



# Northumberland County Council

## CABINET

Date: 9 July 2019

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### Outcomes of Consultation on a proposal to extend the age ranges of Whitley Memorial CE and West End First Schools

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Cabinet Member: Councillor Wayne Daley, Children's Services

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#### **Purpose of report**

This report sets out the results and analysis of the informal consultation process undertaken by the Council at the request of the Governing Bodies of West End and Whitley Memorial First Schools on a proposal to extend the age ranges of the schools with effect from 1 September 2020. The request of the Governing Bodies of the two schools was in turn prompted by the proposal of the Governing Body of Meadowdale Middle Academy to become a primary school with effect from 1 September 2020.

The report also includes a request to Cabinet to permit the publication of a Statutory Proposal.

#### **Recommendations**

##### **It is recommended that Cabinet:**

1. Note the analysis of the consultation, which took place between 23 April and 12 June 2019.

2. Decide in the light of this report and recommendations from the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee whether to permit the publication of a statutory proposal on 11 July 2019, setting out the intention of the County Council to implement the following proposals:
  - Extend the age range of West End First School from a 2 form entry (Planned Admission Number - 60), age 4 to 9 first school to become a 1 form entry (Planned Admission Number - 30), age 4 to 11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2020, noting that the reduction in the PAN would be applicable to Reception class from that date onwards;
  - Extend the age range of Whitley Memorial CE First School from a 1.8 form entry (Planned Admission - 54), age 3 to 9 first school to become a 1 form entry (Planned Admission Number - 30), age 3 to 11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2020, noting that the reduction in the PAN would be applicable to Reception class from that date onwards.
3. Note the indicative budget for capital funding outlined at para. 43 of this report and note the funding for the works required will be allocated from the School Capital Maintenance Grant Fund 2019/2020 allocation. Approve the additional work on establishing deliverability and a definitive budget for the preferred building options. No additional funding is required, the cost will be met from the School Capital Maintenance Grant Fund 2019/2020 allocation.
4. Note the implications for Home to School Transport set out in this report.
5. Note that the outcomes of the consultation, following publication of the Statutory Proposals, would be brought back to Cabinet in September 2019 for a final decision to be taken in relation to the proposals.

## **Key issues**

### The Consultation Process

1. In April 2019 at the request of the Governing Bodies of West End and Whitley Memorial CE First Schools, Cabinet approved commencement of a six week informal consultation to gather views from staff, parents and the wider community on a proposal to extend the age ranges of West End and Whitley Memorial CE First Schools with effect from 1 September 2020. The rationale

for the consultation was presented in the Report of the Executive Director of Adult and Children's Services, 9 April 2019 and is summarised in the Background to this report.

2. Informal consultation began on 23 April and closed on 12 June 2019, which included six clear weeks of school term time. Notification of the informal consultation was distributed to a range of consultees as advised in guidance, in line with the Department of Education (DfE) guidance, including parents, staff and Governors of the school. A Consultation Register was developed detailing all parties consulted and this is provided at Appendix 1 of this report.
3. The consultation document was made available on the Council's website and electronic and hard-copy versions of the consultation feedback form could be accessed; the consultation document is provided at Appendix 2 of this report. The Consultation Document simply asked consultees to consider the following questions and provide their responses which are summarised below:
4. In addition to the distribution of the consultation document, individual meetings for the separate staff groups of each school and each Governing Body were held and notes of the comments made were taken (these are available in the Background Papers to this report. Staff representatives (unions) were also invited and attended the two meetings for staff held at the schools. The meetings held at Whitley Memorial CE First School took place on 8 May and were followed by a drop-in event for parents of the pupils at the school and the general public. The meetings at West End First School were held on 9 May and these were also followed by a drop-in event for parents of the pupils at the school and the general public. At the drop-in events, officers from the Council were in attendance from School Organisation, Admissions, Transport and school finance to assist parents, staff and the public with any questions. School representatives also attended the drop-in events.

### Feedback from consultation

5. Overall results:

There were 205 responses received from consultees in total, but one Governing Body from another school had comments in relation to both West End First School and Whitley Memorial CE First School. Two parents also responded in relation to both schools, so these responses result in 208 total responses.

### West End First School responses to the extension of the age range

Designation	Total number	Yes, I agree responses	%	No, I do not agree responses	%	NULL response	%
Governing Body	1	1	100	0	0	0	0
Other Governing Bodies	4	2	50	1	25	1	25
Individual Governors	3	2	66.67	1	33.33	0	0
Staff	12	12	100	0	0	0	0
Staff member of other school	14	12	85.71	2	14.29	0	0
Parent/carer	87	79	90.80	7	8.05	1	1.15
Resident of the community	21	9	42.86	11	52.38	1	4.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>

The data above shows the breakdown of responses to the question as to whether West End First School should extend its age range. The vast majority of consultees (82%) who responded to this question were in favour of the proposal, whilst consultation is not a referendum, it is clear from the responses above that there is clear support from Staff, Parents and Governors to implement the proposed age range change at West End . The main reasons why consultees gave their responses are set out in para. 6.

### Whitley Memorial CE First School responses to the extension of the age range

<b>Designation</b>	<b>Total number</b>	<b>Yes, I agree responses</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No, I do not agree responses</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>NULL response</b>	<b>%</b>
Governing Body	1	1	100	0	0	0	0
Other Governing Bodies	1	1	100	0	0	0	0
Diocese	1	1	100	0	0	0	0
Individual Governors	1	1	100	0	0	0	0
Staff	10	9	90	1	10	0	0
Joint response from all staff	1	1	100	0	0	0	0
Staff member of other school	8	8	100	0	0	0	0
Parent/carers	35	19	55.88	15	42.86	1	2.94
Resident of the community	8	5	62.50	3	37.50	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

The data above shows the breakdown of responses to the question as to whether Whitley Memorial CE First School should extend its age range. The majority of consultees (70%) who responded to this question were in favour of the proposal, whilst consultation is not a referendum, it is clear from the responses above that there is clear support from Staff, Governors and the Diocese to implement the proposed age range change at Whitley Memorial. However, while 56% of parents involved with the school agreed with the proposal, 43% did not and 3 % did not respond. The main reasons why consultees gave their responses are set out in para. 6.

6. Summary of responses to questions (full responses from consultees are in the Background Papers to this report):

*Q1. Do you agree that the age range of Bedlington West End First School should be extended to become an age 4-11 primary school?*

- The 2 tier system supports parental choice and if all the primaries focus on 1FE this gives greater parental choice. This makes a clear education system and provides one cohesive education system in Bedlington.
- Pupils receive an excellent education with a continuity of education in a good ofsted rated school.
- There are concerns about space and little outdoor space as Bedlington West End First school who currently use Meadowdale's outdoor space regularly.
- The high schools in the partnership have made it impossible to sustain a 3 tier system.
- There are concerns over staff expertise at Bedlington West End First School as they will not have experienced SATs for example, which play a big part in Year 6. There are also concerns on the other hand that Meadowdale Academy staff do not have experience as a primary school.
- Close the school and move all pupils and staff to Meadowdale Academy where there are facilities.

*Q1. Do you agree that the age range of Bedlington Whitley Memorial CE First School should be extended to become an age 4-11 primary school?*

- If there is no middle school, then the school has to extend the age range to be a primary school.
- Meadowdale Academy should have become a senior school as both our high schools have been identified as needing improvement by Ofsted.
- The system should be 2 tier, not a mixed economy. This allows more parental choice.
- There are concerns over the lack of facilities, space and car parking arrangements.
- There is no option with this decision but a necessity.
- There is a lack of agreement for mixed classes.
- Parents are concerned about their children being the first year group to remain in the school.

- There are concerns over the number of surplus places and potentially creating more with another primary school.
- Concerns over staff experience at SATs level.

*Q2. Do you have any further comments or views on the planned age range extension of West End First School?*

- In moving forward if all schools focus on one form entry the opportunity for choice in Bedlington will be greater.
- Some members of other schools in the partnership feel all schools in Bedlington should work together for this change and act as one with the children as their main focus.
- Some parents think it benefits the children to stay in the same school for as long as possible as the teachers know the children from an early age which is proven to be beneficial for their learning long - term.
- Partnerships need to be developed with St Bede's to enable access to the sports field for example.
- It has been suggested to consider separating break and lunch times of year 5 and 6 from younger kids.
- West End First School and Meadowdale should combine schools and be based at Meadowdale's site. West End already has the provision, expert staff and brand new building for pre-school and early years, as well as future intakes of children already lined up, and Meadowdale already has the expertise for upper Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 teaching. This would be a far better solution than giving two more schools (in addition to St. Bede's Primary) primary status - they all must be within half a mile radius of one another. West End's site is too small to accommodate the change to primary alone. Combine West End First School and Meadowdale (see Alternative Proposals)

*Q2. Do you have any further comments or views on the planned age range extension of Bedlington Whitley Memorial CE First School ?*

- As there is a reduction in birth rate in Bedlington, the school is already beginning to have a fall in numbers. Extension of the school to Year 6 will help to address this. However, this will be counteracted by Meadowdale becoming primary as now the reducing numbers will have to be shared between three schools which will result in redundancies for the two well established Whitley and West End schools.
- Breakfast Club would be good if possible.

- Some parents would like to see a preschool from age 2 added also.
- Some residents believe in the Extension of the age range, but you should not limit the year groups to 45 pupils, they should be able to have 2 full classes, 30 students in each class, but not mixed ages. Close Meadowdale Academy and prevent it from becoming a Primary - this would solve the problem of excess places in the town.

*Q3. Do you have any comments on the organisation of the current early years provision at the site of West End First School?*

- Early Years could be extended to 3 year olds, this would mirror other schools with a maintained nursery and streamline the admin duties involved.
- There is good provision which works well
- The nursery could become maintained for 2 year olds and offer morning sessions. 2 year old provision though should be separate.
- The provision is brilliant with knowledgeable staff

*Q3. Do you have any comments on the organisation of the current early years provision at the site of Bedlington Whitley Memorial CE First School?*

- Early Years provision is fantastic. The unit works effectively to teach children 3-5 nursery and reception.
- There has been a lot of positive feedback on the way in which the school teach the Early years children

*Q4. Do you have any views on how pupils with Special Educational Needs can be supported at West End First School?*

- Reports show that children make good progress and funding is effectively utilised.
- The school is open to the idea of an ASD unit with provision alongside mainstream.
- The school already has qualified staff which enables children to make good progress.
- SEND is a strength of the school
- There are concerns if pupils needed 1:1 support that a teachers time would be diverted away from other pupils. To retain inclusivity for all, more TAs need to be funded to provide the 1:1 sessions.



*Q4. Do you have any views on how pupils with Special Educational Needs can be supported at Bedlington Whitley Memorial CE First School?*

- SEND pupils and their families are supported very effectively.
- There are concerns about the size of site due to the lack of space to have a 'spare' classroom to use as an intervention work area.
- If the school is to expand, then a dedicated teacher should be employed to provide full time support with an additional SENCO working alongside the current excellent SENCO due to the level of work, support and time allocation for all pupils.
- The SENCO is very experienced and has national qualifications. She works tirelessly to constantly update and further improve provisions for the children. She has effective communication with all the relevant services. The Thrive approach has been introduced. Special needs are dealt with in a professional and up to date manner.

*Q5. Do you believe the catchment area of Bedlington West End and Bedlington Whitley Memorial First Schools should remain as they are if they become primary schools?*

- 64% of respondees expressed that they would like to see the catchment areas of the two first schools remain as they are.
- Some parents feel siblings could be in different schools (if catchments change) and it will cause parents anxiety in making decisions around schools. It will have a negative impact on community cohesion and create a feeling of inequality.
- If there is a change, other schools in the partnership could be affected.

*Q6 Do you believe there should be a reduction to the catchment areas of West End and Whitley Memorial CE First Schools to accommodate Meadowdale Academy as it becomes a primary school?*

- 66% of responses did not support changing the catchment of the two first schools.'
- Some parents feel they should have a choice and also don't think Meadowdale consulted with West End First School. Meadowdale should have considered becoming a secondary school which is needed in our area
- Some parents feel that siblings could be in different schools and overall do not want the catchment to change at all

- Some staff members of other schools state if the areas stay the same, what catchment area will Meadowdale get? If they keep their current catchment, they have twice as much as the other two schools. All the schools should have the same catchment area.

7. *Whitley Memorial CE First School Governing Body Response - Summary*

The Governing Body of Whitley Memorial CE First School supports the proposal that the school should extend its age range to become a primary school with effect from 1 September 2020. The Governing Body believes all schools in Bedlington should have been reorganised at the same time rather than being forced to change now due to the actions of another school. However, the Governing Body notes that there would be constraints with regard to space at the school's site should it convert as a 1.5FE school. Therefore, the Governing Body would prefer to reorganise to become a 1FE primary school, reserving the right as its own admissions authority to increase its PAN in the future if appropriate.

The Governing Body are content with the current Early Years arrangements at the school, citing the facilities and the praise received by staff from parents. The Governing Body notes that the school has a fully trained SENDCo and that SEND pupils are fully integrated into lessons at the school. Finally, the Governing Body does not wish to see either Whitley Memorial's or West End's catchment areas changed as it would confuse parents and they have served their communities for generations.

8. *West End First School Governing Body Response - Summary*

The Governing Body of West End First School supports the proposal to extend its age range to become a primary school. The Governing Body believes the school has the capacity and ability to be an effective primary school, citing its 'Good' Ofsted rating maintained in April this year, its mix of experienced staff and capable new staff, and established early years partnership. The Governing Body states that the PTA at the school is a strength and there are excellent relationships with parents. The Governing Body believes that the school could also extend its age range downwards to include children from age 3 as this could reduce administrative costs [the school currently runs a nursery for 3 and 4 year olds through community powers].

As the Governing Body believes provision for children with SEND at West End is good, they would be open to discussions of having an ASD (autistic spectrum disorder) unit at the school.

Finally, the school favours retaining the current catchment areas of West End and Whitley Memorial CE First Schools.

9. *Meadowdale Middle Academy Chair of Governors Response - Summary*

The Chair of Governors of Meadowdale Academy responded to the consultation and his comments are presumably shared by his Governing Body. The comments are also in relation to both Whitley Memorial CE and West End First Schools. The Chair supports the age range change at both first schools in the light of what he believes is a necessary realignment of schools to create an integrated and seamless transition for pupils. The Chair notes that as Bedlingtonshire Academy and St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy will remove Year 9 entry into their academies from September 2020, this has placed Meadowdale Academy in a position of unviability. Therefore, this means that West End and Whitley Memorial cannot continue as first schools. However, he believes there has been a reluctance to recognise this. The Chair also noted that Meadowdale Academy would not be changing its current catchment area (see para. 43-44).

10. *Mowbray Primary School Governing Body Response - Summary*

The Governing Body of Mowbray Primary School does not support the extension of the age range of West End and Whitley Memorial on the basis that together with reorganisation of Meadowdale Academy, additional surplus places will be created in Bedlington. However, the Governing Body understands why the proposal has been brought forward and does not believe the transition of Meadowdale to become a primary school makes strategic sense. The Governing Body believes this will create competition among schools for pupils and will damage relationships in the Bedlington Partnership.

11. *St Bede's RC Primary School Governing Body Response - Summary*

The Governing Body of St Bede's RC Primary School support the extension of the age range of West End First School as this will bring its organisation in line

with the rest of the Bedlington Partnership. The Governing Body believes Early Years provision at West End is good and that the catchment areas of West End and Whitley Memorial should remain as they are should the schools extend their age ranges.

12. Bedlington Stead Lane Primary School Chair of Governors Response Summary

The Chair of Governors of Stead Lane Primary school responded that he does not have strong views on whether or not West End and Whitley Memorial should extend their age ranges as he believes it will not affect his school. Having said that, he believes the two schools should have the opportunity to extend although this may cause competition among schools. The Chair of Governors believes that the catchment areas of the schools should be changed to ensure that schools have a viable number of pupils within them.

13. Response of the Newcastle Diocesan Education Board (NDEB)

NDEB has responded that its first principle is to ensure the retention of a thriving CE educational provision in Bedlington via Whitley Memorial CE First School. While NDEB supports the Governing Body of Whitley Memorial's desire to become a primary school, it shares its concerns in relation to the impact on schools of over-provision of school places in this area of Bedlington and the uncertainty and instability this could bring.

As a result of data provided by the LA, NDEB supports the Governing Body's proposal to become a 1FE primary rather than a 1.5FE primary. However, it also supports the Governing Body's ability to reserve the right to increase the school's PAN up to the original 45 intake per year group should this be required. NDEB also supports the schools belief that its current catchment area should be maintained in order to preserve the community and family connections long established in the area.

14. **Feedback received from staff and Governing Body meetings**

The full minutes of the meetings are included in the Background Papers, and the main points and questions raised by staff and Governors respectively were as follows:

#### 14.1 Whitley Memorial CE First School staff, 8 May 2019

- If Meadowdale Academy are not accepting pupils, what happens now?
- Is 14% surplus places data based on the whole of the partnership?
- Why is Early Years provision being raised as an issue?

#### 14.2 Whitley Memorial CE First School Governing Body, 8 May 2019

- There were comments about the catchment area and how this would work across the three schools.
- There were discussions about the process of Meadowdale Academy changing from Middle school to Primary status.
- There were comments about the significance for Governors and what the main considerations are.
- The Governor's talked through the impact of various scenarios to establish what they needed to include in their Governing Body response.

#### 14.3 West End First School staff, 9 May 2019

- A question raised was about the catchment area and how it worked. Staff wanted to understand any impact that may result from their response to the consultation.
- There were discussions about transport
- There were discussions about the proposed age range of 4-11 and if it was possible for it to be 3-11.
- A conversation took place with the HR representative around ideas of the staffing structure
- Is surplus places data based on the whole of the partnership?
- There was a conversation about housing developments being taken in to consideration for forecasting pupil numbers

#### 14.4 West End First School Governing Body, 8 May 2019

- There was a discussion about the consultation process and in particular how the responses are recorded.
- Catchment areas were further discussed
- Thoughts were discussed about an ARP and how this could be achieved

- A conversation took place about the surplus places and in particular in terms of the lack of Secondary places. How can the partnership grow these places?
- A concluding statement was regarding how anxious the staff are feeling through the process

## 15. Alternative Models

A number of alternative suggestions or variations to the model were put forward by consultees for consideration.

- 15.1 *Partnerships need to be developed with St Bede's to enable access [for West End] to the sports field for example.*

Comment:

Should Cabinet ultimately approve the implementation of the proposal, officers would need to assess the availability of space at West End to enable the primary sports curriculum to the end of Year 6 to be implemented effectively.

- 15.2 *It has been suggested to consider separating break and lunch times of year 5 and 6 from younger kids.*

Comment:

Both the West End and Whitley Memorial Governing Bodies and Leadership Teams would be able to consider how lunchtimes could be effectively managed with increased numbers of pupils in the school.

- 15.3 *West End First School and Meadowdale should combine schools and be based at Meadowdale's site. West End already has the provision, expert staff and brand new building for pre-school and early years, as well as future intakes of children already lined up, and Meadowdale already has the expertise for upper Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 teaching. This would be a far better solution than giving two more schools (in addition to St. Bede's Primary) primary status - they all must be within half a mile radius of one another. West End's site is too small to accommodate the change to primary alone.*

Comment:

The Governing Body of West End First School does not wish to become part of an academy trust and therefore the two schools could not combine. Initial desk-top surveys indicate that additional accommodation can be achieved at the West End site. Furthermore, the Governing Body of West End believes that, as a recently re-inspected 'Good' school as judged by Ofsted, it has the staffing capability and expertise to become a good primary school.

- 15.4 *Breakfast Club [at Whitley Memorial] would be good if possible/Some parents would like to see a preschool from age 2 added also.*

Comment:

The Governing Body and Leadership Team at Whitley Memorial would be responsible for investigating the possibility of establishing a Breakfast Club or provision for 2 year olds at the school. The provision of these services would not be dependent on the outcome of this proposal.

- 15.5 *While the age range should be extended, it should not be limited to year groups of 45 pupils, they should be able to have 2 full classes, 30 students in each class, but not mixed ages.*

Comment:

As stated in this report, the birth rate in Bedlington is falling and there will be increasing numbers of surplus places in schools in the future. This has been noted by the Governing Body of Whitley Memorial and the Newcastle Diocese Board of Education (NDEB) and therefore they have proposed that the school should extend its age range but as a 1 form entry (30 children per class) primary school. This would remove the necessity for mixed-age teaching, but reflects the falling number of pupils in the area. The school has reserved the right to increase its PAN in the future if appropriate.

- 15.6 *Close Meadowdale Academy and prevent it from becoming a Primary - this would solve the problem of excess places in the town.*

Comment:

While this may have been a solution while Meadowdale was a maintained school, it is no longer within the powers of the Council to propose the closure of Meadowdale Academy, as it is directly under the

authority of the DfE and Secretary of State for Education. The Secretary of State has now made the decision to approve that Meadowdale Academy can now become a 1FE primary academy with effect from 1 September 2020. Any decisions on its future should it become unviable would be for the DfE and Secretary of State to make.

- 15.7 *Early Years [at West End] could be extended to 3 year olds, this would mirror other schools with a maintained nursery and streamline the admin duties involved.*

Comment:

As the Governing Body at West End have commented themselves in responding to this consultation, the West Bedlington Early Years Partnership based at the West End site works very well. Further commentary on this proposal is provided at para.36-39

- 15.8 *The nursery could become maintained for 2 year olds and offer morning sessions. 2 year old provision though should be separate.*

Comment:

Provision for 2 year olds is already in place at the West End site via the West Bedlington Early Years Partnership. Further commentary on early years provision at West End is provided at para. 36-39.

- 15.9 *The school [West End] is open to the idea of an ASD unit with provision alongside mainstream.*

Comment:

Ideas for improving provision for children with SEND closer to their own communities are welcomed from schools. This proposal will therefore be considered by relevant officers.

## 16. **Conclusions and recommendations**

The consultation to extend the age ranges of West End and Whitley Memorial CE First Schools, whilst promulgated by the actions of other schools, has in fact been inevitable given the previous reorganisation of schools in the Bedlington Partnership. While Meadowdale Academy has stated that in order to remain viable as an education provider it has had to conform to the prevalent



primary/secondary system in the partnership, it is also now apparent that in order to continue to offer a coherent educational pathway to its pupils, West End and Whitley Memorial should also conform to the primary/secondary system in the Bedlington Partnership.

Meadowdale Academy has now been given approval by the Secretary of State to become a 1FE primary school with effect from 1 September 2020. Should West End and Whitley Memorial remain as first schools, pupils leaving the schools at the end of Year 4 would have no local middle school to attend. The options open to parents would be either to send their children to attend another middle school outside of their community, or to enroll their children at a local primary school in Bedlington, but then make them undergo two school changes within 2 years. There is no guarantee that middle school places could be found for these pupils at the end of Year 4, and the negative impact of any school phase change on pupils is well documented and researched, let alone 2 changes in such a short period of time. Neither of these scenarios present a satisfactory educational solution.

The issues concerning the increasing number of surplus places in the Bedlington Partnership is set out in para. 25. There will inevitably be an increasing level of competition for pupils among schools across the partnership as a result. West End and Whitley Memorial are both 'Good' schools as judged by Ofsted, have good standards of achievement by pupils and are highly valued by parents and their communities. In order for them to be able to continue to provide well for pupils in the local area, they need to be able to offer them continuity in their education with a clear, educational pathway established. However, the reducing number of pupils in the area cannot be ignored. Therefore, Cabinet are recommended to approve the publication of a statutory proposal to extend the age ranges of West End First School and Whitley Memorial CE First School, but on the basis that they would become 1FE primary schools from 1 September 2020.

In light of the feedback from this informal consultation it is recommended that the catchment areas of West End and Whitley Memorial, remain unchanged, as this was the view of the majority of those that responded to the consultation (see para 33-34).

In order to support the implementation of the proposals contained within the recommendations set out in this report capital investment in the region of £1.7m would be required. The full implications are set out in para 40-43.

17. Should Cabinet approve the publication of the statutory proposal, the final decision on whether or not to approve its implementation is required to be made within 2 months of the end of the statutory period, i.e. before 3 October 2019 or must be referred to the Schools Adjudicator.
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## Outcomes of consultation on proposal to extend the age ranges of Whitley Memorial CE and West End First Schools

### Background to informal consultation

18. Bedlington Partnership is currently a mixed-provision partnership, with the majority of schools now organised within the two-tier system, but with the mini-partnership of West End First School, Whitley Memorial First School and Meadowdale [Middle] Academy remaining within a 3-tier organisation. Currently, children on roll at the two first schools feed into Meadowdale at the end of Year 4, while children on roll at Meadowdale Academy subsequently feed to either St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy or Bedlington Academy at the end of Year 8, according to parental preference and availability of places.
19. Since reorganising from age 13 to 18 high schools to 11 to 18 secondary schools, Bedlington Academy and St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy have retained two annual intakes each September to reflect the mixed-economy within the partnership i.e. an annual intake into Year 7 and into Year 9. However, from September 2020, both secondary academies in Bedlington will remove the intake into Year 9 and will accept only one annual intake of pupils into Year 7 from that point forward. Any entries into Year 9 would be via the 'in-year' admissions process and would be dependent on any places remaining available in that year group.

The two secondary academies have made the decision to remove the formal entry point into Year 9 based on the fact that the majority of schools that feed to them are now primary schools and therefore transfer to them at the end of Year 6. Furthermore, the two secondary academies have data indicating that pupils joining them in Year 9 from middle school are not performing at the same expected level as their peers who join in Year 7.

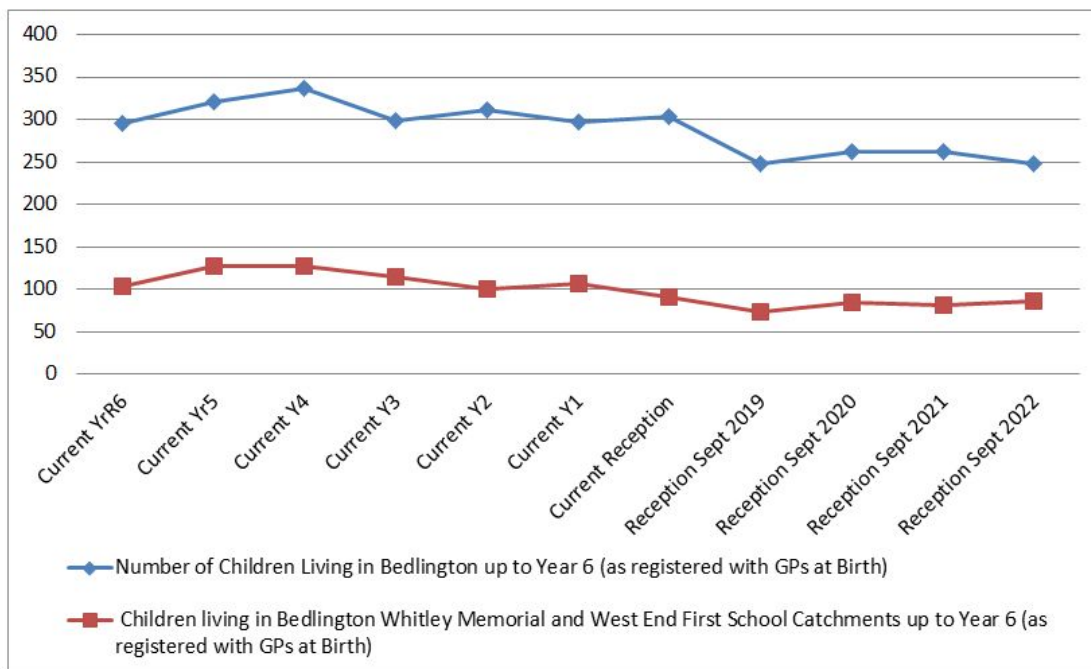
20. Since the reorganisation of the two secondary academies, a number of parents with children on roll at Meadowdale Academy have chosen to send their children to either St Benet Biscop Catholic or Bedlington Academies from Year 7 rather than staying with the middle academy until the end of Year 8; this has resulted in smaller year groups in the top end of the school. The decision of the two Bedlington secondary academies to remove their formal Year 9 intake from September 2020 will be likely to lead to almost all children leaving Meadowdale Academy at the end of Year 6 as there will no longer be a clear educational pathway into Year 9; there will of course be a significant impact on the viability of the middle academy, were it to continue providing education in Years 5 to 8 only.
21. As noted in the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services report of 9 April 2019, the Governing Body of Meadowdale wish to preserve

the academy as a provider of education within the Bedlington community. The Governing Body of Meadowdale consulted in Autumn 2018 on becoming a primary school from September 2019. As a consultee, Northumberland County Council responded that it did not support the proposal on the basis that it would create additional surplus places at the primary phase within the Bedlington Partnership and would have a destabilising impact on the two local authority maintained first schools in the mini-partnership, i.e. Whitley Memorial CE and Bedlington West End First Schools, as there would be no local middle school for children to feed to after Year 4.

22. The Council undertook an initial phase of meetings to try to broker a solution to the issues facing the two first schools in the Meadowdale mini-partnership, including the suggestion of a joint consultation exercise between Meadowdale Academy and the Council on behalf of the two feeder first schools. In December 2018, the Governing Body of Meadowdale Academy published the outcomes of their consultation and while confirming its decision to continue with the proposal to become a primary school within the report, the Governing Body also set out a commitment to carry out a joint consultation with the Council, including an agreement to propose delaying the implementation of their proposal to September 2020 and reducing the proposed planned admission number of the school.
23. However in early February 2019, the Council was informed that the Headteacher Board of the Regional Schools Commissioner have considered a report on the proposal of the Governing Body of Meadowdale Academy to convert to become a primary school which had gone to the Secretary of State for consideration. The Council has since been informed that the Governing Body's proposal has been approved and that Meadowdale Academy will convert to become a 1FE primary school with effect from 1 September 2020. The Council is currently awaiting the pupil transition plan from the academy.
24. As the decision to approve Meadowdale Academy to become a primary school has now been agreed, it is confirmed that, should Whitley Memorial CE and West End First Schools remain as first schools, there would be no clear pathway of education for children leaving those schools at the end of Year 4. A further consequence of the decision to approve Meadowdale Academy to become a primary school is the impact on surplus places which will now increase in the primary phase in Bedlington (see para. 22).

### **Surplus Places in Bedlington**

25. As can be seen from the blue line on the following graph, the number of pupils being born within the Bedlington Partnership as a whole is reducing for the foreseeable future. The picture mirrored closely within the mini-Meadowdale catchment area (Whitley Memorial CE and West End First Schools catchments combined), represented by the red line on the graph.



26. The Bedlington Partnership has 13% surplus places as a whole (October 2018 data), which is the joint 6th highest percentage of the 14 partnerships in the county. Across the three schools in the Meadowdale mini-partnership, there are 17% surplus places (October 2018 data). Therefore, surplus places in the primary phase (and therefore ultimately at secondary level) are projected to increase across the whole of the Bedlington area over the foreseeable future. This is already being evidenced by the Reception intake into to West End and Whitley Memorial First Schools in September 2019 - with a PAN of 60, West End has been allocated circa 30 first places preferences, while with a PAN of 54, Whitley Memorial has been allocated circa 31 first place preferences (as at June 2019). While there is some approved housebuilding in the Bedlington area (315 houses currently approved to be constructed up to 2023), these houses are projected to yield around 9 children per year group, and then only if all occupiers are new to Bedlington.
27. The proposal put forward during informal consultation suggested that initially Whitley Memorial CE and West End First Schools should be reorganised as 1.5 FE first schools i.e. with a Planned Admission Number (PAN) of 45 pupils in each new Reception class. However, the number of pupils forecast to require a Reception place in the mini-Meadowdale partnership area from September 2020 to September 2022 are as follows:

Total Planned Admission Numbers in the mini-Meadowdale area based on model for informal consultation)	New Proposed Planned Admission Numbers	Forecast Reception 2020	Forecast Reception 2021	Forecast Reception 2022
150*	120**	84***	81***	86***

\* Includes PANS of Meadowdale as a 1FE primary and PANs of West End (45), Whitley Memorial CE (45) and St Bede's RC (30)

\*\* proposed PANS Meadowdale 1FE (30), West End 1FE (30), Whitley Memorial 1FE (30) and St Bede's 1FE (30).

\*\*\* Based on GP birth data.

28. From September 2020, there will now be four schools providing primary age education in the Meadowdale mini-partnership area: West End First School, Whitley Memorial CE First School, St Bede's RC Primary School and Meadowdale Academy. As a roman catholic school, St Bede's Primary School already attracts pupils on religious grounds from the area (approximately 50% of its intake reside in this area of Bedlington). Without any changes to school planned admission numbers, there is likely to be an impact on the viability of these schools, and potentially on the viability of other schools in the Bedlington Partnership (West End and Whitley Memorial attract pupils from other Bedlington catchments).
29. Furthermore, while the Governing Body of Meadowdale Academy has been approved by the RSC to reorganise to a 1FE primary school (30 pupils per annual intake), as an academy outside of the control of the Council, the Governing Body could raise its PAN in the future if accommodation was available, which would have an impact on the viability of the two other proposed primary schools.
30. In order to match the number of pupils predicted to live in the West End and Whitley Memorial catchment areas more closely to their planned admission numbers and to manage the impact of the proposed reorganisation on other schools within Bedlington, it is proposed that, should Cabinet approve the publication of a statutory proposal to extend the age ranges of West End First School and Whitley Memorial CE First School with effect from 1 September 2020, this should be on the basis of these schools becoming 1 form entry primary schools with an annual intake of 30 pupils. As noted earlier, the director of education at the Church of England Diocese of Newcastle has indicated in response to the informal consultation that he believes this would be in the best interests of the school and the area it serves. This proposal, should it be approved by Cabinet, would not impact on the number of pupils per year group currently in the schools or on the 2019 Reception intake (albeit the latter appear at this stage to already number around 1FE at both schools). As the planned admission numbers for all schools and academies for September 2020

in Northumberland have already been agreed, a request would need to be made to the Schools Adjudicator to approval to reduction in the PANs at the two schools for September 2020.

### Proposed Model for formal consultation of Meadowdale mini-partnership

31. In view of the issue concerning increasing surplus places in Bedlington, it is recommended that the statutory proposal, if approved for publication by Cabinet, should be on the basis of the following model of organisation:

SCHOOL	CURRENT SITUATION			PROPOSED PRIMARY/SECONDARY MODEL		
	Capacity in Jan 19 (Number on Roll Jan 2019)	Forms of Entry (FE)	Planned Admission Number (PAN) 2018/19	Capacity	Forms of Entry (FE)	Planned Admission Number (PAN)
Bedlington West End First School	300 (257)	2	60	210	1	30
Bedlington Whitley Memorial First School	269 (269)	1.8	54	210	1	30
*Meadowdale Academy	480 (370)	4.3	128	210	1	30
Secondary phase	Currently, it is projected that a further 30 places would be required in Bedlington at the secondary phase starting from Year 7 in September 2020 onwards, following the removal of Year 7 and Year 8 education at Meadowdale Academy as it becomes primary.					

\* Note - Meadowdale Academy has now received final approval from the Secretary of State to become a 1FE primary school with effect from September 2020.

Officers have had initial discussions with both Bedlington Academy and St Benet Biscop Catholic High School about the need for an additional form of entry to be created within the secondary phase in the Bedlington Partnership, beginning with the Year 7 intake of September 2020. These additional places will be required whether or not the proposal to extend the age ranges of West End and Whitley Memorial is approved for publication as the decision to allow Meadowdale Academy to become a primary academy from September 2020 means that there will be a shortfall of Year 7 places in the partnership.

Any additional accommodation needing to be provided at a secondary academy would be funded via central Government Basic Need grant. Should Cabinet approve the publication of the statutory proposal, officers would seek the views of parents in the two first schools and Meadowdale Academy as to whether they had a preference with regard to the secondary route within Bedlington for their children. Further discussions will need to take place with the two secondary academies prior to the end of the Summer Term to ensure that any additional accommodation that may be required at either academy would be in place for September 2020.

### Standards

32. Whitley Memorial CE and West End First Schools are both rated 'Good' by Ofsted and attract the majority of pupils in their catchment areas, as well as attracting pupils from other school catchments. KS1 results at the two schools are also good and improving, demonstrated as follows:

Whitley Memorial and West End KS1 Performance 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18

	KS1								
	Reading			Writing			Maths		
	2015/ 16	2016/ 17	2017/ 18	2015/ 16	2016/ 17	2017/ 18	2015/ 16	2016/ 17	2017/ 18
<b>Bedlington West End</b>	67	88	90	54	80	74	74	92	77
<b>Bedlington Whitley Memorial</b>	67	77	81	48	65	85	58	77	79
<b>Northumberland avge</b>	78	80	81	70	74	74	76	79	79

### Catchment Areas

33. Catchment areas are used by the Council in order to ensure that each school has the opportunity to have a viable number of pupils and to manage home to school transport eligibility. As a middle academy, the catchment area of Meadowdale encompasses the catchment areas of Whitley Memorial CE and West End First Schools. As part of the informal consultation, views were sought on whether West End and Whitley Memorial First School catchment areas should remain as they are or whether they should be reduced to enable a primary catchment area for Meadowdale Academy. The majority of



consultees believed that the current catchment areas for West End and Whitley Memorial should remain unchanged (see para. 6).

34. Should Cabinet allow the publication of a statutory proposal as recommended in this report and then subsequently approve it, it is proposed that the current catchment areas of West End and Whitley Memorial CE First School should remain unchanged from September 2020 for the following reasons:
- Parents would be able to exercise parental preference in relation to any schools and given the short distances between schools, most children would not be eligible for transport in any event.
  - The Council's Home to School Transport Policy allows for parents to express a preference for a place for their child at the catchment, nearest or nearest faith school. Therefore, should any parents living in the West End or Whitley Memorial CE First School catchment areas wish to have a place for their child at Meadowdale Academy and it is their nearest school, and the distance is such that the request meets eligibility criteria, then transport would be allocated on these grounds.
  - Meadowdale Academy has responded to consultation that in any event they intend to retain the same catchment area as a primary academy as they currently operate as a middle academy. The academy's own catchment area would not be used by the Council in relation to transport allocation, or pupil place planning.

#### SEN Provision

35. There is no specialist SEN provision currently within Whitley Memorial CE or West End First Schools.

The Governing Body of West End First School has indicated that they would be open to discussions with the Council on the provision of an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) unit to operate alongside mainstream provision at the school. Ideas for improving provision for children with SEND closer to their own communities are welcomed from schools. This proposal will therefore be considered by relevant officers.

#### Early Years Provision

36. Whitley Memorial CE has a maintained nursery for children aged 3 and 4, while West End First School has on-site early years provision for children from ages 2 to 4. As part of the informal consultation, consultees were asked for their comments on the organisation of early years provision at each school.
37. In relation to West End First School, the Governing Body and a significant number of parents of pupils at the school responded to consultation that they would like the age range of the school to be extended downwards as well as

up in order that the school could become an age 3 to 11 primary school. The reasons for this are set out in para. 6. Current early years provision on the West End site is provided in a purpose-built early years facility through the 'West End Bedlington Early Years Partnership, which includes the following providers and provision:

- Bedlington West End First School Nursery for 3 and 4 year olds, morning and afternoon sessions (term time only). This is provided by the school via community powers and is delivered in part of the early years facility on the school site;
- Bedlington West End Pre-School PVI for 3 and 4 year olds (morning only) and 2 year olds (afternoon only). This provision is also delivered in the purpose-built early years facility, enabling the 3 and 4 year olds who attend in the morning to cross over to the Bedlington West End First School Nursery side of the room in the afternoons.
- Trinity Youth before and after school club - provides breakfast club before 9.00 a.m. and after school club after 3.00 p.m. in the purpose built nursery facility at the West End site.

38. A further provider, Trinity Pre-School, runs sessions for 3/ 4 year olds and 2 year olds at Trinity Church in Bedlington (mornings only). In previous terms, around 2 or 3 children of the 3/ 4 year olds attending Trinity Pre-School in the morning would be walked via a 'walking bus' arrangement to the Bedlington West End First School Nursery for the afternoon session (as a result of parental choice). However, this term there are currently no 3/ 4 year old children who attend Trinity Pre-School in the mornings who then access provision at West End First School Nursery in the afternoon.

Trinity Pre-school is intending to relocate to the Meadowdale Academy site from September 2019; this provision will be integrated into Meadowdale Academy from September 2020, with staff from the pre-school TUPE transferring to the academy at that point. As noted in the above paragraph, this will not currently impact on West End First School Nursery as no children attending Trinity Pre-School in the mornings attend the former in the afternoon. Trinity Pre-school will be integrated into Meadowdale Academy from September 2020.

39. Overall, children in the early years in this area of Bedlington are well-provided for under the current arrangements. Officers working in Early Years have no knowledge of any parents in this area who have not been able to find childcare for 3 and 4 year olds and providers have vacancies. As West End First School already runs a pre-school provision within the purpose-built early years building, there appears to be no actual benefit to the school or to parents to alter these arrangements, given that in any event parents will always have the choice of where to obtain their early years support.

### Implications for school buildings

40. Should Cabinet approve the publication of a statutory proposal and then subsequently approve its implementation, works would need to be carried out at both Whitley Memorial CE and West End First School to support the extension of the age ranges of the schools to become primaries.
41. The buildings of Whitley Memorial First School are in the ownership of the Church of England Diocese and therefore 90% of the funding for a capital project would be via LCVAP (Local Authority Co-ordinated Voluntary Aided Programme); the remaining 10% would be funded by the Council in line with previous school reorganisations. The playing fields at Whitley Memorial are in the ownership of the Council.
42. Any works required at West End First School would be funded via the Council's Medium Term Plan and Council grants. As the buildings and land are in the ownership of the Council, if the proposals are approved by Cabinet, no other permissions to undertake works at the school would be required other than planning permission, if it is required.
43. A desktop analysis indicates that the costs to carry out works at West End First School to enable it to become a 1FE primary school would be between £1.3m and £1.6m. Works at Whitley Memorial CE First School would be less onerous, with a desk-top analysis indicating that £103k would be required to support the school to become a primary, therefore the Council would contribute £10,300 to that project. Should Cabinet approve the publication of a statutory proposal, further detailed work would be undertaken to confirm funding costs during the statutory period.
44. The buildings and land of Meadowdale Academy are on a long-term lease of 125 years from the Council. For information, any planned works required at Meadowdale Academy would need to be funded by the Governing Body or from funding sought by them from the DfE and agreed with the Council as landlord.

### Timeline for implementation

45. If the proposal to extend the age ranges of Whitley Memorial CE and West End First Schools was subsequently approved, the timeline for implementation of the reorganisation of the schools would be as follows:

#### Proposed timeline for reorganisation of Whitley Memorial and West End First Schools

##### **1 September 2020**

- Pupils on roll in Year 4 in the two first schools on 31 August 2020 would be retained by their new primary schools as Year 5.

- Reception class at each school would now operate on the basis of an annual intake of 30 pupils (subject to approval by the Schools Adjudicator)

#### **1 September 2021**

- Pupils in Year 5 in the two new maintained primary schools on 31 August 2021 would be retained as the new Year 6 from 1 September 2017.

#### **1 September 2022**

- Pupils in Year 6 in the two new primary schools would transfer into Year 7 at Bedlington Academy or to another school or academy with Year 7 provision according to parental choice.

The Governing Body of Meadowdale Academy has indicated its intention to extend its age range to include additional year groups from Reception to Year 4 (whilst maintaining Year Groups 5 to 8 initially) and to have nursery provision for children from age 3 with effect from 1 September 2020. Given the timeline the Governing Body consulted on during Autumn 2018, it is to be assumed that the last Year 8 class at Meadowdale will leave the school at the end of the 2023/2024 academic year after which the academy will become an age 3 to 11 primary academy. However, this will need to be confirmed.

#### Implications for Staff

46. Should Cabinet approve the publication of the statutory proposal and then subsequently approve it for implementation, there would be implications for the staff at Whitley Memorial CE and West End First Schools. At the meetings for staff during the informal consultation, it was discussed that the Headteacher and leadership teams in the schools would need to review their staffing structures to ensure that a primary structure was in place, rather than a first school structure. Furthermore, discussions with the Governing Body of the schools, Council Officers and Trades Unions have begun to identify the potential positive or negative impacts of reorganisation and where necessary, how the latter could be minimised.

#### Transport

47. The Council uses catchment areas as one of the means of managing transport eligibility and, as a consequence, any decisions regarding catchment areas could impact on some pupils. In any event, eligibility for transport would be assessed in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.

## Rural Schools and the presumption against closure

48. Neither Whitley Memorial CE nor West End First Schools are classified as rural schools under the DfE's List of Designated Rural Schools 2018 and therefore this legislation would not be applicable to any decisions made by Cabinet with respect to this proposal.

## Sport and Recreation

49. During informal consultation, no impact on Sport and Recreation was identified should the school extend its age range. The West End First School site has very limited outdoor space, in order to ensure the opportunity for the pupils at West End First School to have access to quality playing fields officers will be negotiating with local schools to develop shared use arrangements.

## **IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT**

<b>Policy</b>	The formal consultation (statutory proposal) would be consistent with the Council's policy to review changes to schools in accordance with local wishes and needs.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Should Cabinet approve the publication of the statutory proposal, further work would be undertaken in relation to finalising the costs for the potential works to the school buildings. These costs would be presented to Cabinet at their meeting in September to assist in deciding whether the implementation of the proposal would be affordable. Indicative costs are presented at para. 43 of this report. The proposed works would be funded from the existing School Capital Maintenance Grant funding allocation for 2019/20. No additional funding is required.
<b>Legal</b>	The proposed informal consultation complies with legislation.
<b>Procurement</b>	No implications
<b>Human Resources</b>	There would be some implications for staff in Whitley Memorial CE and West End First Schools should reorganisation be undertaken. See para. 27
<b>Property</b>	Refer to 'Finance and value for money' above
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A draft EIA is attached as Appendix 3 to this report. Should Cabinet approve the publication of a statutory proposal, this would be updated in the light of feedback received during the statutory period.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	A full risk assessment would be carried out on the project should Cabinet approve the publication of a statutory proposal.

<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	This report has considered Section 17 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it.
<b>Customer Considerations</b>	The proposals set out in this report are based upon the desire of the Governing Bodies of Whitley Memorial CE and West End First Schools to consult on a proposal to extend the age range of these schools to become primary schools with effect from 1 September 2020. The Council also has a duty to ensure that sufficient school places are available to all children of statutory school age resident in Northumberland.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	It is not envisaged that this proposal would have a significant positive or negative impact on carbon reduction.
<b>Wards</b>	Bedlington West Bedlington East Bedlington Central

## CONSULTATION

This report has been considered by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Chief Legal Officer.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services, 9 April 2019

Full responses to informal consultation

Notes of the meetings from staff and Governing Body meetings of 8 and 9 May 2019

## Report sign off

Monitoring Officer/Legal	Liam Henry
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Annabel Scholes
Relevant Executive Director	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Chief Executive	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Wayne Daley

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## Appendices

Appendix 1 - Consultation Register

Appendix 2 – [Consultation Document \(Link\)](#)

Appendix 3 - Equalities Impact Assessment

## Consultation Register - NCC

Parents, Staff and Governing Bodies of West End First School and Whitley Memorial First School

Headteacher and Governing Body of:

- Meadowdale Academy
- Bedlington Stead Lane Primary
- Bedlington Station Primary
- Cambois Primary
- Choppington Primary
- Ringway Primary
- Mowbray Primary
- St Bede's RC Primary
- Stakeford Primary
- Bedlington Academy
- St Benet Biscop Catholic High Academy

Newcastle Diocese Education Board

Roman Catholic Diocese, Education team

Local early years providers

Local MP, Ian Lavery

Local Town/Parish Council:

- Bedlington Town Council

Staff Representatives (unions)

The consultation was widely publicised on the Council's website.



## Equality Impact Assessment

**To be completed for all key changes, decisions and proposals. Cite specific data and consultation evidence wherever possible. Further guidance is available at: <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3281>**

### ***Duties which need to be considered:***

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

### **PART 1 – Overview of the change, decision or proposal**

1) Title of the change, decision or proposal:

- Proposal presented under informal consultation 23 April – 12 June 2019 - proposal to extend the age ranges of Bedlington Whitley Memorial CE and Bedlington West End First Schools to become primary schools with effect from 1 September 2019.
- This equalities impact assessment has been prepared in the light of the informal consultation. It would be updated should Cabinet approve the publication of a statutory proposal.

2) Date of equality impact assessment:

Assessment following informal consultation process.

3) Brief description of the change, decision or proposal:

As provided in 1.

4) Name(s) and role(s) of officer(s) completing the assessment:

Lorraine Fife, School Organisation Manager

5) Overall, what are the outcomes of the change, decision or proposal expected to be? (E.g. will it reduce/terminate a low-priority service, maintain service outcomes at reduced cost, or change the balance of funding responsibility for a service which will remain the same?)

These proposals were brought forward by the Governing Bodies of Bedlington Whitley Memorial CE and Bedlington West End First Schools. This proposal has been brought forward as a solution to the decision by Meadowdale Academy to become a primary school from 1 September 2020, thereby removing provision from Year 7 and 8 at the academy. Children on roll at West End and Whitley Memorial CE First Schools leaving at the end of Year 5 would no longer have a clear educational pathway to the middle school phase and could be faced with 2 school phase transfers within 2 years. The Governing Bodies of the two first schools believe it would be in the best educational interests of the children to become primary schools to the end of Year 6 when children would then feed to Year 7 at a secondary school in Bedlington or another secondary school according to parental choice.

If you judge that this proposal is not relevant to some protected characteristics, tick these below (and explain underneath how you have reached this judgement.

Disability       Sex -       Race       Religion   
Sexual Orientation   
People who have changed gender       Women who are pregnant or have babies   
Employees who are married/in civil partnerships

6) The characteristics checked above are not relevant because:

Should the proposal to extend the age range of West End and Whitley Memorial CE First Schools be approved, pupils on the roll of the school in Year 4 in August 2020 would remain on the roll of the school into Year 5 in September 2020. They would then remain on the roll of the school into Year 6 in September 2021 and transfer into Year 7 at secondary school in September 2022.

Parents are also able to exercise their parental preference for another school subject to places being available in the selected alternative schools.

In the medium to long-term, there is no reason to believe that the proposals would affect more positively or negatively than their peers any group of children, parents or staff defined by their gender, age, race, sexual orientation or gender-reassignment status. During the immediate process of transition, we would invite families to let us know if they are concerned about the impact that the change may have on the support networks for any individual children within these protected groups who may be at particular risk of harassment or discrimination.

Existing HR policies covering organisational change would apply to staff employed at West End and Whitley Memorial CE First Schools. These are designed to ensure that the equalities duties of the Council and the schools are fully met.

## **PART 2 – Relevance to different Protected Characteristics**

*Answer these questions both in relation to people who use services and employees*

### **Disability**

**Note:** “disabled people” includes people with physical, learning and sensory disabilities, people with a long-term illness, and people with mental health problems. You should consider potential impacts on all of these groups.

7) What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by disabled people, about disabled people’s experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

There is currently no evidence to suggest that any member of the community with a disability would be disproportionately impacted positively or negatively should the proposal to extend the age ranges of West End and Whitley Memorial CE First Schools be approved.

Any pupil, parent or member of staff of the two schools who has a disability would not be affected by these proposals as any arrangements already in place to ameliorate such disability as the proposals advocate that the school would retain pupils into Year 5 and then into Year 6. No evidence has come to light during the statutory consultation process of any individual who would be categorised within this protected group, but appropriate arrangements would be made where this is necessary to avoid potential adverse impacts should the need arise.

8) Could disabled people be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

There may be an advantage to the proposal that would affect disabled children, more positively than their peers as children would be able to remain at the school for a further two years. In particular, this could be an advantage to children identified with special educational needs who would continue at the schools for a further two years, thus providing continuity. This continuity would potentially benefit parents also with regard to the positive impact on family life.

During the immediate process of transition, we would consult families about any specific potential impacts on individuals; for instance, because of loss of support networks or the need to replicate reasonable adjustments made to accommodate disabled children, and we would ensure that appropriate individual arrangements are made where this is necessary to avoid potential adverse impacts.

9) Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of disabled people to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

The proposed changes would not affect any current arrangements for disabled people to participate in public life as adjustments as all currently arrangements at the school would remain in place.

10) Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards disabled people? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

There is no evidence to suggest that the extension of the age range of the two schools would affect public attitudes towards disabled people.

11) Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that disabled people will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

There is currently no evidence to suggest that the extension of the age range of the two schools would increase or decrease any risk of harassment or victimisation above that which may already exist to any pupil, member of staff or member of the community with a disability.

In line with current special educational needs systems, families would be consulted about any potential issues for individual children arising from the disruption of support networks during the process of transition.

12) If there are risks that disabled people could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

There is no evidence to suggest that there are any risks of disproportionately disadvantaging any pupils or members of staff at either school.

13) Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for disabled people linked to this change, decision or proposal?

See para. 8 above.

## **Age**

14) What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by people of different age groups, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

West End First School provides education to pupils between the ages of 4 and 9 and Whitley Memorial CE First School provides education to pupils between the ages of

3 and 9. Only pupils within this age range would be affected by the proposal.

Staff at the two schools are employed equitably in accordance with the schools' and council's employment policies. Should approval for the proposals be given by Cabinet at some point in the future, it is not expected that any staff would be at risk of redundancy. However, the schools' would need to carry out a staffing restructure as they would need to be organised as a primary rather than a first school. Any changes to a member of staff's working arrangements would be made in accordance with the schools' and council's employment policies deal on an equitable basis, regardless of age.

15) Could people of different age groups be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

See para. 14. Above.

16) Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of people of different age groups to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposals would have any effect on the ability of different age groups to participate in public life more or less than already occurs. No evidence has arisen during statutory consultation to suggest that anyone within this protected group would be prevented from participating in public life.

17) Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards people of different age groups? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

There is no evidence to suggest that this proposal would affect public attitudes towards pupils in the protected groups or any pupils on roll at the school.

18) Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that people of different age groups will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

There is no evidence to suggest that this proposal would increase or reduce the risk of harassment or victimisation of this of pupils on roll at these schools should the latter extend their age ranges. All schools have anti-bullying policies and arrangements in place e.g. split-time lunches and play times etc, to ensure that any harassment or victimisation of pupils is dealt with effectively.

19) If there are risks that people of different age groups could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

Refer to para. 14.

20) Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for people of different age groups linked to this change, decision or proposal?

While this proposal has been promulgated by the decision of Meadowdale Academy to become a primary school, there will be one less phase change for pupils on roll at West End and Whitley Memorial to undergo and they will benefit from remaining for an additional two years within their own communities.

### **Pregnancy and Maternity**

*Note: the law covers pregnant women or those who have given birth within the last 26 weeks, and those who are breastfeeding.*

21) What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by pregnant women and those who have children under 26 weeks, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

Staff at West End and Whitley Memorial First Schools are employed equitably in accordance with the school's and council's employment policies. Should approval be given to extend the age ranges of these schools, any staff reorganisation would be carried out in line with the council's employment policies on an equitable basis, including for those staff who may currently be pregnant or on maternity leave.

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposals would create any barriers to pupils accessing any of the schools impacted by the proposals who have a parent who may be pregnant or who has other children under 26 weeks old. The proposals could have a positive impact for some families where a parent who may be pregnant or who has other children under 26 weeks old may benefit from the child on roll at West End or Whitley Memorial remaining at the current school site for an additional two years. Should evidence arise during formal consultation that anyone within this protected group would be impacted negatively by this proposal, appropriate individual arrangements to the extent possible would be put in place to ameliorate any avoid potential adverse impacts.

22) Could pregnant women and those with children under 26 weeks be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

See para. 23.

23) Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposals would affect the ability of this protected group to participate in public life under the proposals.

24) Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposals would have any effect on public attitudes to this protected group under the proposals.

25) Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal would make it more or less likely that this protected group would be at risk of harassment or victimisation under the proposals.

26) If there are risks that pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

There is no evidence to suggest that the protected group would be disproportionately disadvantaged by the proposals.

27) Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks linked to this change, decision or proposal?

See para. 23.

## **Human Rights**

28) Could the change, decision or proposal impact on human rights? (e.g. the right to respect for private and family life, the right to a fair hearing and the right to education)

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposals would impact positively or negatively on the human rights of any of the protected groups identified within this EIA.

## **PART 3 – Course of Action**

29) Based on a consideration of all the potential impacts, tick one of the following as a summary of the outcome of this assessment:

x	The equality analysis has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken.
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30) Explain how you have reached the judgement ticked above, and summarise any steps which will be taken to reduce negative or enhance positive impacts on equality.

From the initial analysis of the possible negative or positive impact of the proposal on groups with protected characteristics, there is no evidence to suggest that any of these groups would be disproportionately disadvantaged by the proposal. However, as the proposals involves extending educational provision at West End and Whitley Memorial CE First Schools for a further two years, there are some potential advantages that could be enjoyed by some protected groups as outlined. Should the proposal be approved for implementation, the EIA would be reviewed to ensure that if any evidence arises that there could be possible negative impacts, those risks would be analysed to establish whether or not there were certain risks to any or all of those groups. Steps to reduce negative impacts or enhance positive impacts would then be defined.

#### **PART 4 - Ongoing Monitoring**

31) What are your plans to monitor the actual impact of the implementation of the change, decision or proposal on equality of opportunity? (include action points and timescales)

This EIA has been updated following the informal consultation period. Should Cabinet approve the publication of the statutory proposal, the EIA would be further updated at that time. Appropriate action would be identified in the light of the consultation and where necessary, an action plan with timescales developed.

#### **PART 5 - Authorisation**

Name of Head of Service and Date Approved

*Once completed, send your full EIA to: [Irene.Fisher@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Irene.Fisher@northumberland.gov.uk). A summary will then be generated corporately and published*