



Boroughbridge High School

3rd February 2022

Dear Parent/Carer,

BOROUGHBRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL SIXTH FORM

As you know, we ran a stakeholder consultation between 18th November and 16th December 2021 on a proposal to temporarily suspend admissions to the Sixth Form at Boroughbridge High School from September 2022. The proposal was to suspend admissions for a period of up to two years. The Federated Governing Body of Boroughbridge High School and King James's School considered the responses to the consultation at its meeting on Thursday 27th January.

Responses to the consultation

We received three responses during the formal consultation period, all from parents or carers of current students at the school. These responses were opposed to the proposed suspension, primarily on the grounds that the relationships established with Boroughbridge High School teachers would be lost, worries about increased travel times and cost, and concerns about the suitability of alternative Post-16 provision in the area for their children.

We also received a number of additional responses, both written and verbal, in the week prior to the Governing Body's meeting. Whilst there was no requirement for these responses to be considered, in the interests of transparency the Governing Body was also provided with these responses and took them into account. These latter responses focused on similar issues to those raised by the three parents, along with concerns about the impact on the local community of losing a local Sixth Form provision.

What other factors were considered?

i) Funding

As a relatively small secondary school, the Boroughbridge High School Sixth Form has always been smaller than is usual. A decade ago, we typically welcomed around 60 students a year into Year 12 and were operating with a total of about 110 in the Sixth Form. The funding model for Post-16 education has changed a great deal in recent years and now favours much bigger Sixth Forms than Boroughbridge High School has ever had. Research carried out by the Learning Skills and Development Agency in the mid- 2000s suggested that 'Institutions with significantly fewer than 200 A-level students (a year cohort averaging 100) require substantial subsidy, even where they offer only a restricted choice of subjects.' A Department for Education research report into 'Understanding costs of A level provision' published in 2017 states that 'According to the providers that took part in this research, the average minimum class size required to cover costs was 11.7.' Again, this is larger than Boroughbridge High School has ever been able to operate, other than in a handful of subjects. The consequence of this is that, historically, funding intended for those in years 7 to 11 at the school has to some extent subsidised the provision of a Sixth Form. This has become increasingly unsustainable as the average funding per pupil in these year groups has also declined in real terms over the last decade.

ii) Declining student numbers

In recent years, the number of students studying at Boroughbridge High School has fallen markedly, from about 600 in the main school in 2015 to 425 today. This is primarily a result of changes to demographics in the area, along with other factors such as changes in availability of bus services. This is despite the fact that the school now draws from a much wider range of about 30 feeder primary schools. We have worked closely with the strategic planning teams at

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North Yorkshire County Council, particularly looking at the potential impact of the extensive housebuilding in the area. Whilst we expect this to have an impact on the intake to the school over time, this impact is expected to be slow and it could be a number of years before the school returns to anything like its previous size. This has an impact on the size of the Sixth Form as, typically, the intake to most school Sixth Forms is dominated by those moving up internally from Year 11. Whereas the typical intake into Year 12 a decade ago was 60, last September only 5 students joined the Sixth Form. In the preceding years the numbers were 7 (2020), 28 (2019) and 26 (2018). This means the current Sixth Form consists of only 12 students. This is neither financially nor educationally sustainable.

Why are so few students joining the Sixth Form?

In 2021, 92 students from Year 11 stayed in education Post-16. Of these about a third went on to study vocational subjects which Boroughbridge High School cannot provide such as Animal Management and Uniformed Services at places such as York College and Askham Bryan College. Others went to York College, St Aidan's or Harrogate Grammar School, either to study more specialist A levels not available via Boroughbridge High School or because they wanted the opportunity to join a much larger student body. The fact is that the size of the Boroughbridge Sixth Form has always been a limit on the choice of subjects the school has been able to offer, and students have, correctly, chosen the Sixth Form option which best meets their needs and aspirations. We believe it is right that students get support to make the right choice for them, and our independent accreditation for the quality of our careers guidance demonstrates that we do so.

What have you done to try to retain the Sixth Form?

Boroughbridge High School has been working in collaboration with other schools since 2016 to ensure that students have access to a wide Post-16 offer and to try to ensure we could maintain a Sixth Form provision in the school. We initially set up a Post-16 collaboration with Easingwold and Thirsk Schools, whereby students studied some subjects at the school which had the largest numbers. Unfortunately, this collaboration came to an end when Easingwold School joined the Outwood Multi Academy Trust. We then switched to a Post-16 collaboration with King James's School, Knaresborough, a partner with which we were already successfully working on other aspects of school operations. This partnership was formalised when we established the Federation for the two schools in January 2021. As the numbers joining the Boroughbridge Sixth Form have fallen, so the amount of teaching provided by King James's School has increased. It is not effective educationally for students to be taught in classes of one or two students. In September 2021, as only 5 students joined the Boroughbridge Sixth Form, students are receiving some pastoral support at Boroughbridge High School and are being taught all of their subjects at King James's School, with no Year 12 A Level teaching taking place at Boroughbridge High School.

What was the Governing Body's decision?

Taking all these factors into account, and whilst being very conscious of the strong feelings held by some members of the school community, **the Governing Body decided that admissions to the Boroughbridge High School Sixth Form should be suspended for a period of two years from September 2022.** This suspension of admissions will be reviewed in two years' time. At that point, if there is a proposal to either extend the suspension or close the Sixth Form, there will be a further consultation.

How will this affect current Boroughbridge students?

This will have no impact at all on those students currently in Years 12 and 13. They will continue to study their subjects as at present and will continue to receive the same support from both their Boroughbridge and King James's School teachers and pastoral staff.

Nor will this have any practical impact on those students currently in Years 11 and below. They will continue to receive the same careers guidance and support with making their Post-16 choices as in previous years. We want to retain as many students as possible within the Federation in Years 12 and 13, but the support they receive with making their choices will, as always, be professional and impartial. By working as part of a Federation with King James's School, we believe we can secure an effective transition from Year 11 to Year 12 for those who choose to study in the King James's Sixth Form. This will ensure that our students have access to the social and academic experience and wider curricular opportunities to enable them to move confidently on to their Post-16 education. For example, Year 11 students this year have met with Mr. O'Hara, Director of Sixth Form at King James's School, over the last few weeks and will be attending the Taster Day at King James's School on Wednesday 9th February.

It is also worth noting the success of our Year 13 students (2021) who had studied across the Federation and secured excellent results enabling them to go on to student degree courses in areas such as Medicine, Engineering, Mathematics, Geography and History at institutions such as the Universities of Newcastle, York and Bristol.

How are we supporting the rural nature of our catchment?

We are conscious that our school is in a rural area and some students already have a significant journey to get to Boroughbridge High School. We want to make it as easy as possible for them to continue to study within the Federation Post-16. We will therefore continue to run our free minibus service from Boroughbridge High School to King James's School at the beginning and end of the school day so that students can, if they wish, travel initially to Boroughbridge High School. Further details of North Yorkshire's Post-16 home to school transport policy is available on their website at: <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/transport-sixth-form-or-college> . Any parents who may wish to seek transport assistance separately from the school provided service, should seek advice on transport entitlement prior to applying for a place at King James's Sixth Form.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. As ever, please contact us at schooladmin@boroughbridgehigh.com if you have any further questions or queries.

Yours sincerely,

K Stephenson

Kathryn Stephenson
Headteacher



Malcolm Dawson OBE
Chair of Governors