



NORTHUMBERLAND
EDUCATION
SCHOOL'S ALLIANCE

In conjunction with



On behalf of the Local Authority may I thank you for taking the time to read our plans for closer working of Northumberland schools. Whilst the Department for Education (DfE) have decided not to proceed with the idea of Local Authority Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) as outlined in the now defunct White Paper we are keen to support, extend and deepen the close working ties between schools across the county. All schools have an opinion about the drive toward academisation. The alliance model is not about academising or otherwise; it is simply better supporting schools to work more closely together to improve outcomes. The model will continue to develop and grow over time. Please do get in touch if you have a view you would like to share.

David Street

Director of Education, SEN & Skills

WHO?

This opportunity is available to all Northumberland schools who are not in a MAT.

WHAT?

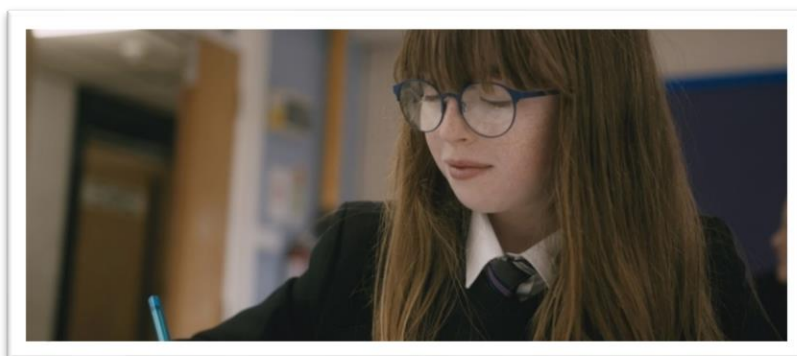
Northumberland Education School's Alliance is simply that - a group of schools who choose to work more closely together to support not only their own pupils and staff, but those in other alliance schools.

WHY?

We have examples in Northumberland where the very close working of groups of schools generates capacity and improvement in all schools. This shared endeavour reduces the pressure on individual headteachers in particular - pressure that has grown since the pandemic. We would like to support a similar structure that provides the benefits but retains the freedom of LA schools.

WHEN?

- Schools sign up from March 2024
- A soft launch in June 2024
- A formal start is anticipated from September 2024



VISION

"We need a social contract that is about pooling and sharing more risks with each other to reduce the worries we all face while optimising the use of talent across our sector ... It also means caring about the well-being not just of our own pupils, but of others' too, since they will all occupy the same world in the future." ([Minouche Shafik](#))

GOVERNANCE

The [Confederation of School Trusts](#) (CST) believe that the best bet for a school system that keeps getting better is groups of schools working in deep and purposeful collaboration in a single governance structure. We think that NESAs can support that idea of "deep and purposeful collaboration". However there are **no plans** to amend the structure of school governance.

HOW?

By bringing groups of Northumberland schools together and supporting them to work more closely on aspects of provision, policy and pedagogy. By providing leadership and back-office support to free up time for leaders to lead.



THE ALLIANCE DIVIDEND

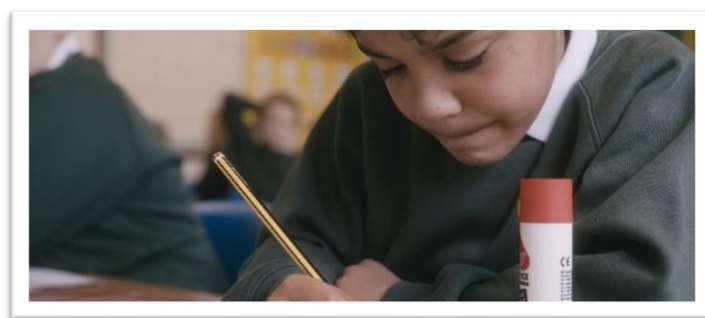
We think that NESAs can develop the dividend that comes from groups of schools working more closely together. Value can be added by supporting standardisation, empowerment, and collaboration across schools.

Some aspects of school life are open to **standardisation**. These aspects act largely the same way each time and are the more mundane elements of the daily life of schools. NESAs will support and develop efficient and effective operational structures in order to free up time and space for school staff.

Aspects that are more complicated should be **empowered** to schools and colleagues. Complex areas respond differently in each setting and so require local decision making as quality and outcome is linked to the situation as it emerges. Such areas will be left to the discretion of individual schools.

High quality **collaboration** that purposefully connects colleagues in schools, and across groups of schools, will support the development of classroom practice. **Networks** will allow the sharing of expertise and development of practice across NESAs, aligning and strengthening the standardised as well as the empowered. **Subject Groups** curate curriculum, design assessment and focus on pedagogy.

A strong focus on implementation will see initiatives better embedded and therefore higher performance over time.



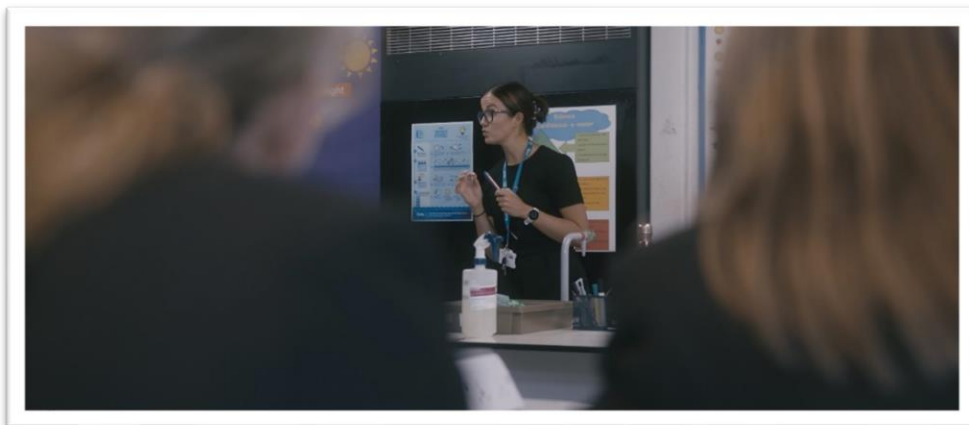
WHAT MIGHT SIT WHERE?

Standardisation	Empowerment	Collaboration
Inspection readiness	Curriculum	Focus on implementation
Data analysis	Behaviour systems	Use of expertise
Quality assurance	Personal development	Meaningful collaboration
Safeguarding	Leadership development	Networks
SEND		Subject groups
Service Level Agreements		
Policies		



WHAT BENEFITS MIGHT WE SEE?

- Consistency - named contacts for all SLAs
- Strategic leadership support - a central support team, including school business management
- Build capacity - possibility of shared specialist staff (music, languages, caretakers, EWO)
- Network meetings for all subjects and non-teaching groups of staff
- Moderation meetings for a wider range of subjects and year groups
- Uniformity of systems
- Greater local CPD opportunities
- Provision of policies from the centre
- Commissioning of contracts, training and services to reduce costs per school
- Develop over time - you are at the heart of shaping the alliance as it develops
- Greater range of opportunities for small schools e.g.: joint trips, joint teams
- Workload reduction as aspects of school provision are standardised
- Agreeing what schools will stop doing



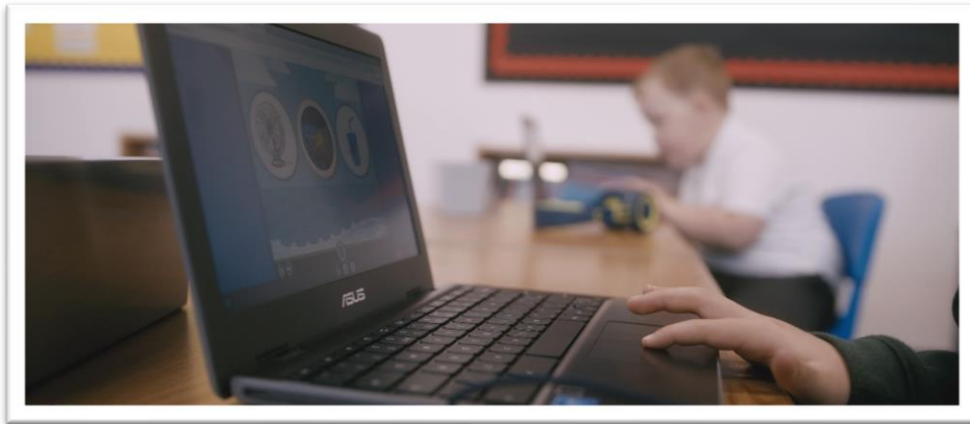
WHAT WILL WE NOT SEE?

- Any changes to staff contracts or terms and conditions
- Staff being forced to work in other alliance schools
- A change to governance structures
- Top slicing of school budgets
- Any changes to school identity, uniform, school name
- Any changes to admissions policies
- Schools forced to join NESA
- Schools forced to stay in NESA



WHAT WILL BE EXPECTED OF MY SCHOOL?

- Support for, and collaboration with, other schools
- Share your good practice
- Be willing to receive and implement good practice from elsewhere
- Endeavour to support other schools as and when required
 - e.g.: SENCO support across schools if necessary
 - e.g.: Leadership support across schools if necessary
- Facilitate subject leadership/middle leadership networks and training



WHAT NEXT?

TALK TO US

Contact one of the [School Improvement Team](#) if you have any questions, queries or feedback on the proposal.

TALK TO YOUR GOVERNORS

Feel free to share this document with your governing board. One of the team would be happy to present to governors if they would like further information.

TALK TO YOUR COLLEAGUES

Whilst we have held the discussions with a range of stakeholders already there will be plenty that we have not considered. Do talk to your colleagues and let us know what they think.

