



Context

There has been a shared sixth form arrangement in place for some time - set up by previous headteachers - between Longbenton High School (LHS) and George Stephenson High School (GSHS). Seaton Burn was an original third partner in this arrangement prior to academisation and becoming North Gosforth Academy. This arrangement was made to try and put KS5 A Level provision in place in the North West of North Tyneside at a time when numbers staying into Year 12 were small. This agreement was never formalised and has no legal basis. **On September 9th, GSHS published their MAT consultation document which outlined their intention to join Pele Trust. This provides LHS with an opportunity to end the shared sixth form arrangement with GSHS.**

Proposal

To end the shared sixth form agreement with GSHS beginning September 2025. This means:

- Year 12 enrolling into sixth form at LHS in September 2025 will be taught at LHS only. There will be no shared curriculum offer with GSHS and no option to travel to GSHS.
- Current Year 12 will need to have their current courses honoured under the shared arrangement from both schools until the end of the 2025-26 academic year (when they will be in Year 13). This means Year 13 students will still need to travel to GSHS in 2025-26.
- The complete end of the shared agreement from August 2026.
- LHS and GSHS no longer sharing a curriculum offer, joint marketing (eg joint prospectus), enrolment or Open Evening events from September 2024 onwards; these will be completely independent and separate from each other.

What are the reasons for LHS wanting to end the shared sixth form agreement?

- GSHS's intention to join Pele Trust puts power over our sixth form into the hands of an academy trust which we will not be part of, outside of the Local Authority. Any assurances GSHS are therefore currently making cannot be guaranteed, given that strategic decisions will be in the hands of the Trust CEO and Board, not the headteacher or governors at GSHS. We need to take control of our own sixth form in order to safeguard it for our own students.
- The logistical challenges of sharing sixth form provision over time have become problematic; for example, the increasing cost of transport between the two sites. It is also difficult to quality assure the provision of sixth form education when KS5 outcomes are split across two schools.
- We are unhappy at the assumptions that have been made by GSHS regarding our sixth form; for example there has been no face to face conversation or sharing of detailed information prior to the MAT consultation paperwork being issued. Our sixth form is discussed in this paperwork and yet we did not sign off on any reference to it.

What does academisation mean? What are the potential consequences/impact on LHS?

The move towards academisation typically results in schools becoming part of a centralised trust structure, which often entails a shift in operational priorities, governance, and funding allocations. While GSHS has indicated that the Pele MAT aligns with its values and ethos, the introduction of a new management framework can have unintentional consequences on partnerships, particularly on shared services like the sixth form provision, which relies on collaboration between multiple schools. Specifically, as academies are afforded greater autonomy in decision-making, including curriculum choices, staffing, and financial management, there is a significant risk that the shared sixth form may no



longer be sustainable. If GSHS and the other schools involved in the shared sixth form join different MATs or operate under different frameworks, the alignment and coordination that this joint provision depends on may be disrupted. Differing priorities between schools within and outside of the MAT could lead to challenges in maintaining a cohesive sixth form structure, affecting the quality and consistency of education provided to students. Furthermore, the cost-sharing model for resources, staffing, and facilities in the sixth form may be altered under the new MAT arrangement. This could lead to financial pressures or inequalities that undermine the feasibility of continuing the shared sixth form as it currently exists. Additionally, academisation could influence student enrolment patterns, with schools within the MAT potentially prioritising internal students for sixth form places, thereby reducing accessibility for students from LHS.

What have GSHS said about LHS's proposal to end the shared sixth form?

They have asserted that they have been transparent and communicated with us regarding their academisation process. However, it is a fact that:

- They consulted with their staff last academic year without informing us. LHS staff heard rumours that this had happened and this was only confirmed via email with the GSHS headteacher on June 21st 2024. Whilst we knew they were considering academisation options, we were kept in the dark about any timeline. This took away any option to plan for the 2024/25 academic year.
- The MAT consultation paperwork was prepared and issued without any direct consultation or discussion with LHS, despite our shared sixth form being referenced in it.
- LHS were not given the courtesy of any advance notice of the MAT consultation process beginning on September 9th - we found out at the same time as everyone else. Our Year 12s enrolled the week prior while GSHS were fully in the knowledge that this MAT consultation was due to start.

What have the Local Authority said about LHS's proposal to end the shared sixth form?

We have the full support of the Assistant Director of Education, Lisa Ramshaw, regarding our decision to run our own sixth form independently of GSHS.

What will this mean for the KS5 curriculum offer at LHS? E.g. will it be narrowed?

Our curriculum offer will be shared with students and parents at our Open Evening event in October. We are currently working on this offer to ensure as much of the flexibility of the current offer is retained as possible, but there may be some courses we simply cannot run due to staffing limitations. We will aim to create as bespoke an offer as possible for our current Year 11 students and will be talking to them about this in the coming days and weeks.

How many students are affected in current Year 12? (ie how many students will still need to travel to GSHS next year) and how will their quality of education be guaranteed and protected?

There are approximately 30 LHS students travelling to GSHS for some of their A Level teaching. There are similarly GSHS students travelling to us for some of their teaching. We need to honour the teaching of these courses to the end of Year 13 as they enrolled in good faith at the end of August without the knowledge that this was coming. LHS would enlist the support of the Local Authority if necessary if GSHS/Pele decided that they were not prepared to do so. We would do everything in our power to ensure continuity of education for these students.



Will students from other schools be allowed to enrol in Longbenton's Sixth Form? Will GSHS students be able to enrol?

Yes. We are mindful, for example, of the recent consultation news regarding Monkseaton High School and possible future closure, which may mean students from that school looking at alternative schools for Year 12 and 13 provision. GSHS students would be welcome to fully enrol with us at the end of Year 11 if they wished, just like they would be able to choose any other sixth form in the area.

Will the sixth form still be called NE12 Sixth Form?

No; we will simply be known as LHS Sixth Form or just Longbenton High School. (E.g. Whitley Bay High Sixth Form does not have a separate name).

How can I share my views about this proposal?

Please give us your comments and questions via this Google Form: [Parent & Carer Survey LHS Sixth Form](#)