



Culgaith C of E School  
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Head Teacher: Lynn Harrison



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

March 14th 2011

Dear Sir,

### **Response from the Governors of Culgaith School to the Consultation Paper**

Firstly the Governors of Culgaith School would like to thank the County Council for carrying out this consultation on behalf of the Governors. The Parents and Governors have sought all-through primary provision several times over the past few years and welcome this opportunity for a reasoned debate on primary status for both Culgaith and Armathwaite.

At a meeting on March 8th the Governors considered the consultation exercise based on the criteria laid out in the consultation paper i.e. whether the present arrangements:

- Are likely to be the most effective in educational terms.
- Could be varied to enhance educational opportunities.
- Represent the best use of available resources.
- Provide the best fit with the wishes of parents

In addition, the Governors considered the school and its local community.

#### **1. Education**

The County Council's agreed policy is for all through primary schools as set out in the "Strategy for Learning". This is a recognition that all-through primary schools offer the opportunity for better continuity of education than systems that involve transfer.

Culgaith has been a First School since the mid 1970's when there was a different curriculum and approach to education. The introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 led to primary education being re-organised into Key Stage 1 (5-7) and Key Stage 2 (7-11). Currently the children at Culgaith move to Langwathby after one year in Key Stage 2. There is some evidence that changing school part way through a key stage has a detrimental impact on children's level of attainment.

It is recognised that there is often a 'dip' for children at point of transfer so keeping those points to a minimum is likely to enable better continuity. In addition, as the consultation document says "Continuity in learning, assessment and tracking of performance are vital to prevent the 'dip'. If teachers know the children and can refer back to the previous teacher to compare performance in Year 2 or Year 3 (for those going into Year 4) it tends to help prevent this." Full primary status would allow for greater continuity for children at our school.



**Healthy School**

## **2. Educational opportunities**

Currently the children and their parents do not have equality of choice, the children have to go to another school at the age of 8. For years many parents have wanted their children to stay and complete their primary education at Culgaith School. The change of status would provide equality for all children and parents across the County by providing choice to Culgaith and Armathwaite parents. The Governors wish to make it clear that this is about choice it is not about the education provided by Langwathby School. Both schools have worked closely together for many years and we would hope to continue to do so in future.

By becoming a primary school a wide range of educational opportunities would open up for the children at Culgaith School. There would be greater community cohesion through more ambitious Key Stage 2 activities. The School has already started working with the Culgaith VIC Community Cafe on a number of enterprise schemes the opportunity to develop these further with older children is an exciting one.

The school already actively works with other schools such as Langwathby and Armathwaite. By becoming a primary school it could provide the children with opportunities to work with other schools across the Eden Valley. It would provide a greater range of opportunities for all, through greater range of activities available outside of school for Key Stage 2 children, for example, joint residential courses with other schools.

The school is already bringing in expert help in sports, languages, singing, and story telling. By becoming a primary school these opportunities would be built on and grown providing the children with wider opportunities.

## **3. Best use of resources**

As laid out in the consultation document, were the suggested change to be implemented there would be an increase in pupil based income to Culgaith School and a similar loss to Langwathby School. The Governors recognise that this will require careful budgetary planning to maintain the situation during the transition phase. Indeed, Culgaith School has a good track record of managing its budget effectively.

In the longer term there would be savings in respect of school transport, which is currently provided from Kirkland, Blencarn, Skirwith and Culgaith to Langwathby, and Armathwaite to High Hesket. In the background paper presented to Cabinet on February 3<sup>rd</sup> the saving was calculated at £54K.

The Governors are also aware that for parents with children at both Culgaith and Langwathby there is an impact in terms of both time and financial resources. It currently takes children from Skirwith 40 minutes to travel by school bus to Langwathby in the morning and 40 minutes back in an evening. There is no public transport available to the children and their parents in Culgaith and the surrounding villages. Children currently attending after school activities at Langwathby have to be picked up by car by parents/carers. As a primary school Culgaith would be able to extend it's after school activities which would benefit all parents and reduce car journeys for those living in Culgaith village itself.

## **4. Parental wishes**

For some time many parents have expressed a desire that Culgaith should become a primary school not only for educational reasons but also to promote emotional well-being. Some children and their parents find transition very difficult, at best it may cause a bit of a 'wobble'. Provision which is based on as few points of transition as possible offers clear advantages. At Culgaith and Armathwaite the possible anxiety about transferring may be compounded by the fact that the children join an existing year group in a full primary school where children may have been together since they were 4. This is an entirely different scenario to that faced by children moving to secondary school where all are new pupils in Year 7 regardless of which primary school they attended.



**Healthy School**

A number of parents have already written to the County Council asking that Culgaith should become a primary school and this has been born out at the meetings held to discuss the consultation paper. The Governors recognise that some of those parents with children in Year 3 have a particularly difficult choice this coming September and have some concerns. However, many of the same parents have younger children at the school and are excited about the prospect of the younger ones staying on at Culgaith if it were to become a primary school.

### **5. Local Community**

The school is an integral part of the community of Culgaith, Skirwith, Blencarn and Kirkland. The sense of continuity and belonging will be greatly enhanced in the community if children are able to remain within that community for the whole of their primary years. The school already works closely with the local churches, the VIC Community Cafe, the Culgaith Flower Show, and The Guardians of the Tarn (one of our local village greens). More ambitious activities with the community could be tried, with older children being able to play key roles.


A greater sense of cohesion may come from children attending the same school rather than dispersing to different ones, this may particularly be true in the smaller outlying villages of Skirwith and Blencarn. The community will have an even greater vested interest in the school through a better relationship with older children who live in that community. Currently the villages lose that community involvement when a whole group of children move to Langwathby.

At the same time the school will continue to play an active role by networking with other schools and enhancing the community's profile in the county. I know that many local people took a great deal of pride in seeing the report in the Cumberland and Westmorland Heard about their school singing carols at the Rheged Centre last December.

By providing primary education the community involvement will continue which is vital in a rural environment such as Culgaith and the surrounding villages and full primary status will help to secure the school for future generations of children.

Finally, the Governors and more particularly the staff have a vision for the children. We believe that by becoming a primary school we can continue to develop each individual child to meet their individual potential aspirations and goals.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Sue Smith  
Chair of Governors







Headteacher: Mrs. Lesley Birtwell B.A (hons)  
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LANGWATHBY C.E. SCHOOL  
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Cumbria County Council  
School Organisation  
18 Portland Square  
Carlisle  
CA1 1PE

16 March 2011

Submitted by email: [school.organisation@cumbriacc.gov.uk](mailto:school.organisation@cumbriacc.gov.uk)

Mr M Tuer,

## **Review of Primary Education for Children Living in the Culgaith and Langwathby Area**

### **Response by Langwathby Church of England School Governing Body**

We welcome the recognition in the summary of the Consultation Document of the good education provided at Langwathby School.

It is not our intention in this response to criticise the Governing Body, staff, children, or their parents at Culgaith School, and we recognise their right to review the educational needs of their community. We are disappointed that this consultation has forced both schools to defend their positions causing uncertainty, and inevitably some animosity between the two communities. Whatever the outcome of this consultation, we look forward to continued close working between both schools and communities, to ensure the best educational opportunities for the children of the Eden Valley.

The consultation document states "*The aim of the consultation exercise is to gather the views of local communities on whether the present arrangements:*

- *Are likely to be the most effective in educational terms.*
- *Could be varied to enhance educational opportunities.*
- *Represent the best use of available resources.*
- *Provide the best fit with the wishes of parents."*



Therefore our response is structured around these four areas, and concentrates on the impact on Langwathby School, should the proposal be implemented. We also raise concerns regarding the consultation process and timescales. Our response has regard to the response already submitted by Mrs L Birtwell, and other responses from parents that we have had sight of.

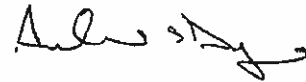
**In summary, Langwathby is a 'happy' school providing effective safe education to the children of the Eden Valley, and we do not want any change that would impact on this.**

We are copying this response to the Headteachers and Governing Body Chairs at Culgaith and High Hesket

Yours Sincerely



Lesley Birtwell  
Headteacher



Andy Dyer  
Chair of Governors

**1. Are the present arrangements likely to be the most effective in educational terms?**

- 1.1 We would ask the County Council what evidence is there that the current arrangements are not effective?
- 1.2 As noted in the Consultation Document, both Culgaith and Langwathby schools have been rated as good at their last Ofsted inspections. However, the Consultation Document also notes that Culgaith has not been inspected against the latest Ofsted framework (published September 2009).
- 1.3 We note the Consultation highlights Culgaith as having outstanding features, but we are disappointed that it does not reflect that Langwathby School's last Ofsted inspection also found outstanding areas in both pupil contributions and effectiveness of partnerships. In their letter to the pupils, the Ofsted inspectors commended the children for the quality of their performance in Twelfth Night and their art work.

**2. Could the present arrangements be varied to enhance educational opportunities?**

- 2.1 From the proposals set out in the Consultation Document, we cannot identify any positive impacts on the educational opportunities and outcomes for the children of Langwathby School.
- 2.2 The Governing Body strongly suggests that the proposals in the Consultation Document will have a **negative** impact on the educational opportunities at Langwathby School. Examples include:
- a) There will be a reduction of staffing at Langwathby School by at least 1.7 FTE teachers, and associated Teaching Assistant (TA) hours and non-teaching staff over the next three years.
  - b) Reduced classes will mean classroom areas will be empty, the atmosphere of the school will no longer be a buzz of excitement and activity and empty classrooms will have an impact on our 'energy rating' (currently B), which will impact on the overall local authority energy rating. We will appear cold and uninviting.
  - c) Reduced classes will mean that there will be a combined Year 2/Year 3 class and combined Reception/Year 1. Both of which are cross key stage classes which is an issue that the change of age range is seeking to resolve at Culgaith School.

**The Council will create at Langwathby School what it feels is inappropriate at Culgaith School.**

- d) Combining Reception with Year 1 means we will no longer be able to operate flexible Nursery admissions. Rural children may be denied a Nursery place at their first choice provider. As a school with significantly better than average Foundation Stage Profile outcomes, this will affect the position of Cumbria in relation to its statistical neighbours.
- e) Children will have fewer educational opportunities outside the statutory curriculum. For example Langwathby School is currently able to support music, sporting and gardening extra curricular opportunities.
- f) Only one residential opportunity per year rather than two will be organised; children will no longer have the choice between the type of residential opportunity (outdoor activity or curriculum).
- g) We will only perform two plays per year (Years 1-3, Years 4-6) rather than three (Reception – Year 2, Years 3-4, Years 5-6). Our reputation for plays that extend the children (e.g. Shakespeare) will be diminished as we choose material more suited to the age and numbers of performers.
- h) Each child will have fewer opportunities to take part in competitive sport and there is a danger that a 'sport elite' will emerge.
- i) There will be less variety of external visits and visitors to school.
- j) There will be less variety in opportunities to work with visiting artists.
- k) Our PTA will have less earning power and therefore not be in a position to fund as many opportunities for the children.

**3. Do the present arrangements represent the best use of available resources?**

3.1 The proposed change would place a short term and long term strain on the County Council budget:

- a) Redundancy costs will be inevitable at Langwathby School and the final decision will mean that any changes could not take place before December 2011. At least 1.7 FTE teacher and associated support staff would be surplus to requirements as the school moves to a four or five class structure. Compulsory redundancy would be a cost to the County Council's budget.
- b) Leadership, and Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) posts are funded on the basis that Langwathby is a Group 2 School. Staff holding these posts have between 8 and 12 years before they will be seeking retirement and protected salaries will have an impact on the overall budget of the school.



- c) Langwathby School is not a school that has a large surplus budget and would require an element of transition funding to ensure the change is smooth. Any such payments would have an impact on the budget of other local schools.
  - d) As a large primary school, Langwathby plays a key role in mentoring the teachers, support assistants and leaders of the future. Every year we take a number of student teachers, NVQ teaching assistants and Childcare students from our local secondary schools. We can provide placements because we have the resources to support the students. If we reduce in size, we will not be in a position to support as many. Teachers apply to our school because we can provide them with the leadership opportunities to develop for the future - small schools do not have deputies that progress to be heads. Without those opportunities the teachers whose training is funded by Cumbria will not have the skills to be the leaders of the future; these posts will be filled from outside the County.
  - e) A change of this scale is unlikely to take place without some capital investment being required.
- 3.2 Cumbria is a rural authority and inevitably will have small schools. However maintaining a number of small schools in non-isolated areas has a significant impact on the overall budget for schools, and consequently the funding for individual schools, in a time of economic austerity. For a school the size of Culgaith, the non-pupil led aspects of funding represent approximately 31% of the overall budget, for a school the size of Langwathby it represents just over 9% of budget; If one of the reasons behind the suggested change is '*more financial efficiency*' (para. 4.6, Cabinet papers 3 February 2011), then it would make economic sense to review the overall provision of school places in the Eden Valley and improve the financial efficiency of all schools in the area. It costs substantially more to educate a child in a small school than a larger school. In 2009/10, Langwathby School received £3,621 per pupil, Culgaith £4,953 per pupil<sup>1</sup>; overall small schools do not represent value for money for the tax payer and the impact is felt on all other schools budgets. This situation is set to worsen as more and more local authority secondary schools apply to become academies. Is the proposal an efficient use of Cumbria County Council's limited funds or could money be better targeted?

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<sup>1</sup> S52 statement, April 2009. All Schools funding, except formula capital.

**4. Do the present arrangements provide the best fit with the wishes of parents?**

4.1 It is not for the Langwathby School Governing Body to comment on the wishes of parents, although we acknowledge many of the concerns raised by parents at the Consultation Event at Langwathby School on 1 March, many of which we also raise against impacts on resources and education.

**5. Other comments**

5.1 We feel strongly that the Consultation Document and consultation process is being conducted in a biased manner without a balanced presentation of the full advantages and disadvantages of the proposal on both Culgaith and Langwathby Schools. This may lead to Cabinet members making decisions on incomplete information. Examples include the Impact Statement (see para 5.6 below), and statements that "*Langwathby is likely to need to reduce staffing levels....*" when clearly it would be a certainty (see para 3.1a, above).

5.2 We are concerned about the timescale and potential implementation of changes proposed under this consultation. The consultation stage is relatively short, being only four weeks (including a school holiday), so there is little time for interested parties to gather all necessary information to make a fully informed response. We note the HM Government Code of Practice on Consultations recommends a minimum period of 12 weeks.<sup>2</sup> We acknowledge that the code states "*Other public sector organisations are free to make use of this Code for their consultation purposes, but it does not apply to consultation exercises run by them unless they explicitly adopt it*" but the principles are sound and it is good practice. The County Council should justify why it does not apply the Code.

5.3 The consultation document states "*Other possibilities have been considered over the years but, for various reasons, are felt to be inappropriate at this time and unlikely to be in the best option that should be considered.*" It is not clear what these other possibilities are, or why they have been discounted (e.g. in terms of cost, impact on education, etc.)

5.4 Any decision about the change of age of transfer is unlikely to be made before the second half of the Summer term, by which time the children, parents and

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.bis.gov.uk/files/file47158.pdf> Para 2.1 (against criterion 2) "*Under normal circumstances, consultations should last for a minimum of 12 weeks. This should be factored into project plans for policy development work. Allowing at least 12 weeks will help enhance the quality of the responses. This is because many organisations will want to consult the people they represent or work with before drafting a response to Government and to do so takes time.*"

schools will be preparing for the transfer process. If there is to be a change, it would be less unsettling for the children if this is implemented in September 2012 when there would be no need for transition arrangements to be put in place.

- 5.5 The Cabinet paper of 3 February states: *“Parents have, however, made representations about how unsettling and upsetting the transfer can be, particularly given that their children will join an already established year group.”* On what data is this statement made, as this came as a surprise to the staff and Governing Body of Langwathby School. Since September 2000, 51 children have transferred from Culgaith to Langwathby, and we are not aware of any specific issues for the children who have transferred. We are aware of some concerns expressed by parents who are worried about change, which is understandable and no different to concerns expressed by parents of Year 6 children before they transfer to secondary school. Following transfer, parents feedback is positive and enthusiastic about how the transition has been managed, and how well their children have settled. This is also supported by pupils’ responses to questionnaires.
- 5.6 The impact statement of January 2011 states that all four Headteachers have raised concerns about managing the transition of pupils. This statement is untrue, as our Headteacher has not expressed such concerns and would be happy to provide evidence from School Improvement Partner (SIP) reports to confirm this.





**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 Hesket 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

Langwathby Parish Council response160311  
Subject: Langwathby/Culgaith Consulation Response

From: Parish Clerk Langwathby [mailto:langwathbypc@hotmail.co.uk]  
Sent: 16 March 2011 08:36  
To: Smart, Andy  
Subject: Langwathby/Culgaith Consulation Response

Further to your Consulation on the proposed changes to Culgaith School,  
Langwathby Parish Council's response is as follows:

All Parish Council members voted in favour of maintaining the current status quo. Members shared the view that Langwathby School offers many advantages to the children transferring from Culgaith at the end of Year 3: The larger year groups offers greater opportunities when it comes to sport and putting on school plays and offers social benefits to children mixing in larger peer groups in preparation for secondary school. Members were concerned about the adverse affects on Langwathby School particularly with regard to the consequent reduction in Government funding.

Mrs Sarah Fairlamb  
Parish Clerk  
Langwathby Parish Council

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### Culgaith and Langwathby Schools

Reply slip – please send by 16 March 2011 to FREEPOST RRBS-RLBG-GZGL, Cumbria County Council, School Organisation, 18 Portland Square, Carlisle CA1 1PE

We need to know which school you are linked with so that we can accurately report back to the council's Cabinet. Please tick appropriate box(es):

Are you a:

	Culgaith	Langwathby	Other (please specify)
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 (please specify) CHAIRMAN PARISH COUNCIL.

Do you agree that Culgaith School should have its age range extended to 3-11?

Yes

No

Name LAURA WILSON Date 07-03-11  
(please print)

Address SKIRWITH HALL  
SKIRWITH, PENRITH.

Postcode CA10 1RH.



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



7<sup>th</sup> March 2011

Dear Sir or Madam,

I write on behalf of Culgaith Parish Council re the proposal to extend the age range at the school in Culgaith to 3-11 years.

Culgaith has been recently re-classified as a Local Service Centre in Eden District Council's Local Development Framework and is undergoing considerable new housing development, bearing this in mind we feel it would be good for the age range at the school to be extended up to eleven years. Many parents from the surrounding villages who would be eligible to send their children to Culgaith have sent them to Milburn or Temple Sowerby as they did not wish them to have to change schools at eight years old, we hope that the extension of the age range would encourage them to send their children to Culgaith. Hopefully the change would reduce the time spent travelling to school by children from Skirwith who are first onto the bus and then on the return journey via Culgaith, Blencarn and Kirkland are last off, making their school day considerably longer than it need be.

The Parish Council voted unanimously in favour of the extension.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Laura I Wilson'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Laura I Wilson

Chairman Culgaith Parish Council