



# Northumberland County Council

CABINET

Date: 10 July 2018

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## **Proposed Closure of Netherton Northside First School**

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services Cath McEvoy

Cabinet Member for Children's Services: Councillor Wayne Daley

Report prepared by Sue Aviston Head of School Organisation and Resources.

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### **Purpose of Report**

This report outlines the results of the statutory consultation process undertaken by the Council in relation to the proposed closure of Netherton Northside First School with effect from 31 August 2018. This consultation has come about as a result of a request of the Governing Body of Netherton Northside due to the significant drop in the number of pupils attending the school and its impact. Cabinet are asked to decide whether or not to approve the closure of the school as requested by the Governing Body.

### **Recommendations**

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

- 1) **Approve** the proposal to close Netherton Northside First School as set out in the Statutory Proposal with effect from 31 August 2018.
- 2) **Note** that Netherton Northside First School is listed on the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order 2017 and therefore when formulating the final decision, Cabinet must give consideration to the points set out in paragraph 10 of this report.
- 3) **Note** the impact of the proposal is set out in the Statutory Proposal attached at Appendix 1 of this report.
- 4) **When deciding, take into account** the Department for Education's (DfE) 'Guidance for decision-makers: Statutory guidance for decision-makers deciding prescribed alteration and establishment and discontinuance proposals, April 2016' and the 'Opening and closing maintained schools; Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers April 2016' attached to this report at Appendix 2a and Appendix 2b

respectively, decide how to proceed with the proposal of the Governing Body summarised in the Key Issues of this report in the light of the four options available:

- reject the proposal;
- approve the proposal without modification;
- approve the proposal with such modifications as Cabinet think desirable after consultation with the Governing Body of Netherton Northside First School; or
- approve the proposal (with or without modification) subject to certain conditions being met.

As noted in Recommendation 2, Cabinet should take into account the guidance set out in 'Guidance for decision-makers: Statutory guidance for decision-makers deciding prescribed alteration and establishment and discontinuance proposals, April 2016' in relation to 'Rural Schools and the presumption against closure' (refer to para. 10 of this report).

## **Key Issues**

1. Following a request from the Governing Body of Netherton Northside First School, Cabinet approved a six week informal consultation on 8 February 2018 on a proposal to close the school with effect from 31 August 2018. The rationale, process and outcomes of this informal consultation are set out in the Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services 8 February May 2018 and the Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services 8 May 2018 , available in the Background Papers to this report.
2. Following consideration of the outcomes of informal consultation, Cabinet decided there were no viable alternatives to closure and approved the publication of the statutory proposal to close Netherton Northside First School in line with the proposed timeline.

## **Representations**

3. There have been no representations received in relation to the proposed closure of Netherton Northside First School. Given that during the informal consultation, the Governing Body of Netherton Northside First School and the majority of respondents to the consultation, including parents, supported the proposed closure of the school as being in the best educational interests of the children, it may be that consultees believed they had no further comments to add to the statutory phase of consultation.
4. However, Cabinet should note the comments that were made during the informal consultation, including the alternative proposals in relation to the future use of the building (see para. 19).

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## PROPOSED CLOSURE OF NETHERTON NORTHSIDE FIRST SCHOOL

### BACKGROUND

#### Summary of rationale for Consultation

5. As stated, the details of the rationale for the proposed closure of Netherton Northside are set out in the Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services 8 February 2018 and the Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services 8 May 2018, which are available in the Background Papers to this report.
6. Netherton Northside First School is a very small, rural school within the Morpeth Partnership of schools, but has had falling pupil numbers for some time and has been surviving on the edge of viability. The capacity of the school is 25 and in May 2018, there were 3 children on roll, 1 in Year 4 and 2 in Year 3 and there are no children requesting a place in Reception in September 2018, and therefore there are no children in the lower end of the school. As the Year 4 child will transfer to a middle or primary school according to parental preference in September 2018, there is a possibility there may be only 2 children on roll at that time. There is one prospective child in the catchment who could join the school in Reception in the future, but that would not occur until September 2019.
7. The Headteacher and Governing Body had carried out activities to try and attract additional pupils to the school in the two years prior to approaching the Council to request consultation on closure, including:
  - Placement of articles in the local Coquet valley magazine 'Over the Bridges' on several occasions;
  - Adverts in the Northumberland Gazette to highlight the school's Ofsted success;
  - Open morning in December 2016 – although this event was well attended, it was by people already connected with the school, with very few people attending who were not already involved with the school;
  - Relaunch of toddler group 'Bumps, Babies and Beyond' at Easter 2017 – again this group was quite well attended for the first 6 months, but attendance has since fallen away.

Unfortunately, these activities were unsuccessful in persuading additional parents to enroll their child at Netherton Northside. Fewer children are being born in the catchment areas of the school and the other neighbouring small schools and therefore parents have a wide choice of schools from which to choose and schools are competing for pupils in a diminishing market. This issue of parental choice and surplus places in schools has been raised through this consultation process and it is recognised that as a result of fluctuations in popularity, the viability of very small rural schools can quickly become an issue.

## Standards

8. There are currently no issues with standards at the school. The school was judged to be good in November 2011 and this rating was maintained at an Ofsted short inspection in February 2017. However, in light of the school's reducing budget, the Governing Body now believe that with so few children on roll, and with little prospect of numbers increasing significantly in the near future, it will become increasingly difficult to sustain the broad and balanced curriculum required by the National Curriculum. Therefore, the Governing Body decided it would be in the best educational interests of the pupils to request the Council to undertake consultation on a proposal to close the school with effect from 31 August 2018.
9. The closest alternative school to Netherton, Thropton Village First School, is rated Good by Ofsted, while the next closest school is Harbottle CE First School and is rated Outstanding by Ofsted.

## Rural Primary Schools and the presumption against closure

10. Netherton Northside First School is categorised as a Rural Primary School within the Department for Education's List of Designated Rural Schools 2017. In forming its final decision, Cabinet should take into account the statutory guidance in relation to rural schools as follows:

*"There is a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This does not mean that a rural school will never close, but the case for closure should be strong and the proposal clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area. Those proposing closure should provide evidence to show that they have carefully considered the following:*

- *Alternatives to closure including the potential for federation with another school or conversion to academy status and joining a multi-academy trust or umbrella trust to increase the school's viability;*
- *The scope for an extended school to provide local community services; and facilities e.g. child care facilities, family and adult learning, healthcare, community access etc.;*
- *The transport implications; and*
- *The overall and long term impact on local people and the community of closure of the village school and the loss of the building as a community facility."*

Alternatives to the proposed closure and alternative use of the school building were considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 8 May 2018 (set out in the Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services of that date, in the Background Papers to this report) where Cabinet decided there were no viable alternatives to closure. The transport implications are set out at para. 15 of this report and the impact on the local community is set out at para. 16.

## Provision for pupils and transition

11. Should Cabinet approve the closure of Netherton Northside First School with effect from 31 August 2018, 2 pupils currently in Year 3 would be displaced, as the child currently in Year 4 will move in to the middle school phase as usual in September 2018. There are 5 other first and primary schools within an 8 miles radius of Netherton village, the closest of which is 4.7 miles away, as follows:

- Thropton Village First School, Thropton, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 7JD – 4.7 miles;
- Harbottle Church of England First School, Harbottle, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 7DG – 5.9 miles;
- Rothbury First School, Addycombe, Rothbury, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 7PG – 6.7 miles;
- Whittingham Church of England Primary School, Whittingham, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 4UP – 5.9 miles;
- Branton Community Primary School, Branton, Powburn, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 4JF – 7.9 miles.

Note that distances from individual pupil's homes to these alternative schools will vary. Should approval be given by Cabinet for the closure of Netherton Northside First School, Council officers would work with the Governing Body and receiving schools to ensure as smooth a transition as possible of the pupils to those schools, according to parental preference.

12. To facilitate this proposal, it is proposed that the following model be implemented in accordance with the following arrangements and timeline:

### **20 July 2018**

- Final day on which pupils would attend Netherton Northside First School.

### **31 August 2018**

- Netherton Northside First School would officially close.

### **1 September 2018**

- The pupil in Year 4 at the school will transfer to a local middle or primary school into Year 5 as usual, according to parental preference.
- The pupils in Year 3 at the school in August 2018 would transfer to join the cohort of Thropton Village First School (refer to para. 13) or to another school providing education in those year groups, according to parental preference.

## Catchment area

13. As part of the informal consultation, consultees were asked which school or schools would be most appropriate to be allocated part of or all of the Netherton Northside catchment area, should it be approved for closure at a later date. The majority of consultees who responded to this question suggested Thropton Village First School or Harbottle CE First School would be the most appropriate.

Within the statutory proposal therefore it was proposed that Thropton Village First School would incorporate the catchment area of Netherton Northside First School should it be approved for closure for the following reasons:

- Thropton Village First School is the nearest school to Netherton village and as with Netherton Northside First School, does not have a faith designation;
- Parents who would by choice prefer for their children to be educated within a faith school would be able to make a preference for Harbottle CE First School or Whittingham CE Primary School (whichever was the nearest to the place of residence), and where eligible, transport would be available on denominational grounds;
- Some children may be eligible for home to school transport where other schools are nearer to their place of residence e.g. Whittingham CE Primary School; Branton Primary School.

As there have been no representations received during the statutory consultation, it is proposed that the catchment area of Netherton is allocated to Thropton Village First School for the reasons stated above.

## Implications for Staff

14. If a decision to approve closure of the school is made, staff employed at Netherton Northside would be deemed to be 'at risk' of redundancy. Council officers would work with them in order to identify redeployment opportunities elsewhere in the County and to avoid redundancies where possible. Any costs associated with ongoing salary protections of redeployed staff would need to be met from within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) from the revenue savings that would be made as a result of the proposed closure. Any costs associated with any possible redundancies could also be met from the savings within the DSG.

## Transport

15. Transport for pupils affected by the proposals, should they be approved, would be arranged in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy. The implications of the proposed re-assignment of the Netherton Northside catchment area should it be approved for closure is set out in para. 13. Distances to other local schools from the pupil's home addresses will vary, and while some pupils may have a longer journey to school, some may also have shorter journeys to school.

It is not envisaged that there would be any significant impact on the Council's Home to School Transport budget as a result of the proposed closure of Netherton Northside.

### Impact on the Community and Denominational Provision

16. There would be no anticipated denominational impact on the community should Netherton Northside First School be approved for closure, as it is a community school and there are two first schools within 8 miles of the village (see para. 11) that have a faith designation. Furthermore, there is no evidence to suggest that the closure of Netherton Northside would have either a positive or negative impact on community cohesion within the local area.

It is not envisaged that there would be an impact on the community of the potential loss of the school building itself as it is not used as a community facility.

### Special Educational Needs

17. None of the 3 pupils currently on roll at Netherton Northside have been identified with Special Educational Needs and there is no specialist SEN provision currently within Netherton Northside First School. In any event, appropriate provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs would be available at the other first schools within the local area, subject to parental preference.

### Early Years Provision

18. While Netherton Northside First School is an age 3 to 9 school, there are no children on roll in the early years provision. Four other schools in the local area include early years provision from age 3, therefore it is not envisaged that the closure of the school would have a negative impact in this area of provision.

### Land and Buildings

19. The buildings of Netherton Northside First School are in the ownership of the Council, while the playing field is held on long term leasehold with a private owner. Proposals for alternative use of the building were put forward by some consultees during the informal consultation and were set out in the Report of the Executive Director of Education, 8 May 2018 as follows:

- a) *Develop the school building as an outward bound centre for all children in Northumberland*
- b) *Develop the school building as a SEND provision for children in the local area to reduce travel distances*

If Cabinet approve the closure of the school, the school building would be assessed by the Council's Estates team for possible use by other Council services in the first instance, including as a SEND provision. If it is not possible for another service to utilise the building, then alternative uses would be considered.

As stated earlier, the school building is not used by any community groups and Netherton village has a village hall where community activities are generally held.

## Sport and Recreation

20. Any potential impact on Sport and Recreation arising from the proposed closure of Netherton Northside would arise through the loss of the school playing fields. Any proposal to dispose of the school playing fields at any point in the future would be subject to the Government's 'Protection of school playing fields and public land' non-statutory guidance. As noted previously, the Netherton Northside playing field is owned by a private individual.

Furthermore, Sport England is a statutory consultee on all planning applications for development affecting playing field land and it is its policy to oppose any plan that would involve the loss of playing fields unless it meets with one or more of the five exceptions within its "Policy on planning applications for development on playing fields".

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services, 8 February 2018

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services, 8 May 2018



## IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

<b>Policy:</b>	The statutory consultation has been 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>	<p>The proposed closure of Netherton Northside would result in a saving of £110k in a full year, based on the current formula. This saving would accrue to the Dedicated Schools Grant and be spent on the education of pupils across the whole county.</p> <p>Should Netherton Northside be approved for closure, it may close with a surplus or a deficit depending upon the costs, including redundancy costs which the County Council may need to incur during the period leading up to the proposed closure. Any surplus would accrue to the DSG whilst any deficit would have to be met from either the DSG or other Children's Services budgets.</p>
<b>Human Resources:</b>	There would be a need to support staff displaced as a result of the proposed reorganisation with redeployment opportunities.
<b>Property</b>	Refer to 'Finance and value for money' above
<b>Equalities</b>	An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out concurrently with the consultation process and is included at Appendix 3.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	A full risk assessment has been carried out.
<b>Carbon Reduction</b>	It is not envisaged that this proposal would have a significant positive or negative impact on carbon reduction.
<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 proposal set out in this report is based upon the request of the Governing Body of Netherton Northside First School on the basis that this proposal is in the best educational interests of the pupils
<b>Consultation</b>	This report has been considered by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Chief Legal Officer.
<b>Wards</b>	Rothbury

## **Report sign off**

Finance Officer	SD
Monitoring Officer/Legal	LH
Human Resources	n/a
Procurement	n/a
I.T.	n/a
Director of Children's Services	CM
Portfolio Holder	WD

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## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 Statutory Proposal, published 10 May 2018
- Appendix 2a [DfE 'Guidance for decision-makers Statutory guidance for decision-makers deciding prescribed alteration and establishment and discontinuance proposals, April 2016'](#)
- Appendix 2b [DfE 'Opening and closing maintained schools; Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers April 2016'](#)
- Appendix 3 Equalities Impact Assessment

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

**STATUTORY PROPOSAL FOR THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF  
NETHERTON NORTHSIDE FIRST SCHOOL**

**Discontinuance (closure)**

In accordance with section 15(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, this proposal sets out the intention of Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2EF to discontinue (close) the following school;

- **Netherton Northside First School**, Netherton, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 7HD with effect from 31 August 2018.

**Netherton Northside First School is a local authority maintained community first school.**

**Contact Details**

Copies of the full proposal may be obtained from:

The School Organisation and Resources Team  
Northumberland County Council  
County Hall  
Morpeth  
Northumberland  
NE61 2EF

Or from the Council's website at [www.northumberland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations)

The school is part of the Morpeth Partnership of schools.

**Implementation.**

Netherton Northside First School is proposed to close with effect from 31 August 2018.

## **Objectives and reason for closure of Netherton Northside First School**

The objective of the above proposal is to:

- discontinue (close) **Netherton Northside First School**, Netherton, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 7HD with effect from 31 August 2018.

### Reasons for proposed closure of Netherton Northside First School.

The consultation on a proposal to close Netherton Northside First School was brought forward as a result of the request of the Governing Body of the school. The Governing Body had reluctantly requested the Council to consult on the closure of the school as a result of the continuing fall in pupil numbers and the impact of the quality of educational provision for the pupils on roll at the school. In spite of a variety of initiatives, including early years provision, the Governing Body has not been able to attract additional pupils to join the school. The Governing Body believes that the school would not be able to continue to offer a broad and balanced curriculum to pupils based on the number of pupils on roll and projected numbers. There are a several first and primary schools within the local area, which provide parents with a wide choice of options for school places.

The capacity of the school is 25. In May 2018, there were 3 pupils on roll at the school; one pupil is in Year 4 and will leave the school to join a middle school in September 2018 and no applications have been made for a place in Reception at the school in September 2018. Therefore, there are 2 children forecast to be on roll at the school in September 2018.

## **Pupil Numbers and Admissions**

There are currently 3 pupils on roll at Netherton Northside First School.

The age range of the school is a 3-9 and provides education to both boys and girls.

There are currently no pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs/Educational Health Care Plans enrolled at the school.

### **Displaced Pupils**

In accordance with section 15(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, Northumberland County Council intends to discontinue (close) the following schools with effect from 31 August 2018:

To facilitate this, it is proposed that the following model be implemented in accordance with the following arrangements and timeline:

#### **31 August 2018**

- Netherton Northside First School would close.

#### **1 September 2018**

- Pupils in Year 4 at the school would transfer into Year 5 as usual to a local middle or primary school according to parental preference.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 3 at the school in August 2018 would transfer to join the cohort of Thropton Village First School or to another school providing education in those year groups according to parental preference.

There are several first schools within the locality of Netherton Village that would have the capacity to accommodate the displaced pupils from Netherton Northside First School. It is proposed that Thropton Village First School would incorporate the catchment area of Netherton Northside First School should it be approved for closure for the following reasons:

- Thropton Village First School is the nearest school to Netherton village and as with Netherton Northside First School, does not have a faith designation.
- Parents who would by choice prefer for their children to be educated within a faith school would be able to make a preference for Harbottle CE First School or Whittingham CE Primary School (whichever was the nearest to the place of residence), and where eligible, transport would be available on denominational grounds;
- Some children may be eligible for home to school transport where other schools are nearer to their place of residence e.g. Whittingham CE Primary School; Branton Primary School.

Distances from Netherton Northside First School village to alternative first schools named above and others are set out in the 'Travel' section of this proposal.

### **Impact on the Community**

The closure of Netherton Northside First School would remove primary education provision from the village. However, as stated in 'Displaced Pupils', there are several other first schools within a reasonable travelling distance of Netherton.

The school building is in the ownership of the Council and alternative proposals for its use would be considered should the school be approved for closure. The playing field is in private ownership, but there may be a possibility of a community transfer agreement being negotiated between the community and the owner, should the community wish to pursue this as an option for retaining the field as a community facility.

### **Balance of denominational provision**

There would be no impact on the balance of denominational provision within local area of Netherton as Netherton Northside First School does not have a religious character. There are a number of schools with a religious character within the local area.

**Rural Primary Schools**

Netherton Northside First School is a designated rural primary school, listed on the Department for Education's designated list of primary schools 2017. There is a presumption against the closure of rural schools in legislation, which requires that the case for closure of the school must be strong and in the best interests of educational provision in the area. In forming a final decision on this statutory proposal, the Council would need to consider:

- Alternatives to closure
- Transport implications
- Overall and long-term impact on local people and the community of the closure of the school and the loss of the building as a community facility.

**Maintained nursery schools**

Netherton Northside First School includes a maintained nursery with provision for children from age 3. There are no children on roll in the nursery currently. All the schools listed in the 'Displaced Pupils' section of this proposal have nursery provision for children from either 2 or 3 years of age.

**Provision for 16-19 year olds**

N/A – Netherton Northside First School is an age 3-9 first school.

**Special educational provision**

There are currently no pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs on roll at Netherton Northside First School.

## **Travel**

- Transport for all pupils affected by the proposed closure of Netherton Northside First School should it be approved would be arranged in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.
- Pupils on roll at Netherton Northside First School in Year 4 in August 2018 will transfer into a middle or primary school in accordance with parental preference in September 2018 as usual.
- Pupils on roll at Netherton Northside First School in Year 1 to Year 3 in the school in August 2018 would transfer to Thropton Village First School or another first or primary school in accordance with parental preference in September 2018. These pupils may have a longer journey to school, depending on the location of the home residence. For information, the distances to alternative local first and primary schools from Netherton Northside First School are as follows;
  - Thropton Village First School, Thropton, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 7JD – 4.7 miles;
  - Harbottle Church of England First School, Harbottle, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 7DG – 5.9 miles;
  - Rothbury First School, Addycombe, Rothbury, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 7PG – 6.7 miles;
  - Whittingham Church of England Primary School, Whittingham, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 4UP – 5.9 miles;
  - Branton Community Primary School, Branton, Powburn, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 4JF – 7.9 miles.
  - There would be no anticipated significant increase in car use as a result of these proposals.

## **Consultation**

In the interests of providing further information, all of the applicable statutory requirements to consult on this proposal as set out in Section 15(1) and Section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 were complied with during the pre-publication consultation period between 9 February and 30 March 2018.

Notification of the consultation was distributed to a range of consultees in line with Department of Education guidance, including parents, staff and Governors of Netherton Northside First School. A consultation document was also made available on the Council's website and electronic and hard-copy versions of the consultation feedback form could be accessed. Consultees were able to respond to the consultation by either using the electronic online response form, by email or by post.

3 separate meetings for the parents of the 3 pupils at the school and public, staff and the Governing Body were held at Netherton Northside First School during the consultation period between 9 February and 30 March 2018. The meeting for parents and the public was advertised on the Council's website.

Details of the persons and parties consulted, notes of the consultation meetings, and views of the persons consulted are detailed in the Executive Director of Children's Services which are available on the Council's website at

<http://committee.northumberland.gov.uk/Meeting.aspx?MeetID=7797>

### **Submission of Objections and Comments on Proposals**

Within four weeks after the date of publication of these proposals (**i.e. by midnight on Thursday 7 June 2018**), any person may object to or make comments on the proposals by sending their written representations to: **The Executive Director of Children's Services, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2EF**, or by email to [educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk).

Signature

Publication Date: 10 May 2018

Cath McEvoy  
Executive Director of Children's Services  
Northumberland County Council



## 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 9 February – 30 March 2018, the closure of Netherton Northside First School with effect from 31 August 2018.
- Statutory Proposal to close Netherton Northside First School published 10 May 2018 opened 4 week statutory consultation
- This equalities impact assessment has been updated in the light of the publication of the statutory proposal.

2) Date of equality impact assessment:

Assessment following informal consultation process. This EIA will be refreshed and updated should Cabinet approve the implementation of the statutory proposal for closure of the school on 10 July 2018.

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 Body of Netherton Northside First School. Although the school has good standards, the roll at the school has been falling for some time and now there are only 3 pupils in the school. The Governing Body do not

Cabinet, 10 July 2018

believe that it is in the best educational interests of the children to remain open.

It is envisaged that the implementation of the proposals would lead to improved outcomes for pupils in the Netherton area.

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

6) The characteristics checked above are not relevant because:

Should the proposal to close Netherton Northside First School be approved, the two pupils who would have remained on roll at the school on 1 September 2018 had it remained open would be affected equally by the proposal. These pupils would be offered places at other schools within the Morpeth Partnership or in accordance with parental preference .

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 proposed school closure 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 who may be at particular risk of harassment or discrimination.

Existing HR policies covering organisational change and redundancy would apply to staff employed at Netherton Northside First School. 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 close Netherton Northside First School be approved.

Any pupil, parent or member of staff in Netherton Northside First School who has a disability would not be affected by these proposals as any arrangements already in place to ameliorate such disability would be replicated at the alternative schools as required. 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?

In the medium to long term, there is no reason to believe that the proposed school closure would affect disabled children, staff or parents more positively or negatively than their peers. In particular, the support identified through the special educational needs system would continue to be provided to all pupils who need it.

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 would be made to enable access to alternative schools, should such access not already be 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 proposed closure of Netherton Northside First School 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 proposed closure of the school 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 of Netherton Northside First School who have a disability.

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?

Netherton Northside First School provides education to pupils between the age of 3 and 9. Only pupils within this age range would be affected by the proposal.

Staff at Netherton Northside First School are employed equitably in accordance with the school's and council's employment policies. Should approval for closure of the school be given, suitable alternative employment for staff would be sought in accordance with the schools' and council's redeployment 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 when they transfer to alternative schools in the local area.

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 would increase or reduce the risk of harassment or victimisation of this group of pupils when they transfer to alternative schools. The receiving schools will have anti-bullying policies in place to ensure that any harassment or victimisation of the new 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?

It is believed that the learning experience of the pupils currently on roll at Netherton Northside First School would be enhanced from a social development perspective by transferring them to alternative schools with increased pupils numbers. The budget at Netherton Northside is now also being impacted by the falling rolls and may not be able to maintain its current teaching capacity in the near future.

### **Pregnancy and Maternity**

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

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 Netherton Northside First School are employed equitably in accordance with the school's and council's employment policies. Should approval for closure of the school be given under the proposals, suitable alternative employment for staff would be sought in accordance with the schools' and council's redeployment 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. No evidence has arisen during consultation that anyone within this protected group would be impacted by this proposal. However, appropriate individual arrangements to the extent possible would be made where this is necessary to 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?

While other schools within the local area are within a reasonable distance of Netherton, it is likely that most children living in Netherton would be eligible for home to school transport and therefore it is not envisaged there would be any physical disadvantage or impact on pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks whose school-age child transfers to other local schools.

No evidence has been provided that the allocation of a school place at another first within the Morpeth Partnership or other local school to a child displaced by the closure of Netherton Northside First School would cause disproportionate disadvantage to a member of this protected group. However, should evidence arise, the council would use its best endeavours to the extent possible in accordance with the Admissions Policy to seek a solution that would ameliorate such disadvantage.

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. 22.

## 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 or advantaged by the proposal. 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*