbers would allow a sponsor to come forward. I hope this is considered.

I would also like to point out that THE COUNCIL and the THE COUNCIL alone are responsibility for scaremongering pupils to other schools in order to further create insecurity in the school. It is a disgrace and I sincerely hope this council is condemned by the national Party.

In conclusion, this process has been an absolute shambles, From John Pearce and Beverly Scanlon Cluelessly introducing the proposals at Temple Park, to local Councillors, aggressively, turning parents away and calling them a "Mob". I hope that the council have a heart and vote on behalf of the people and not power.

Respondent 5

I'd like to object to the closure of South Shields School as part of your consultation.

There are many reasons for my objection so I'll try to list just a few below:

1. I find it very difficult to find the consultation information on the council website – it's almost like the information has been deliberately hidden.

2. I've been unable to find information on future class sizes in the schools you plan to keep open within the information you have provided so far. Have you investigated how this closure will impact future class sizes and notified Tennent's within the school catchment area?
3. I live in this schools catchment area and I've received nothing through the post about this closure. I'd presume this would be a statutory requirement when trying to close down public services within a given area?
4. Should Boldon Comprehensive school be full when my child has to go to comprehensive – it will be an extra mile travel to Mortimer Comprehensive. Not only bad for the environment – but extra congestion on the boroughs roads during rush hour. Have you considered increased travel within you consultation. Again I can't find mention of facts and figures based on extended travel and associated costs of this to the environment and the South Shields economy.
5. I note you mention in some paperwork that you have been unable to find a sponsor for the school concerned. You don't however state why the council has not stepped in as an academy sponsor for the school. My understanding is that this school is budgeting better than other schools in the area whilst helping many disadvantaged young people from a very deprived catchment area. It should be noted that other councils have stepped in to become sponsors for local schools.
6. Based on the information I have provided above It would appear that this school closure is a council money saving scheme which will be to the detriment of class sizes and education within the borough – whilst saving little money, as the building still has to be maintained for educational purposes moving forward. For this reason it makes absolutely no sense to close the school.

Respondent 6

Statutory Consultation Response: Governors of South Shields School

Section 1 Priorities for the Governing Body of South Shields School

- 1.1 Governors want to secure an effective and supportive transition for students in KS3 into receiver schools
- 1.2 Governors want to provide highly effective curriculum for the students remaining at South Shields School in Year 11 to ensure GCSE outcomes are in line with ambitious targets already set
- 1.3 Governors want to ensure an appropriate curriculum is in place for KS3 students remaining at South Shields School
- 1.4 Governors want to secure the best support for staff going forward if the decision is made to close the school by working closely with the LA and council officers

Introduction:

The Governing Body of South Shields School wish to maintain and preserve continuity in the academic and personal development curriculum for students remaining at South Shields School. This includes maintaining alternative pathways for a small number of Year 9 and Year 10 students already historically in place and used successfully at the school.

Section 2: Rationale for proposal

Governors do not feel they can influence the decision to close the school any further and have no new information to put forward with regards to alternative solutions, (please refer to previous document also uploaded), however governors do wish to put forward a slight change to the proposed implementation plan given the current context of the school.

The governing body understands that there has been significant turbulence within South Shields school with a large number of students in key stage 3 already moving to receiver schools. This has left a smaller cohort in lower school which presents opportunities to provide highly effective teaching and learning in smaller groups as well as being able to provide significant additional support where required on an individual basis.

Governors believe that current Year 10 are most at risk of being disadvantaged academically by the proposed school closure, if staffing stability is not maintained. Governors therefore want to assure parents and carers that effective staffing will be maintained to support students through their GCSE final year with the support of the LA and the council. Current predictions for Year 11 are very positive showing considerable improvement again this year and predictions for current Year 10 must be maintained next year. A small number of Year 10 students will continue an alternative pathway into Year 11.

In addition, governors want to maintain the current curriculum for Year 7 and 8 which again will require staffing stability and particular attention to staffing for the delivery of subjects in the creative arts and design faculty. In addition, Governors wish to continue to work with a small number of Year 9 students into Year 10 who benefit from an alternative curriculum pathway. This would require a longer transition and excellent communication between South shields School, the pathway providers and the receiver schools.

Section 3 Proposal for implementation plan:

3.1 Key stage 4:

Current student numbers in year 10 have remained stable and are predicted to do so providing highly effective communication is prioritised with parents, carers and students.

Governors wish to staff the Yr 11 curriculum in September 2019 with the highly effective teachers already employed at South Shields School. This will ensure consistency for the students and their families and will support the delivery of the GCSE curriculum securing the current predicted outcomes or better.

Governors want to ensure the students with SEN will be fully supported throughout year 11. In addition, Governors want to ensure the pupil premium strategy and notional spend for students with SEND are delivered effectively and have highly effective impact on student outcomes and

progression to training and further education. This will require effective academic staffing as well as continued staffing for mental health provision, reading recovery, writing and oracy interventions. In addition, school will require staffing for pastoral and attendance strategies as well as for careers education and resilience strategies as the examinations approach.

The key stage 4 provision is fully inclusive and includes alternative provision placements that include vocational training and these must be maintained. Governors would also want to work closely with sixth form and FE providers as well as Business in the Community to ensure the students can access high quality careers information, advice and guidance. Links with South Tyneside College in particular would ensure all students are supported into appropriate education, training and apprenticeships.

3.2 Implications:

- Stable leadership team to provide security for remaining students and strategic direction for staff body to deliver current outcomes for Year 11 (currently predicted to be higher than 2018 outcomes for all students)
- Stable teaching staff to deliver the academic curriculum and secure outcomes
- Support from Business in the Community, FE and post 16 providers and LA to ensure no students are at risk of not being in education, employment or training and to secure high attendance rates for all students

3.3 Key Stage 3:

There has been significant movement to receiver schools this term which has caused disruption for South Shields School and one receiver school in particular who have taken in excess of 85 in-year admissions. This is from a combination of out of area admissions as well as South Shields School transfers. This degree of in-year movement has caused considerable turbulence and Governors want to ensure future moves are managed more effectively for the sake of South Shields School but also the receiver schools. The original implementation plan was for all Year 9 to transfer for September 2019 and for current year 7 and 8 to transfer September 2020. Governors wish to propose:

The remaining students in Year 7, 8 have access to highly effective teaching and support staff to ensure academic rigour, SEN and mental health support as well as meaningful careers education information and guidance as part of a full personal development curriculum.

In addition, governors wish to propose that staff continue to work closely with families and students in Year 9 who may find the transition to a new school more challenging. This would be a deviation from all year 9 transitioning at the end of this year but would support a small number of students who may benefit from a longer transition period and would continue the bespoke pathway programme for a small number of students, noted as a strength by Ofsted. This approach to curriculum planning is already in place at South Shields School and could therefore be effectively maintained through good relations with college and placement providers.

3.4 Implications:

- Stable leadership team to provide security for remaining students and strategic direction for staff body to deliver curriculum for current Year 7 and 8

- Stable and effective pastoral support for students in South Shields School, including mental health, attendance and behaviour support
- Stable teaching staff to deliver the academic curriculum and secure outcomes
- Support from Business in the Community, FE and post 16 providers and LA to ensure no students are at risk of being NEET and to secure high attendance rates for all students

3.5 Inclusive curriculum:

Governors suggest that for students in Year 9 (Yr 10 in 2019) who may benefit from a longer transition that alongside other support students may benefit from an alternative curriculum including qualifications gained through ST College or placements linked to future apprenticeships alongside other academic qualifications and school support.

3.6 Implications:

- Flexible timetable and alternative provision to support a small number of current year 9 students who will transition September 2020
- Effective South Shields School SEN staff to support students in Year 10 (September 2019) with college courses working closely with college and placement staff
- Stable and supportive pastoral provision for students
- Stable academic teaching staff to support students
- Establishing a designated senior leader responsible for Mental Health
- Highly effective parent and carer information prior and post to support transition to receiver schools and also into education, employment and training
- Collaboration between principals and head teachers of college and receiver schools to secure best provision and transition for students post September 2020
- HR support and packages to secure effective staffing until August 2020

Respondent 7

Now that this consultation phase has closed, I know that parents and carers of students at South Shields School will not be feeling any more positive about the school's future. The dialogue I have had with parents and students from the outset leaves me in no doubt that the potential closure of the school would have a massive impact on the local community and they feel that their views have not been listened to. The school itself has worked hard to create a positive and inclusive environment, where each student is valued and nurtured as an individual. This approach has been rewarded with excellent results at the end of the last academic year. It is an improving school.

Sadly, I believe that this success and undoubted rapid progress has been overlooked in certain quarters, overshadowed by a determination to consider only the financial and numerical aspects of the school's future. Of course, 'the books' have to balance – schools are subject to the national funding formula. The irony is that this school has balanced its books. This is not the case in all other schools in our area. I fear that South Shields School has not been promoted positively at its time of greatest need. Of course, pupil numbers will fall dramatically - the school is being billed by some as having no future.

Above all of this, what matters is the people involved. Parents who want a stable education for their children have moved them because of the uncertainty, staff at the school have no idea what the future holds, school leadership has to maintain the motivation and trust of students, parents and the staff teams. I care about that. That is why I have supported the campaign to save South Shields School. Schools are not just bricks and mortar, neither are they just forecasts and finance.

If we aspire to attract businesses and investment to South Shields, if we want to improve and expand the housing offer here, if we want to encourage families to thrive here, then we need to ensure that our infrastructure is ready. It seems extremely rash and very short-sighted to close a purpose-built, new school rather than looking at creative ways to ensure sustainability. That's what I believe and that's what I will continue to say.

I have asked on a number of occasions for the viability assessment that led to this situation. Each time, I have been directed to information contained within reports rather than a viability assessment. I am told that it would be 7 years before student numbers could return to a minimum level to enable the school to be viable. The school was only opened to pupils 7 years ago. Surely a viability assessment would have been undertaken then that projected beyond a seven-year lifespan? Even more so in the knowledge that the school was constructed under a PFI arrangement that still has 19 years left to run?

In February this year I was informed that nationally there were nine local authority maintained schools issued with an academy order following an inadequate Ofsted judgement that had not been matched to a sponsor for 3 years or more. This does raise a question in my mind over the haste with which South Shields School has been forwarded for closure consultation.

This proposed closure is supposedly based on falling pupil numbers. In the data I have been given, it is clear to see that the pupil numbers on roll were in line with or exceeding projections before this huge cloud of doubt was cast, following which, of course the figures then sharply decline. This, coupled with the excellent 2018 exam results, leads me to believe that much more can yet be done to save South Shields School if the will is there amongst decision-makers.