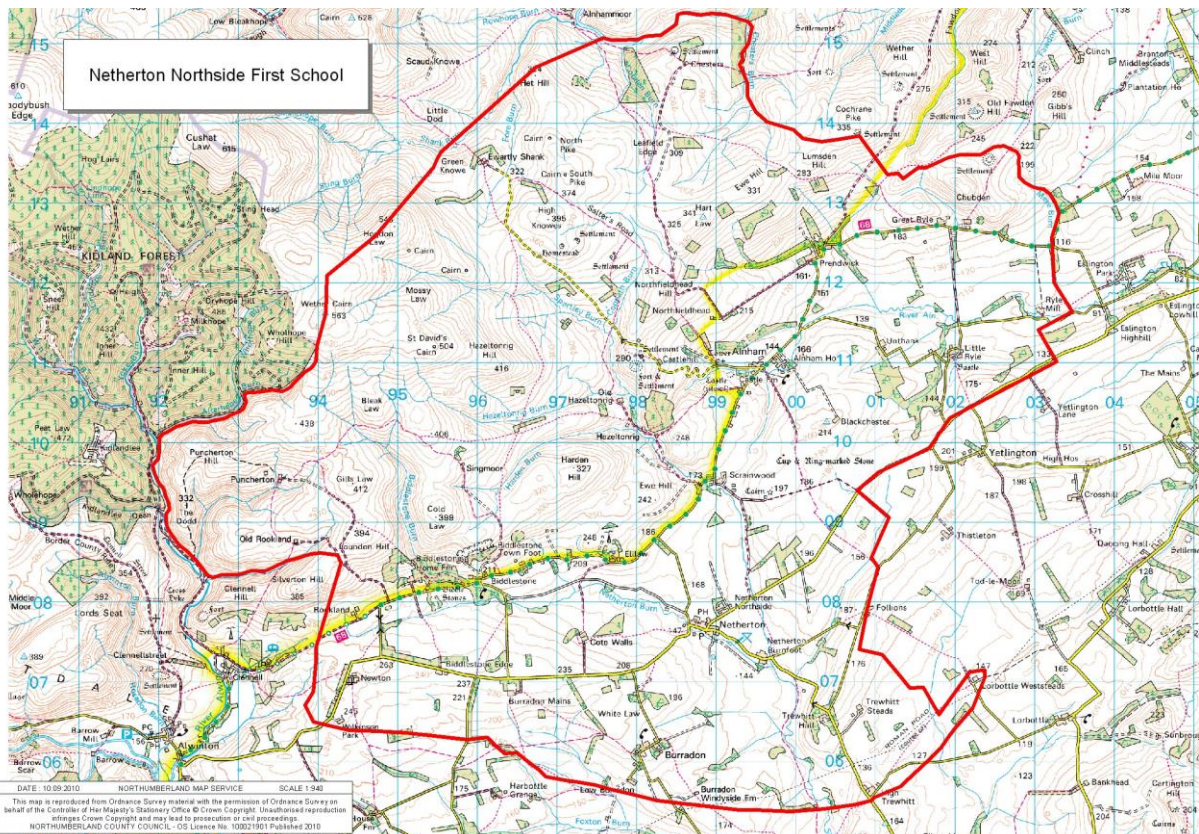


NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

NETHERTON NORTHSIDE FIRST SCHOOL

CONSULTATION FEBRUARY-MARCH 2018



THE COUNTY COUNCIL IS CARRYING OUT CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL PUT FORWARD BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF NETHERTON NORTHSIDE FIRST SCHOOL TO CLOSE THE SCHOOL FROM 31 AUGUST 2018.

WE NEED TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT THIS PROPOSAL AND ALSO TO FIND OUT WHETHER YOU HAVE ANY ALTERNATIVE IDEAS ABOUT THE ISSUES FACING THE SCHOOL.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES FACING NETHERTON NORTHSIDE FIRST SCHOOL?

1. Netherton Northside First School is a very small first school within the Morpeth Partnership of schools. In recent years the school has had very small pupil numbers, never more than 10 pupils attending the school. Table 1 below shows the numbers of pupils who have been attending the school since September 2013.

Table 1

Netherton Northside First School	Pupils Attending Jan 2018	Pupils Attending Sep 2017	Pupils Attending Sep 2016	Pupils Attending Sep 2015	Pupils Attending Sep 2014	Pupils Attending Sep 2013
Y0	0	0	2	1	3	0
Y1	0	1	0	3	0	1
Y2	0	0	2	0	2	2
Y3	2	2	0	2	2	1
Y4	1	2	2	3	1	2
TOTAL	3	5	6	9	8	6

2. Currently, Netherton Northside has only has 3 pupils on roll in the upper years, with no children at all in the lower end of the school. Unfortunately, there are no applications for a place in Reception class in September 2018, although from data available to the Council there are four children living in the school's catchment area in that age group. Data also shows that there are no children living in the catchment area who would be eligible to join Reception in September 2019 or September 2020. The majority of parents with first school age children living in the Netherton catchment area send their children to other local schools.

When the current Year 4 child transfers to a middle or primary school for September 2018, there is a real possibility there may be only 2 children on roll with the school.

In order to attract additional pupils to the school, over the last 2 years the Headteacher and Governing Body have carried out the following activities:

- 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.

3. Unfortunately, none of the above activities have resulted in additional parents enrolling their children with the school. As fewer children are also being born in the catchment areas of neighbouring small schools, such as Thropton Village First School and Harbottle CE First School, parents have a wide choice of schools from which to choose. This makes very small, rural schools vulnerable to any fluctuations in popularity which can often be overcome by larger schools if they are not sustained over a long time.

4. While small, some rural schools can offer a different kind of educational experience to their pupils which parents rightly value, there is a point at which the school becomes so small that it exists on the edges of viability and the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum becomes impossible. All schools receive a lump sum as part of their annual funding budget from the central government – the Department for Education, but this is added to via funding based on the number of pupils on roll. On average a primary school would expect to have 220 pupils on roll, each one generating an amount of income. Therefore, the fewer pupils there are, the less money the school receives. The 'fixed' costs of running a school, such as maintenance, heating, lighting and cleaning, remain the same no matter how many pupils attend and as numbers fall, schools find they spend a higher proportion of their budget on these costs compared to staffing and educational resources.

5. Eventually, a tipping point is reached when the school is no longer able to fund the broad and balanced curriculum their pupils need and as is required by the

National Curriculum. In addition due to the very small numbers of pupils in a school the development of social and emotional skills in activities such as play become very limited.

6. In the light of the school's reducing budget and with little prospect of numbers increasing significantly in the near future, the Governing Body now believes that it will become impossible to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils and therefore in the best educational interests of the pupils, or to allow them to fully develop socially and emotionally with their peers. Governors therefore requested the Council to consult on a proposal to close the school with effect from 31 August 2018.

MY CHILD IS ENROLLED WITH NETHERTON NORTHSIDE FIRST SCHOOL - HOW WILL HE/SHE BE AFFECTED BY THIS PROPOSAL?

7. Due to the very small numbers of children at the school we will contact parents or carers on an individual basis to discuss the consultation. There are school places available in other schools within a five mile radius should Netherton Northside be approved for closure at a later date and parents will be able to indicate a preference for any school they wish. We are also asking whether parents and other consultees have any views on which other school the catchment area of Netherton Northside should be allocated to, as part of this consultation. Transport to other schools would be in line with the County Council's Home to School Transport policy and assessed on an individual basis, but generally, first school pupils aged up to 8 are entitled to home to school transport where they live more than 2 miles from their catchment or nearest school, or where there is no safe walking route from home to school. From the age of 8 onwards, pupils are generally eligible if they live more than 3 miles from the nearest catchment school or if there is no safe walking route.

HOW CAN I MAKE MY VIEWS ABOUT THIS PROPOSAL KNOWN?

8. The Council would like to hear your view on this proposal, and whether you have any alternative suggestions that could resolve the issues raised. We would also like your views on alternative catchment areas as stated above for children currently residing in the Netherton Northside catchment, should the school be approved for

closure at a later date. A questionnaire is attached at the end of this document for you to complete with your views, with details of how to return your response.

The consultation is open until 30 March 2018.

Additionally, there will be meetings held at Netherton Northside on **Tuesday, 27 February 2018**. The purpose of these meetings is for Council Officers to present the reasons for the proposal and to enable staff, parents, Governors and other interested parties the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on any issues

Please attend the meeting for the group that you most associate with, you will be able to express your views at that time or send in your views by post or email.

Venue	Meeting for:	Date	Time
Netherton Northside First School	Staff only	Tuesday , 27 February 2018	1.00 p.m.
Netherton Northside First School	Parents and community	Tuesday , 27 February 2018	2.00 p.m.
Netherton Northside First School	Netherton Northside Governing Body only	Tuesday , 27 February 2018	3.00 p.m.

Please now complete the response form which follows:

**CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL TO CLOSE
NETHERTON NORTHSIDE FIRST SCHOOL**

Your name:

Are you responding mainly as a (tick one box only):

Parent/carer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Governor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Netherton Staff Member	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resident/ Member of the community	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parish Councillor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other school staff	<input type="checkbox"/>

Your views; (continue on a separate sheet where necessary)

1) Do you agree with the proposal to close Netherton Northside First School with effect from 31 August 2018?

Yes, I agree

No, I do not agree

Please provide the main reasons for your answer:

2) Do you have an alternative proposal for tackling the issues faced by Netherton Northside First School that you would like the Council to consider or any further comments?

- 3) If Netherton Northside First School is approved for closure following statutory consultation at a later date, which schools or schools do you think would be most appropriate to be allocated part of all of the Netherton catchment area?

SUBMITTING YOUR RESPONSE FORM:

There are three ways that you can submit your response form;

1) You can use the electronic form on the Council's website at

<http://northumberland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations>

2) You can return this form attached to an email

email Lorraine.Fife@northumberland.gov.uk

3) You can return your Response Form in hard copy to:

**FAO Lorraine Fife, Children's Services, FREEPOST MP135, County Hall,
MORPETH, NE61 1BR**

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS CONSULTATION
THE CLOSING DATE FOR CONSULTATION IS 30 MARCH 2018**