

# A review of education in the Alston area



## Education provision in Alston and the surrounding area

The county council wants to hear the views of those with an interest in the education provision in Alston before it decides what to do next. This paper sets out a number of possible options to consider how school provision might be best shaped to fit the current and likely future needs in the area.

### Why a review?

There has been a decline in the number of children in schools in Alston in recent years, both from the Alston area itself and those choosing to send their children from neighbouring County Durham and Northumberland. This decrease in numbers is evident in all three schools in the area, but particularly so in Samuel King's School.

	Number on roll by year										
School	Jan 04	Jan 05	Jan 06	Jan 07	Jan 08	Jan 09	Jan 10	Jan 11	Jan 12	Jan 13	Jan 14
Samuel King's	183	202	217	211	211	204	200	182	161	156	120
Alston	163	137	119	113	103	105	93	105	103	103	102
Nenthead	29	33	36	33	30	34	28	24	22	25	22
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>244</b>

Information on numbers of pre-school aged children in the catchment areas of Alston Primary and Nenthead Primary schools (Samuel King's catchment area encompasses both areas) shows that numbers are likely to remain low in the foreseeable future.

	Age			
	3	2	1	0
Pre-school aged children in Alston area	14	16	15	16

Alston Primary and Nenthead Primary schools were both judged to be 'Good' by Ofsted in their most recent inspections. Samuel King's was judged to 'Require Improvement' in its most recent inspection. The provisional GCSE results for 2014 for Samuel King's indicate improved outcomes in comparison to 2013. Pupil achievement at Nenthead has remained high and at Alston Primary the 2013 results indicate a slight reduction.

### How will this affect the local schools?

Current information indicates that the numbers in all Alston schools will continue to fall. Projections show the combined roll at the primary schools will dip to 98 by January 2018, with Samuel King's falling to around 75 pupils at this point, but dropping even further to around 60 pupils by January 2025.

School budgets are dependent on the number of children on roll. As numbers fall so does funding, even though many other costs to the school remain the same.

The number of teachers in a school is also affected by how many pupils there are on roll, and this in turn can have an effect on curriculum options and the other opportunities that are available to pupils, such as sporting activities, after school clubs and field trips.

The impact on Samuel King's has been the most pronounced and has now reached a critical point. The very low numbers on roll at the school have resulted in a reduction to the school budget which is currently in deficit by £45,000 (as at 31 March 2014). Recently, around a third of secondary aged children from the area have chosen to attend schools outside the area. Whilst the current Headteacher, staff and governors at the school have done an excellent job in tailoring the running of the school to the reducing numbers, the situation in Samuel King's has reached the point where the school may not be sustainable beyond the next two or three years.

## The way forward

There are some options to consider around the future of Samuel King's School and the shape of education provision in the Alston area. There may be other options, and we would be happy to consider any alternatives put forward.

If no change was made at this stage and the situation continued as it is with declining numbers in Samuel King's, the school deficit is likely to increase and further redundancies may need to be made. A balanced curriculum would become harder to maintain, as would other opportunities for pupils. In this situation it is still probable that the school would have to eventually close, but in the meantime it would continue to diminish the ability of the school to provide a balanced curriculum for the children still in the school.

### Option One – closure of Samuel King's School

This would obviously remove secondary education from Alston, but would offer pupils an education in a sustainable school environment with a balanced curriculum in another area. Transport to the new catchment school or next nearest school, under Cumbria County Council's Home to School Transport Policy, would be available to those who are eligible.

### Option Two – federation

A federation involves a shared leadership structure amongst a number of schools. A single governing body would oversee all schools in the federation and would have the option of operating under a single headteacher. All three existing schools could stay on their individual sites or could be located on a single site. The advantage of this arrangement would be the sharing of resources (including finance) and expertise amongst the schools involved which provides the potential to reduce some costs. The continued sustainability of Samuel King's in its current state might be considered to be a barrier to it being part of a federation.

The Alston Moor Federation already exists in the area. The federation involves Alston Primary School and Nenthead Primary School. This option would see the inclusion of Samuel King's to broaden the federation to include the secondary phase of learning. At this stage the Alston Moor Federation has formally stated its wish not to pursue this option.

NB. The county council has no power to bring about a federation; only school governors can bring forward these proposals.

### Option Three – an all-through school

An all-through school option would involve the co-location of Samuel King's, Alston and Nenthead schools on Samuel King's School, Alston Primary or Nenthead Primary School site. Feasibility studies have been undertaken to examine the suitability of each site, from which the recommendation is the Samuel King's site, due to its size. Alterations to the school layout and facilities would be made to accommodate both primary and secondary aged pupils.

This option could see a number of different layouts of the primary and secondary phases within the school and could manage areas of integration between the two. It would share best practice and expertise between phases on the same site and allow younger children access to facilities that they would not normally have in a primary setting, as well as providing continuity between the primary and secondary phases. It would have the single governing body of the federation option and would also operate under a single headteacher. This option could allow savings to be made on operational costs and may offer a more sustainable long term education solution in the area.

There are two ways that this option could be achieved;

- a) Through formal closure of 2 schools and an extension to the age range of the remaining school in order to cover the extended age range of an all-through school.
- b) Through formal closure of all 3 schools, to be replaced by an all-through academy. The new all-through school would be an academy/free school in accordance with the Education and Inspections Act 2006, section 6A, which states that there is a presumption that any new school will be an academy /free school.

## We want to hear your opinion

The Alston area faces significant challenges to existing school provision. A greater proportion of parents are choosing schools in other areas whilst pupil numbers are falling. In the longer term, the county council does not believe that all 3 schools can be sustained as they are currently operating.

Before decisions affecting the future of provision in the area are made Cumbria County Council wants to hear your views.

## Have your say

This period of public consultation will run from 15 September 2014 to 24 October 2014

You are invited to a consultation event so that you can find out more about the options being considered.

The event will be held at:

### **Samuel King's School Thursday 2 October 2014**

From **6pm to 7:30pm** there will be opportunity for you to attend a presentation from county council officers and ask questions. The consultation runs until 24 October 2014 and you can respond by completing the questionnaire in this document, on-line or in writing to:

**Cumbria County Council, School Organisation, Parkhouse Building, Kingmoor Business Park, Carlisle, Cumbria CA6 4SJ**

By email to [school.organisation@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:school.organisation@cumbria.gov.uk)

You can complete the questionnaire on-line at [www.opinionsuite.com/cumbria/cumbria-county-council](http://www.opinionsuite.com/cumbria/cumbria-county-council)

## Next steps

The county council needs to know your views to help it decide what to do next. But no final decisions can be made on the basis of this consultation alone. Further work will be needed on whatever option we decide to pursue, and there will need to be more detailed consultation on the favoured option(s) before any changes are implemented.

## A review of education in the Alston area

Please return by **24 October 2014** to Cumbria County Council, School Organisation, Parkhouse Building, Kingmoor Business Park, Carlisle CA6 4SJ.

Responses can also be made on-line at [www.opinionsuite.com/cumbria/cumbria-county-council](http://www.opinionsuite.com/cumbria/cumbria-county-council)

- 1. We need to know some basic information so that we can accurately report your views. Please tick all boxes that apply.**

Are you a	Samuel King's	Alston Primary	Nenthead Primary
Parent/carer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Member of staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Governor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (Please specify)

- 2. Given the information contained in this document please select one option from the list below.**

- Option One** Closure of Samuel King's
- Option Two** Federation
- Option Three** All-through school
- Alternative** (Please provide details overleaf)

- 3. Supporting and additional comments can be entered overleaf if required.**

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_



**Please provide any supporting/additional comments below.**



**If you require this document in another format (eg CD, audio cassette, Braille or large type) or in another language, please telephone **0845 712 57387****

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