

**CABINET**

**12 May 2020**

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES TO**

**CABINET**

**PROPOSED CLOSURE OF WEST WOODBURN FIRST SCHOOL**

**REASONS FOR DECISION**

The statutory proposal to close West Woodburn First School with effect from 31 August 2020 should be adopted for the following reasons:

- 1) West Woodburn First School has no pupils on roll currently and there have been no applications for a place in Reception Class for the September 2020. Local parents have removed their children from the school over the last 18 months in particular and no longer support the school.
- 2) In spite of the efforts of the federated Governing Body of the River Rede Federation and staff at both West Woodburn First and Otterburn Primary , West Woodburn has not been able to retain children on its roll or to attract additional pupils to the school since the two schools federated.
- 3) There continues to be a decline in the number of children being born in the West Woodburn catchment area and at some point in the near future this would have caused concern about the viability of the school in any event.
- 4) There have been no viable alternatives put forward to the closure during the informal and formal stages of consultation on the proposal to close the school.
- 5) The nearest school to West Woodburn that offers primary education from Reception to Year 6 is Bellingham Primary School, which is 4.65 miles away. The majority of children who were on roll at West Woodburn initially and who were removed were enrolled at Bellingham Primary and it is for this reason and others that the catchment area of West Woodburn will be allocated to Bellingham Primary. Otterburn Primary is 5.7 miles from West Woodburn, and the nearest faith school is Wark CE Primary at 10 miles away. Children living in the current West Woodburn catchment

area but attending Bellingham Primary School would be entitled to transport as Bellingham will become their catchment school. Transport to alternative schools would be based on the Council's Home to School Transport eligibility criteria, but it is expected that all children living in the West Woodburn area would be eligible for transport to Bellingham.

- 6) The West Woodburn school building is not used as a community facility, but Cabinet acknowledges that the loss of any school has an impact on the local community to a greater or lesser extent.
- 7) For the reasons set out above and in the light of the statutory guidance on 'Rural Schools and the presumption against closure', Cabinet believes that it is in the best interests of education in the local area that the school closes with effect from 31 August 2020.

The consultation on this proposal has been extensive, reasonable and robust.