



North Tyneside Council

Diane Buckle
Assistant Director for Education Learning and Skills
North Tyneside Council
Langdale Centre
Langdale Gardens
Howdon
Wallsend
NE28 0HG

Tel: (0191) 643 7100

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Dear

Consultation on changes to provision at the Melrose Centre and Southlands School

David Griffiths, who was the Interim Assistant Director for Education Learning and Skills at North Tyneside Council, wrote to you in November 2019, to tell you about some changes we are proposing to make to the Melrose Centre at Longbenton High School and to Southlands School. David's letter invited parents and carers to attend one of the consultation sessions we held in November. It also offered the opportunity for comments or questions to be e-mailed to us.

As the new Assistant Director for Education Learning and Skills at the Council, I am writing to summarise the background to, and the scope of the proposed changes, to give you some feedback about the consultation sessions, and to inform you about what happens next.

David's letter explained that, should the proposal go ahead, it would mean that the Melrose Centre would stay in the same location at Longbenton High School. Children now at the Melrose Centre would continue their education at Melrose and the existing staff team would continue to support them.

The Melrose Centre would become special educational provision under the leadership of Southlands School. Southlands has the expertise to fulfil this role as the school already has a high number of students with autism and a number of staff who specialize in this area.

The proposal is being made for two reasons. Firstly, the complexity of the needs of children at the Melrose Centre has increased so that the leadership and expertise of a special school is now required to run it. Secondly, the number of children with

Education, Health and Care plans who have autism has increased in recent years and more special school places are required to meet their needs in North Tyneside.

Longbenton High School has confirmed that the increasingly complex needs of the children with autism in the Melrose Centre, and the need for pupils to have access to specialist teaching expertise and resources, requires the centre to be placed under the leadership of a special school. Longbenton High School is unable to continue to run the Melrose Centre from the next academic year starting in September 2020. The governors at Longbenton High School have confirmed their commitment to continue to host the Melrose Centre on the Longbenton site, with a special school taking over the leadership of the provision.

Five consultation sessions were held in November 2019, attended by a total of 32 parents. A presentation was made at each session covering the changes proposed, the rationale and benefits, next steps, sources of advice and how to offer comments. The presentation slides and Frequently Asked Questions are available on the engagement section of the [North Tyneside SEND Local Offer](#) website.

Parents who wrote to us to request further information or to express their concerns have received a response and have been sign-posted to the written Frequently Asked Questions and offered a one-to-one discussion if required.

The next steps are as follows. The Council's Cabinet, the main decision-making body of the Council, will consider a report about the proposal for the Melrose Centre on 20 January 2020. The report will recommend that Cabinet approves moving to formal consultation. Should Cabinet give approval, the Authority will follow the Department for Education's guidance, which indicates that a formal consultation period of at least four weeks is required, including the publication of formal public notices. I will write to you to inform you of the Cabinet's decision.

In the meantime, you can get impartial information and advice from the Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS). This specialist service can help you with all aspects of special educational needs. Contact Details: Amanda Durrant or Nicola Gregg tel. (0191) 643 8313 or (0191) 643 8317 or email: SENDIASS@northtyneside.gov.uk

If you would like to discuss your child's Education Health and Care Plan you can contact the SEND Support Service on 0191 643 8684.

You may also want to contact the North Tyneside Parent Carer Forum – tel. (0191) 406 0018 or e-mail: info@ntpcf.co.uk

Yours sincerely



Diane Buckle

Assistant Director for Education Learning and Skills