NEW CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR INDEPENDENT EDUCATION AT POLAM HALL SITE IN DARLINGTON

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A new centre of excellence for independent education is being proposed at the site of Polam Hall School, Grange Road, Darlington. Polam Hall School propose to introduce a new ‘diamond’ structure involving separate schools for boys and girls at secondary school and mixed boys’ and girls’ classes at junior school and sixth form. Polam Hall School does not have a boys’ secondary school. It is proposed that Hurworth House School, currently based in Hurworth, would relocate to the Polam Hall site and would operate its own boys’ secondary school from that site.

Such an innovation would enable the full range of subjects to be taught to a larger cohort of pupils on a site with two separate schools for the 11 to 16 age range – one for girls and one for boys.

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Sixth form - mixed classes

Secondary - Separate
Boys School

Secondary - Separate
Girls School

Primary school - mixed classes
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The proposals are currently the subject of consultation. If the proposals are confirmed, however, it is hoped that the new look academic centre will come into being in September this year. This would involve a long term investment programme for both schools, beginning with Hurworth House relocating to a designated building on the Polam Hall site. This summer it is hoped that this building will be completely refurbished and specially adapted to enable the proposed ‘diamond’ model to function effectively. If the proposals are confirmed resources will be focussed on ensuring continued excellent teaching and maintaining the high staff to pupil ratios which are a feature of both schools.
Consultation about these proposals is taking place with staff and parents of each school. Hurworth nursery and junior school pupils would be welcomed into Polam Hall Junior School before the boys and girls progress to the separate schools at age eleven.

Marie Green, Headteacher at Polam Hall School, said: “This is an exciting proposal which would generate new investment in educational excellence in Darlington. The town would be home to a significant academic base for independent education offering both boys and girls, in separate schools between 11 and 16, a first class education with resources focussed on high quality teaching and first rate facilities.”

Kerry O’Rourke, Headteacher of Hurworth House School, said: “I am delighted with the proposal for both secondary schools to come together on one site whilst maintaining separate education by each of the schools at the 11-16 age range. This could be a fantastic opportunity and the schools have a united vision for the future of independent secondary education in Darlington. Together we would be formidable and provide an outstanding centre of excellence. Our boys’ secondary school would have the opportunity to grow and develop at a new home. The proposed new model would enable resources to be effectively targeted and would ensure the continuation of independent secondary education for boys in Darlington in an environment suited to the academic ethos we have always maintained.”

Marie Green added: “Diamond Schools are practical and innovative. They can give your child the best of both worlds – single sex teaching and pastoral care, yet shared cultural and social opportunities in a controlled environment. Diamond schools are the fastest growing model in the UK. Already existing diamond schools have proved popular with parents and effective for pupils. Both Polam Hall School and Hurworth House School already deliver some of the best GCSE and A level results in the region and this proposal would ensure continued success for many more generations.”

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