



**School Organisation
and Resources**

Consultation on a proposal to reduce the Planned Admission Number (PAN) into Seaton Sluice Middle School and to change the feeder middle school of Seghill First School to Whytrig Middle School



Northumberland
County Council

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Background to the Proposal

Northumberland County Council is the Admissions Authority for community and voluntary controlled schools in the county and allocates the planned admission number (PAN) and catchment area for these schools. The Council also sets the transport eligibility areas for all schools and academies within Northumberland in relation to Home to School Transport. As Seaton Sluice Middle School and Seghill First School are community schools, the Council can propose changes to their admissions arrangements.

The number of children being born in Northumberland has been falling for several years, with some areas of the county such as the North and West impacted most significantly. Falling pupil numbers results in surplus places, which are the number of places a school has available for students that remain unfilled.

The Council's [School Organisation Plan 2025-2030](#) sets out its approach to the management of the number of surplus school places within the community and voluntary controlled schools for which it is responsible. There are several factors that the Council uses when managing the number of surplus places in its community and voluntary controlled schools, which are:

- Work to maintain the length of journeys to school for primary and secondary pupils to within DfE guidelines unless it is unavoidable due to specific local circumstances
- Support the viability of schools so that they can be maintained as close as possible to the communities they serve, particularly in relation to schools in rural areas;
- Reduce carbon emissions through reduction in car travel on the environment, specifically in relation to supporting of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2024-2026

The Council has implemented this method of managing surplus places since 2021 and from that time we have amended the PANs of several schools in the county to better match their intake with the needs of their communities. Managing surplus places can also support schools in implementing cost-effective staffing structures.

The Seaton Valley Partnership area has also been experiencing a fall in births; this means that after places have been allocated to students living in most of the schools' catchment areas, there are an increasing number of surplus places available, many of which are then taken up by students living in other areas of the county or out of the county.



Seaton Valley Federation includes Seaton Valley High School and its two feeder middle schools, Seaton Sluice and Whytrig. The number of students living in the catchment areas of the two middle schools who could have joined Year 5 in September 2026 was 128 combined, while the number of actual places available in the two middle schools was 175 combined. In some future year groups, the combined number of students living in the catchment of both schools will be as low as 110.

Why is there a proposal to reduce the Planned Admission Number (PAN) at Seaton Sluice Middle School?

It is now proposed that the PAN of Seaton Sluice Middle School should be reduced from 85 to 60 with effect from September 2028 for 3 key reasons:

Falling Pupil Numbers

1. The number of students being born in the catchment area of the school has been significantly below 85 for many years, particularly since the current Year 5 joined Reception class 5 years ago, as demonstrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1 (Seaton Sluice Middle School – No. of children born in catchment area)

Age 0	Age 1	Age 2	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7	Age 8	Age 9	Age 10	Age 11	Age 12	Age 13	Age 14	Age 15	Age 16	PAN	CAPACITY
01.09.24	01.09.23	01.09.22	01.09.21	01.09.20	01.09.19	01.09.18	01.09.17	01.09.16	01.09.15	01.09.14	01.09.13	01.09.12	01.09.11	01.09.10	01.09.09	01.09.08		
To	To	To	To	To	To	To	To	To	To	To	To	To	To	To	To	To		
31.08.25	31.08.24	31.08.23	31.08.22	31.08.21	31.08.20	31.08.19	31.08.18	31.08.17	31.08.16	31.08.15	31.08.14	31.08.13	31.08.12	31.08.11	31.08.10	31.08.09	85	340
62	65	63	45	67	50	61	68	65	72	74	72	54	91	70	65	60		

The last two intakes into the school have been significantly smaller than in previous years, with only 65 joining Year 5 in September 2025 and only 59 joining Year 5 in September 2026. In addition, not all of the students who live in the catchment area select to attend Seaton Sluice Middle. This means the number of students on roll in the school who live in the catchment area is reducing over time, for example in 2020/21, 64% of the students lived in the Seaton Sluice Middle catchment, while in 2025/26 this had fallen to just 56%. This means that larger number of students from other communities are travelling to Seaton Sluice Middle School for their education. With a PAN of 60, the school's intake will better match the needs of the Seaton Sluice community.

By reducing the PAN to 60, the school will also be able to maintain two classes per year group and operate more stable staffing arrangements throughout the school year.



Matching the middle school PANs with Seaton Valley High School PAN

2. Seaton Valley High School has been built to accommodate 150 students per year group which meets the needs of the Seaton Valley community plus some capacity to offer places to students who do not live in the locality. However, the combined total of places at Seaton Sluice and Whytrig Middle Schools is 175; as the high school is always keen to support the educational pathway of students from the middles to the high, it has been taking more than 150 students into its year groups in recent years. Consequently, the school is very full and this can result in larger classes, impacts options for timetabling of lessons, increased workload for staff and less time for pastoral support for pupils.

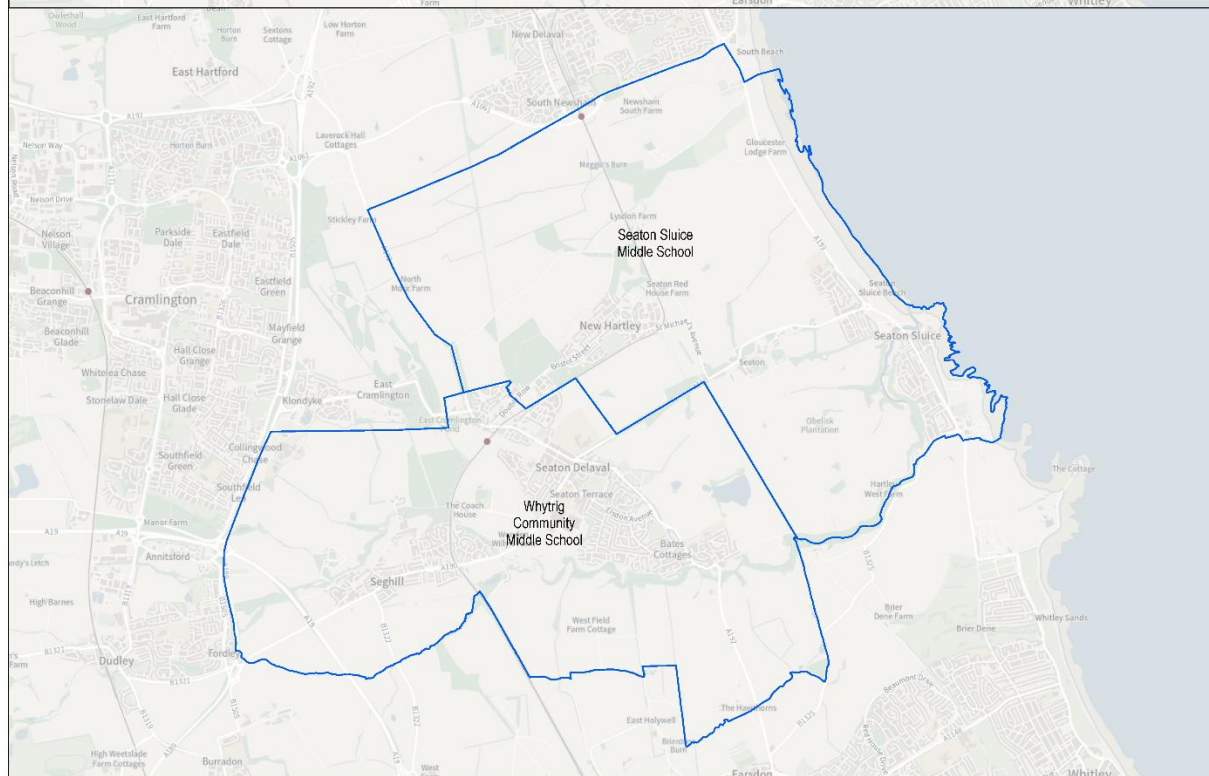
By reducing the PAN at Seaton Sluice Middle, future year groups transitioning from the middle schools to the high school will be no larger than 150 and the majority of students attending will live in the Seaton Valley area.

Seghill First School catchment area

3. Seghill First School is a feeder school to Seaton Sluice Middle. Students currently travel through the Whytrig Middle catchment on their journey to school, but why and how this feeder arrangement was agreed is not known. It is now proposed that students living in the Seghill catchment area should instead feed to Whytrig Middle School in order to reduce their journey time to school and to educate them closer to their home community. This would result in a re-drawing of the current catchment areas so that Seghill forms part of the Whytrig Middle catchment – the current and proposed catchments of Seaton Sluice Middle and Whytrig Middle is available on page 6.



The map displays the Seaton Sluice area, highlighting the catchment areas for two schools: Seaton Sluice Middle School and Whytrig Community Middle School. The map includes labels for various locations such as East Hartford, Cramlington, Seaton Sluice Middle School, Whytrig Community Middle School, and Seaton Sluice. It also shows roads like A151, A152, and A153, and the coastline.



Date 15/09/26	☐ Existing boundaries ☒ New proposal	Proposed catchment changes to Whytig and Seaton Sluice Middle Schools (September 2026)
 Northumberland County Council		0 0.5 1 2 km © Crown copyright and database right. 2025 OS. All rights reserved. You are granted permission to view this map on a computer screen for personal use only. You are not permitted to copy, distribute, alter, sell or otherwise make available a 'reproduced' map. Distribution, alteration, sale or otherwise may be liable for copyright infringement in any form. This policy right to view the map on a computer screen shall be deemed to be exhausted.



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The allocation of Seghill First as a feeder school of Whytrig Middle would not prevent parents of students living in the Seghill catchment from applying for a place at Seaton Sluice Middle in the future. However, it would impact eligibility for free transport as explained below.

What impact would this proposal have on students who already receive free transport to Seaton Sluice Middle School?

If approved by the Council's Cabinet, the change to the PAN at Seaton Sluice Middle would be effective from 1 September 2028 and Seghill First would become a feeder to Whytrig Middle at this time.

Any students already on roll at Seaton Sluice Middle School prior to 1 September 2028 and living in the Seghill catchment area who already have free transport in place would continue to receive it until the end of Year 8 or until such time as they leave the school. This would include students living in the Seghill catchment who join Year 5 in September 2027 or who join and start at the school in other year groups between now and July 2028 who meet the current eligibility criteria.

However, it is unlikely that students living in the Seghill First catchment **who join Seaton Sluice Middle School from 1 September 2028** would be eligible for free transport to that school, although of course parents would be able to transport their children to take up a place if that was their preferred school.

What is the timeline for Consultation and how can I submit my views?

Events	Date
Consultation	19 October to 30 November 2026
Drop-in event Seghill First School, Main St N, Seghill, Cramlington NE23 7SB	4.00-6.00 pm on 11 November 2026
Drop-in event Seaton Sluice Middle School, Alston Grove, Seaton Sluice, Whitley Bay NE26 4JS	4.00-6.00 pm on 24 November 2026
Consideration of consultation outcomes and final decision by Council's Cabinet	9 February 2027



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The Council is consulting directly on this proposal with a wide range of stakeholders including:

- All parents and carers of students on roll in schools in Northumberland
- Parents of children currently in early years provision (as far as it is possible to contact them)
- All schools and Governing Bodies in Northumberland

A link to a consultation response form for you to feedback your views on this proposed change to reduce the Planned Admission Number (PAN) into Seaton Sluice Middle School and to change the feeder middle school of Seghill First School to Whytrig Middle School is available via the link below:

<https://haveyoursay.northumberland.gov.uk/education-skills/reduce-pan-in-ssms-change-feeder-of-sfs>



or by the QR Code

and is available on the Council's website. As well as hearing your views on the proposal, we are also asking you for any alternative proposal(s) you may have for addressing the issues set out in this document.

If you would prefer a paper copy of the consultation response form, please contact Educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk.

As noted above, drop-in events will also be held at Seghill First School on 11 November 2026 and Seaton Sluice Middle School on 24 November 2026 when you will be able to speak face-to-face with Council Officers about this proposal.

What happens after the consultation?

After the close of consultation, council officers will analyse the feedback received from all consultees who have responded to the consultation. The feedback will then be presented to the Council's Cabinet (decision-making committee) in February 2027 when they will make a decision on whether or not to approve the implementation of the proposal.

If approval is given, the implementation will start from September 2028 with the new Year 5 intake at that point.

Thank you for participating in this consultation.



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