



## LONGBENTON HIGH SCHOOL

9th September 2024

Dear Parents, Carers and Students

### **GSHS Academisation and NE12 Sixth Form**

We have been made aware today of George Stephenson High School's proposed conversion to academy status under the Pele Multi Academy Trust (MAT); I have attached the correspondence they have sent to us this afternoon. To be clear, Longbenton High School is NOT considering a similar pathway and is NOT in discussion with Pele. Nor have we been involved in any of the discussions that have taken place between GSHS and Pele. I am incredibly concerned that there is no reference to our shared sixth form arrangement in any of this consultation paperwork. I would therefore like to outline at this stage the potential impact this transition may have on the shared sixth form arrangements currently in place.

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 George Stephenson High School 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 George Stephenson High School 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 partner schools.



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**For these reasons, we believe the decision to join the Pele MAT could lead to the closure or significant reconfiguration of the shared sixth form.** Whilst we hope that this impact be carefully considered during the consultation process - and that stakeholders, particularly parents and students who rely on this provision, are given clear and detailed information on how the shared sixth form will be affected by the academisation process - it is a fact that it has not been considered up until this point and that GSHS have not engaged in any open dialogue with us regarding this.

**As a result, I am keen to avoid decisions regarding the safeguarding of our sixth form's future being taken out of our hands.** I will therefore be writing to you again shortly regarding a consultation for Longbenton High School parents on **bringing the shared sixth form arrangement with GSHS to an end.**<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime, please get in touch with me directly with any queries or comments.

Yours faithfully

Kelly Holbrook

Headteacher

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<sup>1</sup> This would mean all Year 12 students being taught solely on our site from September 2025 and all Year 12 and 13 being taught solely on our site from September 2026. It would not affect Year 12 students who have just enrolled into our Sixth Form.