



Department
for Education

**Office of the Regional Schools
Commissioner, North
Academies and Regional Delivery
Directorate
Department for Education
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Email: RSC.North@education.gov.uk

22 March 2018

Jacqueline Knight/Caroline Pryer
Ponteland Community Middle School

By email

Dear Jacqueline and Caroline

Thank you for your significant change application to change the age range of Ponteland Community Middle School (PCMS) from 9-13 to 2-11 to enable it to become a primary school from September 2020. Ministers have now considered the application and made a decision. In coming to a decision ministers have considered a number of aspects including PCMS's stated desire to fit with the now two tier system in Ponteland, pupil numbers in the area, the results of the consultation and the views of stakeholders including other local schools, local authorities and the diocese. Ministers have taken into account the concerns raised by some stakeholders about the potential for the additional primary places to adversely impact on other providers. Ministers also considered the effectiveness of PCMS and the ability of the academy to transition to become a primary school, and sustain an effective educational offer. Taking all these aspects together, ministers have decided to approve the application to change your age range on the understanding that it is for a one form entry school.

A successful transition will depend on robust financial planning based on realistic pupil forecasts. To that end the department will provide a School Resource Management Advisor to work with you to ensure resources are used as effectively as possible.

We will also work with you to agree how the phasing out of year 7 and 8 provision will be achieved.

We would also encourage the trust board to continue to try and work with a multi academy trust to access expertise and capacity, particularly in early years and KS1.

We would also encourage you to think hard about alternative uses to make effective use of the school estate and to work with local partners on this.

There is still much work to be done to prepare PCMS for becoming a primary school, but ministers hope that all interested parties can now work together in the best interests of education provision in the Ponteland area.

Yours sincerely

Katherine Cowell

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'K Cowell', written in a light grey or blue ink.

Director, Academies and Regional Delivery Directorate, North

Cc:

Dean Jackson – Northumberland County Council

Sue Aviston – Northumberland County Council

Ewen Weir – Newcastle City Council

Ian Dawson – Newcastle City Council

Kieran McGrane – Pele Trust

Gerry Miller – Pele Trust

Guy Opperman MP