

SCHOOL REORGANISATION: REVIEW OF PRIMARY EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN LIVING IN THE ARMATHWAITE AND HIGH HESKET AREA

Background

Approach to this Response

The approach adopted for this report was to collate, respond and analyse what is felt to be the most important data and issues received by the governors and High Heskett Church of England Voluntary Controlled School during the period of the consultation. Responses were received from the local community, parents, children and staff. It is felt important, however, that Members of the Cabinet digest the formal responses received as a result of the consultation as they contain a good detail of information, comment, views and arguments that this report is unable to cover.

The General Context

This consultation is concerned with the arrangements for primary education in the villages of Armathwaite and High Heskett. The question of all-through primary provision at Armathwaite has arisen several times over the last 30 years. Consultations have been undertaken from time to time on the future of Armathwaite, however, as a result of the views received and the adverse effect this would have on High Heskett Church of England School no changes have been made.

The consultation focuses on only two options. Option A would maintain the status quo. Option B would see Armathwaite become an all-through primary school catering for children aged 4 to 11 with no transfer at the end of Year 3 to High Heskett.

The Consultation Process

On 3 February 2011 the Cabinet Members for Children's Services presented a report which sought agreement on the undertaking of public consultation on changes to the age range of Culgaith Church of England and Armathwaite Schools. Public consultation was agreed and commenced in February 2011.

A formal consultation paper was made available to the general public. Concerns have been widely expressed that the consultation paper is biased towards the change taking place. It was very clearly spelt out that the county council has a preference for all-through primary schools as opposed to separate infant and junior schools. Minimal reference was made to the potential adverse impact that this change could have on the children, parents and local communities associated with both schools. As a result, the consultation exercise has resulted in conflict between the two communities and considerable investment has been required on the behalf of teaching staff at High Heskett Church of England School to ensure this has not adversely impacted on the children in their care.

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As is usual in relation to possible school change, the consultation exercise involved meetings with stakeholders which took place in February and early March 2011. This included meetings with staff, governors, parents and the general public at Armathwaite and High Hesketh that were well attended. The meetings gave all individuals the opportunity to voice their views. Following the Armathwaite public meeting a number of upset parents attended the school with the view that responses from the school organisation team to public comments had led them to believe that the matter had already been decided and both schools will be all through primary schools. Concerns were expressed that Armathwaite parents had received information from the school organisation team that a high volume of response had been received from High Hesketh and at the meeting they were urged to increase the level of correspondence accordingly. It is viewed inappropriate that either party to this consultation should be receiving feedback that will inform actions during the consultation process.

In addition to formal consultation meetings, the governors and head of the school has met with parents on a number of occasions. It is also known that a number of parents formed an action group to encourage the local community to give their views throughout the consultation process.

On Thursday 3 March 2011, following discussion with the governors a managed session was held with children within school time to seek the children's views in relation to transition. Responses to these sessions have been forwarded to the school organisation team to be recorded as part of the consultation process.

Feedback from the Consultation

Cumbria County Council have identified that the consultation is in line with the document "A Strategy for Learning" (2009) which sets out a strategic framework to inform educational and service development. The document sets out a number of underpinning principles to achieve the outcomes of Every Child Matters.

This response has been prepared in response to the strategic principles set out in this strategy document.

Principle 1: Giving Priority to Learners

In line with national policy we believe that every child does matter and have developed our systems to meet the needs and aspirations of all learners. It has been demonstrated through national benchmarking results that the school is extremely successful in achieving outcomes at key stage 1 and key stage 2. It should be recognised that success in key stage 2 is achieved for all pupils including those transferring from Armathwaite Community School at the end of Year 3. As a result of the reputation that High Hesketh Church of England School has built up over recent years, 63 children now attend the school from outside the catchment area. There is a concern that if the school loses the children from Armathwaite with consequences of reduced funding, a poorer environment, mixed classes and the

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impacts of reduced staffing the school will no longer be the first choice for parents and will become unviable.

Due to the building and facilities available and the numbers of children within the school, the school is currently organised so that there are six classes. It is strongly believed that this provides a structure that meets the needs and aspirations of learners. The size of the classes and the focused lesson plans enable the staff of the school to work with the children both as individuals and with peer groups to meet the needs of all.

In addition to the successful arrangements for the children's education, the school prides itself on offering a range of opportunities to promote personalised learning and raise the aspirations, self-esteem and overall achievements of the children. Our enthusiastic and diverse teaching staff offers a wide range of after school and lunchtime clubs including the following:

- Country dancing
- Wildlife
- Multi-skills
- Film club
- Musical instrument workshops
- Netball
- Chess
- Radiowaves
- Board games
- Rubik's cube
- Sports leaders

The school takes part in a range of enrichment activities including cross country, football, gymnastics, athletics and netball. The children take part in external events which they enjoy and in which they have had considerable success. High Hesketh also receives very positive feedback of the residential trips it offers. In Year 4 the children are given the opportunity to take part in a two day residential and in Year 5/6 the children are invited to attend a five day residential in Edinburgh. Staffing capacity and the number of children ensures these trips are viable from both a developmental and economic perspective. These additional activities are reviewed on a regular basis to respond to the needs and wishes of the children. There is considerable concern that agreement to this school reorganisation and the consequences it would have on the numbers of both children and staff would make these additional activities unviable. The school believes that the growth of the children both educationally and socially is essential to the overall well being of the child and propose that this reorganisation would diminish the opportunities for the children.

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The consultation meetings heard of a number of examples where changes to the organisation could have a negative impact on the needs of the children. Whilst these responses will be recorded as part of the consultation process the following present a number of examples:

- One parent emotionally outlined the experience of her child in a small school that offered classes for mixed age groups. She said that her child who had special needs was unable to adequately express herself in order to be heard within that setting. This impacted on her education, social development and self-esteem. Following a transfer to High Heskett that parent reported a significant change in the well being of her child as her personal needs were met. That parent was significantly concerned that acceptance of this proposal would adversely impact her younger children who also have special needs.
- Another parent reported that her son had been disadvantaged by his experience of being in a small school. He was the only male of his age group and this reduced his opportunities for social and personal development. She exercised her parental choice and moved the child to High Heskett School and spoke positively about the outcome.
- A parent with a child that had transferred from Armathwaite Community School at the end of Year 3 talked enthusiastically about the positive impact the transfer had for his son due to the opportunity presented by a wider number of peers, opportunities for extra curricula activities and classes focused on the age and development needs of his son

Principle 2: Inclusive Planning

High Heskett Church of England School has active involvement of children, parents, church and the local community in its provision and development. In addition the School has a strong relationship with other local schools, University of Cumbria, community groups such as a boy's writing project and mountain rescue and local and public sector organisations e.g. sports partnerships and fire and rescue services. The School prides itself on being a resource for other local schools. Other schools consider the new foundation unit as a considerable resource and use the wildlife garden and science facilities as educational resources for their children. The School has hosted an e-safety cyber bullying programme and other schools have been invited to attend this.

High Heskett School has an active PTA that provides opportunities and activities for networking and socialising for both children and adults. The School also takes part in community activities such as coffee mornings, writing circles and Fairtrade and Forest Friends events. The School has video conferencing facilities and have linked with schools in USA and Tanzania to develop and conduct innovative lesson plans and have been filmed by

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Teachers TV. High Heskett School takes every opportunity to integrate with the local community and to introduce the children to wider perspectives and other communities

The Councils Strategy for Learning outlines the principle that provision will be planned and provided at a local level incorporating the views of learners and providers. The Governors have an expectation that the views received from High Heskett community will be considered to inform the decision of Cabinet.

Our School is focused on developing greater community cohesion. This includes the immediate community within High Heskett and also includes wider communities within the local area. It is recognised that the isolation brought about by smaller communities places some of the Cumbrian population at risk. These risks include educational and social ones but there are also safeguarding, economic and health risks associated with isolated communities. We believe that closer integration of the communities through a transfer to High Heskett School reduces these risks and provides increased opportunities for enrichment of learners and the communities.

Principle 3: Serving the community

It is recognised at strategic, community and school level that any school reorganisation should reflect local needs. As Governors we place needs in a higher category to wishes. We seek to ensure that High Heskett continues to be at the heart of wider community learning meeting the needs of learners, their parents and the community as a whole.

The consultation process has identified a variance in research and views associated with mixed age classes. Local evidence from High Heskett School has identified that the current system is very effective and we therefore propose that it should not be changed. It was possible to ascertain through the process clear evidence in support of the current system at a local level. Whilst the Local Authority representatives made comment that mixed classes may not have an adverse impact on educational outcomes for the child, they reported that it made the role difficult for teachers. They reported that as a result of meeting different educational needs of the group and balancing this with the personal requirements of the child, there would be increased pressure on the teaching staff. Whilst we acknowledge both schools have experienced, competent and flexible workforces we request that the individuals are not put in a position of balancing the needs of one child against the other at the expense of their professional working lives. It has been noted that whilst training for age children would be desirable to date this training is not available in Cumbria. We would like our staff to be given the opportunity to continue to provide enriched educational opportunities to a single year group at key stage 2 of a child's education.

High Heskett School is a learning site that aims to provide opportunities for children to attend from 8.00am – 6.00pm. This is possible due to the school having the capacity and capability within its workforce to offer a full range of additional opportunities as outlined

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above. On an ongoing basis local parents have identified the reduced provision for pre and after school care available due to the relatively rural setting of the school. It is recognised that activities after school provide a means for some parents to get extended provision but we are aware that not every child wishes to engage in the activities available. Work is currently ongoing to establish an out of school club that would meet the needs of parents by securing accessible, convenient, safe and structured care for their children. There is considerable enthusiasm for this proposal from a number of parents who will be supported to improve the balance of their home and working lives. The out of school club has been scheduled to commence early May 2011. It is noted that if the school is reorganised and children do not transfer from Armathwaite this proposal may not be viable.

High Hesket does not have the advantages of a community structure that many local villages have. The village does not have a shop, post office, pub or a village hall and as a result the school is central to pulling together the local community and reflecting local needs. Local residents wish to increase this community structure not see it diminish as result of smaller numbers and reduced diversity within the School.

Cumbria is a county that supports the concept of "Green " and the advantages this brings in relation to the public health of its citizens. There are limited numbers of safe parking facilities associated with both Armathwaite and High Hesket Schools. The current provision of school transport between the villages reduces the carbon footprint, promotes a safer environment and gives opportunities for the children to develop some independence and integrate socially with other children from the community. Without the Armathwaite children High Hesket School would need to actively accommodate children from outside of the catchment area to remain viable potentially leading to increased traffic within the village.

The consultation process has highlighted a range of views in relation to the impact the transfer to a new school has on the child. We accept that the transition will have an impact at an individual level, although this will vary from child to child. In many ways, we view this transition to be a positive one. At High Hesket the needs of the individual child is paramount and we proactively work with the children and workforce of Armathwaite School prior to the transfer to inform and introduce the children to the change. Following the transfer the children are assessed on an individual level in order that the necessary support can be given to the child in order that they flourish educationally and socially. It is noted that the majority of children currently at Armathwaite School and those that have gone on to other schools are very positive about its environment. It has also been heard from a wide number of children that whilst they enjoyed their years at Armathwaite School they have equally enjoyed their time at High Hesket School and have been positive about the increased opportunities education within a bigger setting can bring. As there is no secondary school within Armathwaite or High Hesket all of the children will transfer to a much larger secondary school out with their local community.

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The Governors support the views of children and parents that it is not in the best interests of the child to transfer from a very small school to a large one. A wider social network increases the likelihood of the children integrating quickly and effectively into the secondary school environment.

Principle 4: Diversity and Parental Choice

Over the years this consultation has taken place on a number of occasions at the request of parents within Armathwaite. We are aware that Armathwaite parents believe they do not have parental choice in relation to the education establishment their child will attend from age eight. It is recognised that the parents do have a number of choices regarding the establishment their child may attend, High Heskett School being only one of them. The only choice that is not available is to continue their child's education at Armathwaite School.

A large number of parents have responded to this consultation to confirm that they seek diversity of provision for their children in line with the arrangements that are currently in place. Parents from both High Heskett and Armathwaite children have responded to say diversity for them means education focused on the key stage of their child, opportunities to enhance the personal development of their child, and to integrate with the wider community. Parents support the opportunity for their child to integrate with a larger diverse group of children. The views expressed include the opportunity this gives to widen the children's views of their communities, to support emotional development and enhance skills equipping children for positive interaction with a range of personalities and communities. Importantly it has also been voiced by both parents and children that this enhances the opportunity to develop friendships and on occasion find that special friend that will support the child throughout their school age years and potentially into adulthood.

High Heskett is currently the only School which offers single age classes in Key Stage 2 between Carlisle and Penrith. This is a 16 mile stretch and High Heskett is exactly 7.5 miles from Carlisle and 8.5 miles from Penrith. Unless Parents want their child to attend a much larger town School, this is the only Village School which currently offers this. To approve Armathwaite's Full Primary Status would make High Heskett another small school offering mixed age classes. This will take away any choice for any parent in the vicinity seeking an alternative option. High Heskett currently offers something different to all the other local Schools. To give a minority of parents the choice of keeping their children at Armathwaite for their whole Primary Education, would result in making two very small similar sized schools; replicating that which already exists and limiting diversity and choice for the majority of parents. Under the Restructuring code of conduct, (page 3) the Local Authority has a statutory duty to support diversity and listen to views of the parents. If approved, this will limit diversity and take away parental choice.

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We propose parental choice that promotes diversity of provision and a focus on the needs of the individual child should be considered more favourably than the opportunity to be given a choice of which school a child should attend. Based on the numbers of children in the local community, we believe the potential risks of having two small schools that are unable to offer a broad curricula due to financial restraints and workforce capacity along with reduced opportunity for the children to develop socially are not in line with the choices that would be made by many parents from both communities. We are aware, that it was for many of these reasons that this proposal was not supported by the Local Authority in 2007. Please see attached letter from Mike Tuer dated 20 November 2007.

The School strives to secure an appropriate balance of church and secular provision. Although we are a Church of England voluntary controlled school it does offer diversity in relation to faith, having children from a range of faith groups including Christianity, Hindu and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Principle 5: Buildings and Environments Fit for Purpose

High Heskett Church of England School has been extremely fortunate in recent years to receive capital funds from the Local Authority and local community to the value of £400,000 to increase capacity and enhance the environment within the school.

The school is and has been acknowledged as being vibrant, welcoming and comfortable all of which have a positive effect on learning. Internally the building is attractive with individual areas having been developed to represent the needs and age group of the children. All rooms are accessible and fit for purpose and have sufficient capacity to support the current numbers of children and a potential increase.

The school is equipped to deliver a range of opportunities for the children. The facilities support large and small group work as well as providing opportunities for individual one to one work. The facilities support the delivery of a range of opportunities on an academic, creative, technological and physical level. We are confident that this range meets the needs of all of the children within the School.

We are significantly concerned about the impact this proposal will have on the environment for the children. We are aware that losing the Armathwaite children alone will lead to a reduction in the number of classes. This has a potential impact on the choices made by parents who choose to send their child/children to High Heskett School as a result of the current practices in place and the opportunities these provide. Closure of classrooms and spare capacity throughout the building will have a negative impact reducing the vibrancy and attractiveness of the setting.

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Principle 6: Efficiency and Viability

It is recognised that although Cumbria County Council has a preference for all-through schools it also has a responsibility to ensure efficient provision for school places.

We propose that both Armathwaite and High Hesket Schools being all-through schools would not be efficient in relation to the number of surplus school places, financial efficiency (capital and revenue) and educational and social standards.

It has been reported that many schools in the local area have spare capacity. The consultation document indicates that High Hesket has a net capacity of 133 places. It is our view that net capacity is 160 without counting the Foundation Class. The document projects that pupil numbers 2013 – 2014 would be 85 if this proposal was accepted. This clearly demonstrated the inefficient use of the building and its environment. The building is old and has significant running costs in relation to heating and lighting. The building would need to be maintained and there would be very little if any reduction in these overheads.

Extension of the age range at Armathwaite School would have considerable impact financially on High Hesket School. The consultation document indicates a reduction of 48 children by 2013/2014. This would mean result in an annual reduction in income of £27,500, which over three years would mean lost income of at least £120,000.

The document indicates that Armathwaite has a net capacity of 68 and that development of a community hall will enable the school hall to be used as a classroom for a mixed age group. It would result in three classes for children across the 4 – 11 age group, requiring children of two and on occasion's three age groups to be taught in one area. The document projects pupil numbers of 78 by 2013 – 2014. There is therefore insufficient capacity of ten places within the school. It is our understanding that no capital funding is available with the current financial climate. It is our view that it is inappropriate to make plans to change the educational system when there is insufficient capacity to put that system in place and no funds available to change it. The current system has sufficient capacity to meet the needs of children ensuring positive outcomes for all.

Whilst Mr Smart has advised that High Hesket School would not have their income reduced until April 2012, this reduction continues to raise considerable concerns. Mr Smart also advised that Cabinet would be requested to give Armathwaite School additional financial support during 2011/2012 to enable them to make adaptations to accommodate the increase in numbers and needs of the children. We are surprised that within the current financial climate, it is proposed that additional revenue should be spent on introducing a change in system when the current one is economically, educationally and socially sound. We are aware capital funding is limited but acknowledge that expenditure in relation to desks and chairs as a minimum would be required to meet the basic needs of the children.

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The implication for the workforce within the two schools is considerable. Whilst Armathwaite School would need to undertake a recruitment exercise to secure an appropriate workforce, High Hesket School will need to commence a consultation with its valued and capable workforce to reduce within the next financial year one teacher and one teaching assistant. Further consultations will be required within the next three years as further redundancies will be required. The Governors of High Hesket believe that it would be morally wrong to implement changes that would have such a negative impact on this valued workforce and potentially the education of the children. We have requested information in relation to the financial implications of redundancy and whether the School or the Local Authority would be the accountable organisation for incurring these costs. We do not believe the School has the financial resources to make these payments and consider that the Local Authority would be incurring unnecessary expenditure if it picked up these costs to support the proposal.

Principle 7: Effective ICT

High Hesket School has invested a considerable amount of money over the last five years. This includes a high quality video conference camera, a visualiser, 42 curriculum computers, a plasma interactive touchscreen and 7 whiteboards with overhead projectors. We have very recently invested a further five thousand pounds in a portable ICT unit which will allow pupils to work on the latest netbook ICT equipment anywhere in the School, including developing learning outdoors. We are now very well equipped in offering ICT education for the 21st Century and will be accessed by considerably less pupils if the proposal goes ahead.

Principle 8: Effective Leadership

High Hesket Church of England School has extremely experienced staff, this has been recognised by the Local Authority. One of our teachers is an Early Years Specialist and Lead Teacher who is used by the LA to support other schools. Another is a Lead teacher for Literacy and the Every Child a Writer Programme and also supports a number of local schools. We have a music specialist and a teacher on the Maths Specialist Teacher Programme as well as a sports specialist. The Head is a Local Leader in Education. The workforce at High Hesket School are system leaders; they do not work in isolation but for the benefit of all schools and children. Fewer pupils on roll would result in the loss of at least three teachers and therefore the school would be unable to continue to release staff from teaching duties, therefore losing the expertise these teachers provide. The Head would need to have a greater teaching commitment, with less time spent on management and leadership duties. There is a significant risk that staff morale would be adversely affected with a potential for increased turnover.

CONCLUSION

As Governors of High Hesket School we are continually impressed and delighted by the achievements of both our staff and our children. We believe as demonstrated above that we are currently and actively delivering to the principles outlined in Cumbria County Council's learning strategy.

We believe the current proposal is not viable and will have an adverse impact on the children educationally, developmentally and socially. We do not consider it is an economically viable model both in relation to the impact the loss of budget would have at High Hesket, the cost of redundancies and the increased expenditure at Armathwaite as a result of pump priming funding in the first year, increased costs of equipment and the likely requirement for capital expenditure by 2013.

The proposed timescale for the change we believe to be unrealistic. The needs of the children should be central to this. Parents have already submitted choices in relation to school transfer in September and sessions are scheduled with the Armathwaite children to support the transition process of those that are currently expecting to transfer to High Hesket in September 2011. The final decision will not be reached until 30 June 2011. This does not give an appropriate timeframe to adjust the children to a change. We also consider it does not give adequate time to adjust the structure of the school, teaching plans and associated activities. Armathwaite School would require additional staffing. It is likely that permanent staffing would not be in place by September 2011. We feel that temporary staffing with a school in transition and retirement of the Head would be disadvantageous to the children at this time.

We consider that the options proposed within the consultation document are limited. If it is considered that transferring the children during a Key Stage of their education is inappropriate, the transfer of the children one year earlier, at the end of Key Stage 1 should be considered as an option. We therefore submit this as a counter proposal as Option C. It is noted that the County Council has a preference for all-through primary schools. As outlined above, we do not think it is a viable option for both Armathwaite and High Hesket Schools to be all through primary schools. The governors of High Hesket CE School, therefore propose Option A should be considered the only outcome which is the most effective in educational terms for all children, enhances educational opportunities, represents the best use of available resources and provides the best fit with the wishes of the majority of parents. If this is not the preferred option, a further consultation should be commenced which includes an Option C.



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15th March 2011

Dear Sir/Madam

We, the Governing Body of Armathwaite Community School, strongly support the proposal that the school becomes a full 4-11 primary school.

This proposal has been driven by parents and the community for many years and will continue to be an issue until there is equality of provision with other rural Cumbrian schools. At present, pupils are forced to leave at the end of Y3. They and their parents have no choice in this matter. We believe that they are disadvantaged compared with other pupils in Cumbria.

Our school is firmly rooted within its community. Since the last consultation the number of pupils on role has increased substantially. Community fundraising has enabled us to build a voluntary sector pre-school facility and a new school hall. This community has demonstrated outstanding commitment to the future of the school and we have the space and the pupil numbers to ensure its on-going success.

Armathwaite is classed under planning terms as a local service centre with areas designated for future house-building. As this thriving and popular village continues to expand the need for primary places will inevitably increase and we believe that the unnecessary transportation of pupils from their own community to High Hesket is both financially and environmentally undesirable.

Armathwaite Community School has been judged 'outstanding' by Ofsted yet the current system does not allow pupils in Years 4-6 to take advantage of this. The enforced transfer halfway through Key Stage 2 disrupts pupils' academic performance in Year 4 which can result in a dip in attainment. Our children's development is compromised by being trapped in a system recognised as being educationally undesirable. Transition at the end of Y3 is not in the best interest of our



Healthy School



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pupils – it is disruptive to their education. Full Primary status would allow continuity of learning in an environment where children and their families are well known to staff, excellent relationships are fostered and a climate of mutual trust has been developed.

The unique academic ethos at Armathwaite Community School offers pupils and their parents excellence and choice in educational approach. The school is recognised locally and nationally as a centre of excellence and specialist provision. From 2007 to the present the school has been invited to advise present and past Government's policy makers.

"The work that I saw at Armathwaite School whilst I was Chief Executive of the Innovation Unit was of very high quality and highly innovative. This approach certainly deserves to go further up the age range." – Mike Gibbons,
We believe we exemplify "a best school" and should be allowed to expand.

Armathwaite Community School plays an active part within its cluster of primary schools in this part of Cumbria. At present it is an unequal partner, excluded from sporting and curriculum enrichment opportunities offered to pupils in Y4-6 in all other primary schools.

Armathwaite School is one of very few schools not affiliated to the Church of England and, as such, adds to the diversity of educational options in our locality.

We have recently been awarded Healthy Schools status and we encourage an active approach in all aspects of our children's lives. The current bus transfer unreasonably extends journey times, increases transport costs and prevents children from travelling sustainably (i.e. walking or cycling to school).

We empathise with the parents and families who find it divisive that siblings of primary age are educated separately, transported to school separately and must celebrate events such as plays and sports days separately. We believe that this adversely affects community cohesion.

The consultation process has aroused many emotions for the Governors, staff, parents, pupils and the wider Armathwaite Community. However, there are some fundamental principles at stake:

- We agree with the Government's aim of a schools system shaped by parents which delivers excellence and equity and where the best schools are able to expand and spread their ethos and success.
- We believe that every child has a right to receive an excellent education, whatever their background and wherever they live. Armathwaite is an Ofsted 'outstanding school' and, under the current arrangements, pupils are subject to discrimination due to an historic anomaly.



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- We support Cumbria County Council's preference for all-through primary schools which allow a natural sense of progression for children through their primary education, supporting their social and educational needs.

We are very excited about the future of our school and feel that with full primary status we can, at last, really build on our successes. We are ready to implement this change within existing resources, both capital and revenue.

We passionately believe that Armathwaite Community School is a very special learning environment that offers our pupils a fantastic start to their education. We simply want our children to have the same opportunities as those in the rest of Cumbria; that is, to remain at their local village school throughout their primary education thus ensuring fair access to educational opportunity.

It is imperative that this matter be resolved at the earliest opportunity. Any set-back would delay the healing process between the communities.

The time is right to address this anomaly and restore full primary status to Armathwaite School. We urge you to grasp this opportunity.

Yours faithfully

May Robinson

Chair of Governors

On behalf of the Governing Body of Armathwaite School



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Headteacher: Mrs J Dixon

14th March 2011

Dear Sir or Madam

Armathwaite School Staff Response to the review of Primary Education for children living in the Armathwaite and High Hesket area

We give our full support to the proposal that Armathwaite School becomes an all through primary school.

The objective of achieving a change of status that would allow Armathwaite First School to become a full 4-11 primary school has been the demand consistently made by successive cohorts of parents and the wider community for many years now. We believe this issue will continue until the desired change is implemented. As the political climate has encouraged parental choice in education, parent voice has become more vociferous. The expectation that this voice will be listened and responded to has intensified since the last consultation. Our parents feel that their wishes are not being respected and that they and their children are being discriminated against. They want to be treated equally with fair access to educational opportunity. The vast majority want their children to receive full primary education (4-11) at Armathwaite School.

We believe we have the resources and capacity to implement this proposal

- Numbers of pupils on role have increased substantially in recent years. At present a significant number of pupils on role (46%) were not born within this catchment area and would not be identified within the mechanism used for projecting future numbers. Armathwaite and Ainstable are attractive places to live and we have a significant number of families who have relocated here from other parts of the country. These people cannot understand why we are a First school in a system that has no Middle schools. Given that this village is a service centre with plans to build more affordable housing we expect the trend of increasing numbers of pupils to continue. At the time of the last review the average number of children in each year group was 8. Now our average is 12 per year group which is more than the number of places held over at High Hesket School.



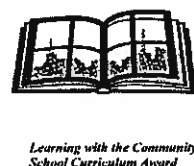
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- We are ready to implement the process to provide full primary status within existing revenue.
- An illustration of social capital and the value this community places in Armathwaite School is the extensive fund raising, sharing of expertise, time and energy that have been donated to drive through the building of an excellent purpose-built new school hall this year.
- In 2002 the school and community worked together to secure funding for the building of the nursery and pre-school facility adjoining the school.
- Our staffing structure is such that we have the expertise and experience to continue pupils' education in all subjects through to Year 6. We are able to implement any changes needed to staffing to accommodate additional pupils by September 2011.
- We have a spare classroom available for use by older children.
- Restoring full Primary status would produce a saving to the transport budget. It would reduce the carbon footprint and result in healthier children. Currently Y4, 5 and 6 children living within walking/cycling distance of school have to travel by car or bus to and from school each day.
- Y4, 5 and 6 children being educated at Armathwaite would add to the social capital within this community, working in partnership on local projects such as the restoration of the community garden at the Old School Hall thus making a positive benefit to the community in which they live.

Educational Issues

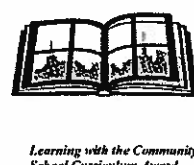
- Transition is stressful for parents and children. Pupils are forced to transfer to a different school with a different ethos, staff and ways of working leaving their siblings and friends at Armathwaite.
- This transition is unlike any other transition point with pupils having to join an existing, established cohort. It disrupts the social mix and can and does result in some children taking a long time to settle and make this adjustment. This can impact on achievement and progress.
- Allowing pupils to remain at Armathwaite would raise standards of achievement and attainment; there would be continuity of learning in an environment of mutual trust where children and their families feel secure. There would be no dip in performance that can be experienced in transition.



- Continuity in learning, assessment and tracking of performance would be in place from Reception to the end of Y6 thus preventing any potential dips in performance.
- All staff teach their specialisms throughout Armathwaite School which makes transitions between classes smooth, providing continuity and uninterrupted progression in learning. We have a team of 6 subject specialist teachers. All staff have in depth knowledge of each child and know their precise next step of learning. This way of working would be continued and expanded.
- Time invested building positive relationships and trust with all families is vital for educational success. This is particularly the case with more vulnerable families. This current disruption to a partnership that has been grown for 4 years is unnecessary and not in the best interest of the children and their families.
- Efforts made to close the learning gap for vulnerable pupils are jeopardised by transition.
- Despite sharing detailed records for every area of the curriculum, personalised reports and meetings with staff from the receiving schools transition is disruptive to all involved. Each year we have to support parents whose children find this move distressing, compromising their child's well-being.
- "Best schools should be allowed to expand". Armathwaite School is an Ofsted outstanding school. Armathwaite has been selected as one of only 9 educational institutions nationally to be a Next Practice field trial school working with and advising the Department for Education for the previous Government. Presently we have been invited to, and are working with, the National College and the present Department for Education, offering advice about current educational matters. We have many visitors from local schools and from schools nationally who come to learn from our practice. We have been invited to share our practice at many conferences locally, nationally and internationally. The ability to extend our way of working across the full primary age range would expand and give further credence to our achievements -surely an accolade for Cumbria.
- Full primary status would allow choice for parents who seek a non-denominational school. It secures diversity within this locality.

Extended Services

- At present Armathwaite pupils have the opportunity to attend a wide range of after school clubs and curriculum enrichment activities such as cookery, gardening, art, singing, playing musical instruments, Tae Kwando, tag rugby and animal care club. Having more pupils would allow us to extend this range.



- Full primary status would allow this school to work as an equal partner with other schools locally. It would allow us to access many more sporting activities and curriculum enrichment activities available within our cluster group, currently unavailable to us.
- It would enable us to work with other schools to provide a wider range of extended services building on current good practice. At present Armathwaite School hosts Rainbows, Brownies and football and cricket clubs attended by pupils from our school and other neighbouring schools.
- Presently our ex-pupils keep in touch and contribute within the Armathwaite Learning Community through the use of an innovative Virtual Learning Environment. We have ambitious and exciting plans to expand the ways in which pupils in Y4-6 could develop and extend their skills and learning using and contributing to the available social capital within their community through the Virtual Learning Environment.
- If this change is implemented High Heskett and Armathwaite would be similar in size to all our neighbouring schools (Lazonby, Plumpton, Kirkoswald, Calthwaite). This would allow us all to work as equal partners, providing opportunities for our children to work and mix together.

We believe that the long term benefits of this proposed change far outweigh any short term difficulties.

We would urge you to implement this change from September 2011. 50% of the children within the cohort that could stay at Armathwaite have younger siblings at this school or due to start school. They have no siblings at High Heskett. Their parents desperately want their children to remain together.

Please grant us full primary status.

Yours sincerely

Jenny Dixon

Barbara Anderson

Jane Yates

Helen Hepworth

Lesley Wylie

Susan Fullelove

Libby Dowes

Deborah Rackham

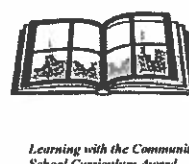
Gillian Nelles

Fiona Josh

Sandra Kendall

Carolyn Brough

Armathwaite School Staff





**DIOCESE OF CARLISLE
Board of Education**

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Mike Tuer,
FREEPOST RRBS-RLBG-GZGL
Cumbria County Council
School Organisation
18 Portland Square
Carlisle
CA1 1PE

16 March, 2011.

Dear Mike

I am writing on behalf of the Carlisle Diocese Board of Education in response to the Local Authority (LA) consultations relating to Armathwaite and Culgaith Schools and wish to make the following points:

I know Culgaith, High Hesket and Langwathby schools very well. I have visited them many times over a number of years. They are all effective schools with talented and hardworking staff and governors. The experience they provide for children is wonderful and the quality of education in each school has improved consistently over the years. I know less about Armathwaite but everything that I do know suggests that the same is true there also. I think that it is vitally important that we celebrate the very positive achievements of all these schools and recognise those who have contributed to these. They, and other schools like them, are the pride of Cumbria.

Armathwaite and Culgaith are the only two first schools in the whole of Cumbria. They came into being, it seems, from a failure of the Authority to act strategically during a previous re-organisation. Their position is anomalous and should be regularised as soon as practical. The Carlisle Diocese Board of Education (DBE) guidance on school organisation says about First Schools:

"The DBE should support the extension of the age range of both these schools to full primary schools. As primary schools their viability should be judged by the same criteria being used for other small, rural primary schools and not in isolation. The DBE should as a matter of priority:

- i) support the governors of such schools in extending their age range
- ii) work with the LA and governors to minimise any impact that these changes may have on other schools."

In principle, therefore, the DBE welcomes the current consultation and would support the change of both first schools to all-through primary schools.

In coming to its decision we believe that the Local Authority should give significant weight to the wishes of parents and children. In the short term this should particularly focus on the wishes of parents and children in Armathwaite and Culgaith. It seems clear that there is overwhelming support amongst these two groups for the proposed changes. In the longer term, here as elsewhere, parent choice should be allowed to determine the viability of the two schools.

"Every Child Matters To God."

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However, we share with many others, a concern regarding the timing of any changes. The consultation itself has happened very quickly. The short time scale may have contributed to the intensity of the debate which is regrettable. There is also concern about the proposed date for any changes, namely September 2011. This will clearly create difficulties for all schools as they seek to respond in the best interests of children to the final decision late in June.

We believe that any changes should have been deferred until September 2012 at the earliest and that this should have been clearly set out at the start of the consultation. This would have allowed each school to prepare for any changes in a more effective, less pressurised way. However, it is clear that the proposals have already raised expectations of many parents in Armathwaite and Culgaith to a very high pitch. We therefore accept that, if the changes are approved, it may be unavoidable to adopt them for September 2011. However, this early date should only be adopted if it is clear that children will be suitably provided for in the new arrangements.

Because a late decision (June 2011) to change the status quo from September 2011 will create difficulties for both High Hesketh and Langwathby, then it should only be made if suitable transitional support is made available to both schools. The consultation documents suggest that there will be no change to the budgets for the schools until Easter 2012. However, decisions about classroom organisation made for September 2011 should be maintained until the end of that academic year. This will mean that additional funding will be needed to cover the summer term 2012. This should be a minimum requirement, other reasonable requests for transitional costs should also be met as a condition of any changes.

Finally, it became clear during the consultations that the process to date has disrupted the good relationships that have existed between the several communities and the schools. Whatever the outcome of the consultation, for the benefit of the children, the LA should provide support to reconcile these differences and create good collaborative working in the future. Likewise, any further consultations need to be managed in a way that will minimise any negative fall-out.

Your sincerely

Bert Thomas

Ainstable Parish Council response 150311
From: Nigel Vear - Chairman of Ainstable Parish Council
[chairman@ainstable.org.uk]
Sent: 15 March 2011 23:36
To: Tuer, Mike J
Subject: Armathwaite School Consultation

Dear Sir

Ainstable Parish Council would like to express support for Armathwaite School in its bid to become an all through primary school.

Armathwaite School is the local primary school for the children of Ainstable village, Ruckcroft and the surrounding communities. This school has been extremely successful, and very popular with the children and parents from Ainstable.

We feel though that the children of Ainstable and the surrounding communities have for too long been forced to change school during an important part of their education. Changing school is always a stressful time for children, and one which they will face when they are older and along with all other children move up to secondary school. We do though feel that the children of Ainstable Parish should not have to face this additional stress, and should not be forced to change to a different school in the middle of their primary education.

Councillors from Ainstable Parish Council attended the meetings at both High Heskett and Armathwaite schools, and the parish council discussed the subject in public meetings. We are fully appreciative of the emotions raised at both meetings, and the obvious pride the parents and staff have in their respective schools. We feel though that the needs of the children, and the wishes of parents in Ainstable Parish, would be best served by Armathwaite School becoming an all through primary school.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Vear
Chairman
Ainstable Parish Council

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From: Louise Fawcett [Louise.Fawcett@eden.gov.uk]
Sent: 14 March 2011 15:12
To: School Organisation Project Team
Subject: Review of Primary Education - Armathwaite & High Heskett Area

Follow Up Flag: Follow up

Flag Status: Completed

Please see response below from the Ward Councillor of the Heskett Ward regarding the above:

Heskett Parish would like the following to be noted:-

Last week representatives from Heskett Parish Council and myself attended both consultation evenings held at Armathwaite and High Heskett Schools. After further discussions held at the Parish Council on the 8th March 2011 it was decided they would like to offer the following comments.

Representatives from Heskett Parish Council and Councillor Lesley Grisedale attended both consultation evenings and believe that both schools offer an excellent facility.

Heskett Parish Council supports every school in its parish equally

Lesley Grisedale
Eden District Councillor
Heskett Ward

Louise Fawcett
Secretary to Chief Executive/Chairman
Eden District Council
Town Hall
Penrith
CA11 7QF
(01768) 212133

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School Organisation
Cumbria County Council
18 Portland Square
Carlisle
CA1 1PE



10 March 2011

For the attention of Mike Tuer

Armthwaite Nursery Group
The Playhouse
Station Road
Armthwaite
CA4 9PW

Dear Cumbria County Council,

Review of Primary Education for Children Living in the Armthwaite and High Hesket Area

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chairman of the Armthwaite Nursery Group Management Committee, and I represent the collective views of all those serving on the Management Committee.

It is recognised that Cumbria County Council is considering a proposal for Armthwaite School to become an all-through primary school catering for children aged 4-11, and that the aim of the current consultation exercise is to gather the views of local communities and those people and organisations that may have an interest in this proposal. I would comment as follows:

Armthwaite Nursery has served the area surrounding Armthwaite since 1974. In 2002, a purpose built facility was constructed in the grounds of Armthwaite School which was strongly supported by the School and the local community. The Nursery enjoys an excellent working relationship with the School operationally, given that it is on the same site as the School and is physically linked. The Nursery and the School work very well together serving the Armthwaite community.

Armthwaite Nursery serves not only the local Armthwaite community but a much wider population and set of catchment areas attracting toddlers and nursery school children from many parishes in the area. Similarly, Armthwaite Nursery feeds into several local schools including Armthwaite and High Hesket.

Armthwaite Nursery Group wishes to stress its commitment to Armthwaite and to the wider community, and to supporting all schools for which there is a transition of nursery children in the area. There is a desire to maintain positive and constructive relations with both Armthwaite School and High Hesket School, and indeed all schools for that matter. This representation should in no way be regarded as a "taking of sides" between schools, nor attempting to promote one school over another.

Armthwaite School is one of just two "first" schools left in the County which are not currently able to offer a complete Key Stage 2 education under the National Curriculum. We believe that there is a good and sustainable argument to the effect that if the curriculum for Key Stage 2 was planned in one Setting, there is likely to be less risk of disruption to any affected children, both educationally and socially, which supports the case for Armthwaite attaining full primary school status.

Armthwaite School children do not have equal opportunities with other children in the area as they are currently forced to move to a different school at the end of Year 3. We believe this to be at odds with the prevailing County Council policy on "educational equality".

Armathwaite catchment currently has a number of families who have chosen to send their children to other schools from the start of this stage in their education because Armathwaite School does not have full primary status. There does appear to be an inherent inequality here in the context of parental choice.

Given the supporting information provided within the consultation paperwork, we are unaware of any good reason why both High Hesketh and Armathwaite Schools should not be able to operate and remain viable moving forward, both with full primary school status.

There appears to be a sound case for Armathwaite School to be awarded full primary status in terms of its educational credentials, its resources and finances, its premises and capacity (particularly in light of the recently completed new Centenary Hall), and potential transport benefits and cost savings.

If the status quo is retained, and Armathwaite School is not granted full primary status, there is a perception and a fear on the part of many of those associated with Armathwaite Nursery Group that the future of the School will become more uncertain, particularly in the context of the County Council's confirmed preference for all-through primary schools as opposed to separate infant and junior schools. Any question mark over the future of Armathwaite School will inevitably have a knock on effect on Armathwaite Nursery, and this is of concern to us.

If primary status is granted, this would not only secure Armathwaite School for the future, but it would also secure Armathwaite Nursery for the future.

We would like to offer our support to Armathwaite School in their strive to attain full primary school status.

Yours faithfully



Iain Henderson
Chairman of the Management Committee
Armathwaite Nursery Group

