



Benedict Biscop C.E. Academy

"Every child is cherished as a unique individual" – Ofsted 2012

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BENEDICT BISCOP CE ACADEMY – RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

Thank you for everyone who took the time to respond to our consultation for the proposed building work at Benedict Biscop CE Academy with questions and feedback. We are exceptionally pleased that the school is held in such high regard by members of our school community and it was humbling to hear so many positive comments about the school. We are delighted that you have highlighted the success of our curriculum and programme of personal development, for both children and staff; the exceptional quality of teaching and learning provided by the school; our family ethos; that we have a highly effective leadership team, including governance and the willingness to support the school in providing high quality education to more children.

We thought it would be helpful to provide some further information and answer questions that came up during the consultation period.

Initially, Benedict Biscop CE Academy were informed by the Local Authority that the development of new housing in the area served by the school would place additional pressure on the sufficiency of school places within Sunderland South. There are in excess of 3000 new homes planned in future years. These homes are projected to create additional demand for up to 720 new school places for primary aged pupils. In Council wards, such as Doxford, there are currently no available primary places for new families who may move in to developments in the area and it is anticipated future cohorts already residing in the area will increasingly be unable to secure Reception places at a local school without an increase in the local capacity.

As part of the South Sunderland Growth Area (SSGA), the Council approached all schools in the area, to form a strategic response to this projected shortfall in school places and demand created by the new housing developments. It is our understanding that no other schools within the area were able to consider an expansion and Benedict Biscop was identified as it is ideally located to provide a reflective spread of school places across the targeted area. Following this, an agreement was reached to propose an increase in capacity at Benedict Biscop CE Academy, for which the Council, the school and the Trust are all pleased to support. The school were later informed, by the Council, that there were also additional plans within the Sunderland South area for a new school to be built at some point in the future when there are sufficient children requiring places to make the setting viable, whilst not affecting other schools' attendance within the area. It is our understanding that this is still a viable option.



Benedict Biscop CE Academy continues to be a popular school and is frequently oversubscribed. We are currently larger in size than an average primary school and we pride ourselves that staff know all of our pupils well, despite our size. Recently, we have seen an increase in applications and interest in places, since the housing development begun. The school is currently graded Outstanding by Ofsted and outcomes for pupils in all key stages remain significantly high, above Local and National outcomes. With children at the heart of everything we do, we are therefore delighted to propose an extension to our provision to provide more outstanding education for children in Sunderland, ensuring children who live within our local community have a neighbourhood school place, as we pride ourselves in being a school for our local community. The proposed building work will help to provide increased parental choice for school places, ultimately helping to meet the anticipated future demand.

Initial plans for the original school in 1974, cited a two form entry school and we are fortunate enough to currently have enough space to accommodate the proposed building works with minimal disruption to learning and grounds. Our current kitchen is able to accommodate the increase in demand at lunchtime and we have previously extended the school hall, ensuring that we have capacity to meet the requirements of our Physical Education curriculum. The plans propose three additional classrooms to be located at the end of the current key stage 2, near the Year 6 classroom, and an extension to the current Early Years Foundation Stage - this includes additional facilities such as toilets. School have recently extended the Early Years outdoor provision and moved to an OPAL curriculum, where children access significantly far more of our outdoor grounds than in previous years.

We are appreciative that our congregation on a Friday worship has grown over the years and we hope that it will continue to do so. With this in mind, we will look to review our worship policy to ensure that we are able to provide worship with community engagement moving forwards. We have relocated the front main pedestrian gate and offer a drop off period and staggered finishing times, including extended services and After School Club/ Breakfast Club facilities which help to reduce traffic congestion within the surrounding area. We have increased our internal car park and have worked with the council, supporting the introduction of road markings, the introduction of speed restrictions, the introduction of safety railings and safety bollards outside of the school. The school is now located on the Sustrans cycle route and school actively promote cycling to school, educating pupils on cycling awareness as part of the curriculum and providing facilities to store bikes within the school grounds. We have an agreement with the Colonel Prior that parents may use their parking facilities at the start and end of the school day.

We understand that by extending the school, that a main concern, particularly for local residents and for the school, will be the increase in traffic within Moorside. School are fully committed to ensuring the safety for pupils, their families and the surrounding residents and have shared all concerns raised in the consultation we have received with the Local Authority. The Local Authority have informed us that they have been consulting on the proposal for several years now with the local community and are aware of parking concerns. They have assured us that parking and drop off requirements will be reflected in the scheme to address this issue, whilst still enabling the school to extend and provide the places that are needed. Some solutions considered have been to provide parents with a turning circle and pupil drop-off within the school grounds, changes to the Academy car park, additional entrances and widening of the main school entrance to accommodate larger vehicles. It is our understanding that once a suitable solution has been identified local residents and parents will be able to provide further feedback on plans to Sunderland Council during the planning permission consultation period.

School are also fully committed to producing a revised travel plan. We aim to work with the community to further promote healthy lifestyles and alternative means of travel to school. We are hoping to establish a parking charter and revisit the option of a walking bus to school. It has been proposed that the increase in capacity at Benedict Biscop will begin operationally in September 2021, with plans to increase the admissions of the Nursery and Reception cohort from 30 to 45 places that academic year [PAN – pupil admission number]. As this cohort progresses in the school, school will gradually introduce some mixed year groups within the school, to accommodate for the larger cohort and ensuring that school are compliant with Infant Class Size Regulations [30 pupils per class]. This does not mean that we will increase class sizes to 45. This will mean that there will only be an **increase by 15 additional places to the Reception class cohort in 2021**, if all places are filled. There are no plans to mix current classes at the school and it is not anticipated that current year groups will be affected by the increase of PAN.

Proposed structure for introduction:

<u>Year introduced</u>	<u>Year group</u>	<u>Change to school capacity</u>
2021	Reception	+15 pupils
2022	Additional mixed KS1 class [Year 1 and Year 2 pupils]	+15 pupils
2023		+15 pupils
2024	Additional mixed KS2 class [Year 3 and Year 4 pupils]	+15 pupils
2025		+15 pupils
2026	Additional mixed KS2 class [Year 5 and Year 6 pupils]	+15 pupils
2027		+15 pupils

Current Early Years pupils [Reception and Nursery cohorts] at Benedict Biscop CE Academy are taught within a mixed Early Years Foundation Stage [EYFS]. The introduction of mixed classes, teaching and learning has been hugely successful and the school has seen standards increase within the EYFS since its introduction, supported positively by parents and carers.

The school have previously taught in mixed year groups, within Key Stage 1 and believe that our school curriculum is well adapted to meet the needs and range of abilities within each cohort, providing high quality education and additional support where needed – this will not change. As a Teaching School, we have successfully supported several schools with the introduction of mixed age range teaching, particularly with a Mastery Maths curriculum. Both of our partner schools within the Northern Lights Learning Trust teach in mixed cohorts and have successful outcomes, maintaining Outstanding and Good Ofsted judgements. Mixed age classes may seem a big change, however it will simply mean that themes are taught on a two year rolling programme. This will enable greater differentiation, additional support and challenge for pupils within these year groups, impacting positively on outcomes.

School are passionate in providing an education which can be accessed by our local community. In order to better provide this, school previously removed Church places within the school admissions criteria, providing 10 additional places for other categories.

Proposed building works are currently planned to commence at the beginning of the school's Summer holidays in July 2020 for 32 weeks. During this period, school will put in measures for when pupils return in September 2020. There have been several building works to the school in recent years, including extending several classrooms and extensive building work to the main entrance of the school, including the increased extension to the main building with the creation of our learning centre. As in previous years, school will ensure that all deliveries of building materials to the site are appropriately timed to reduce congestion and that works are completed at

appropriate hours. School are confident that the process will be managed effectively and that there is minimal disruption to teaching and learning for the current cohorts as well as local residents. The Council has secured funding for the works required to increase Benedict Biscop, they will also seek to provide revenue funding for any positive variance between the existing PAN (30) and the total number on October Census at each year up to 15 pupils for 7 years from September 2021. The required works therefore will not place any financial demands upon the current school's budget.

We again thank you for engaging with us in a positive way. We value our partnership with our parents and the local community and we are really excited for the next development of our school, which will further strengthen our BB family.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "SArmstrong". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'S' at the beginning.

Mrs S Armstrong
Headteacher