

The cabinet report of September 15, 2009 contains a vision for the future of educational provision in the west of Gateshead:

"A single community school that offers the highest quality educational opportunities for 11-19 year olds through an inclusive approach. This vision can be best achieved by retaining Ryton Comprehensive School, but developing its offer to the whole community by incorporating the best features and many strengths of Hookergate School. A new school building is proposed on a new site chosen to maximise opportunities for the whole of the West Area."

What's happened since the cabinet's report?

A steering group of the two Headteachers, two Chairs of Governors, the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Learning and Schools have met five times. The meetings have been very positive and an open, honest but mutually challenging team has formed. This team's key role is to make the vision become a reality.

Members of both Governing Bodies have met to share ideas and concerns. Further meetings are planned.

All partners have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding. This is a document that details the scope of the project, the principles of how the partners work together and highlights important tasks that need to be addressed.

An early task has been for all partners to agree an approach and process to staffing the new school. All partners agree that providing job security for staff is an absolute priority. Although not complete, significant progress has been made.

What's next?

The partnership hoped the Government, through Partnership for Schools (Pfs), would already have allocated the funding for a new building. This hasn't happened yet, but the partners are optimistic and excited about the funding being allocated before April 2010. Everything that can be done is being done to secure the funding.

The Steering Group and Joint Governors' Group will continue to work on the staffing arrangements and also investigate potential sites for the new building.

"In summary, partnership groups have been established and are working well and making good progress on a range of issues. There are challenges to come but all the partners are totally committed to working together to find solutions. Our priority remains to continue to work together to raise the educational standards for all students in the Hookergate and Ryton areas."