Notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 15(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, that it is the intention of Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2EF to discontinue (close) the following school:

- **West Woodburn First School**, West Woodburn, Hexham, Northumberland, NE48 2RX with effect from 31 August 2020.

West Woodburn First School is a local authority maintained community school and forms part of the Haydon Bridge Partnership of schools. The school is also federated with Otterburn First School as part of The River Rede Federation, formed in 2019.

**Contact Details**
School Organisation and Resources Team  
Northumberland County Council  
County Hall  
Morpeth  
Northumberland  
NE61 2EF

**Copies of the full Statutory Proposal may be obtained from:**
School Organisation and Resources Team  
Education and Skills  
Wellbeing and Community Health Services  
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)

**Implementation**
- West Woodburn First School is proposed to close with effect from 31 August 2020.

**Objectives**
The objectives of this proposal are to
- **Discontinue (close) West Woodburn First School**, West Woodburn, Hexham, Northumberland, NE48 2RX with effect from 31 August 2020.

**Reasons for proposal:**
West Woodburn First School is a small, rural community first school located in the heart of West Woodburn village on the edge of the Northumberland National Park. A formal consultation to extend the age range of West Woodburn First School to become a primary school was
undertaken in September 2019 on the basis of pupil numbers on roll at the school July 2019 and a new pupil coming on roll in Reception in September 2019. However, as a result of parental preference, these children have now transferred to other local schools for the beginning of the Spring Term in January 2020 and there are now no children on roll at West Woodburn.

Furthermore, no children have applied for a place in Reception at the school for September 2020, and feedback from local parents on the recent formal and informal consultations on proposals for the school indicates that West Woodburn is unlikely to attract further pupils for the foreseeable future. Therefore, the school is deemed to be no longer viable.

In September 2019, the remaining maintained first schools in the Haydon Bridge Partnership (except West Woodburn) became primary schools and in Haltwhistle the middle academy closed in August 2019 and the first academy extended its age range to become Haltwhistle Primary Academy as part of the Wise Academies Trust. West Woodburn is the only remaining first school in the Haydon Bridge Partnership, while Bellingham Middle School remains open as a result of the decision of the School’s Adjudicator in Autumn 2018 to overturn the Council’s decision to close the school. The primary/secondary structure is now the prevalent educational structure in the Haydon Bridge Partnership.

**Effect on other schools, academies and educational institutions in the area**

There are currently no children on roll at West Woodburn, with children living within its catchment area now on roll at other local schools. The number of pupils forecast to reside in the West Woodburn catchment area in the foreseeable future would be able to be accommodated in other local schools and it is likely that these children would qualify for transport in line with the Council’s Home to School Transport Policy, although eligibility is assessed on an individual basis.

**Pupil Numbers and Admissions**

There are currently no children on roll at West Woodburn First School. The age range of West Woodburn First School is 4 years to 9 years and provides education to both boys and girls.

**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 2020. As there are no pupils on roll at the school, there are no pupils to accommodate in other local schools. However, it is proposed that the catchment area of West Woodburn First School should be allocated to Bellingham Primary School, which will from September 2020 become the catchment school for pupils aged 4-11 who live in the current West Woodburn catchment area. Bellingham Primary School is judged to be ‘Good’ by Ofsted.

However, the right of parents to express a preference for any school remains in place although eligibility for transport to any school would be assessed in line with the Council’s Home to School Transport Policy. Parents who would prefer their children to receive their education within a faith setting would be able to make a preference for their preferred faith school and where eligible, transport would be available on denominational grounds. Wark CE Primary School is the nearest faith school to West Woodburn village and is rated ‘Good’ by Ofsted. West Woodburn First School is currently federated with Otterburn Primary, which is rated ‘Good’ by Ofsted. A number of children resident in the current West Woodburn catchment area are already on roll at other local schools and pupil data indicates that the above alternative schools would be able to accommodate pupils living in the current West Woodburn Catchment area in the future.

Distances from West Woodburn First School village to alternative primary schools are set out in the ‘Travel’ section of this proposal.
**Impact on the Community**

The closure of West Woodburn First School would remove primary education provision from age 4 to 9 years from the village. However, as stated in ‘Displaced Pupils’, there are several other first schools within a reasonable travelling distance of the village.

The school building and playing field is in the ownership of the Council and alternative proposals for its use would be considered should the school be approved for closure; suggestions for alternative uses would be considered as part of this formal consultation. There are currently no extended services run from West Woodburn First School.

**Balance of denominational provision**

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

**Rural Primary Schools**

West Woodburn First School is listed on the DfE’s List of Designated Rural Primary Schools 2018. 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 order to assist in forming a final decision on this statutory proposal, the Council would need to consider:

- Alternatives to closure. West Woodburn has already federated with Otterburn Primary School in early 2019. This resulted in a fall in attendance. Should the school be approved for closure, it may be considered for other uses by council services or the local community.
- Transport implications; it is envisaged that should West Woodburn First School close, the costs of transporting children living in the catchment to the alternative catchment school would be circa £26k per annum.
- While the small number of pupils on roll at the school was a concern with regard to possible educational disadvantage, there are now no children on roll.
- The school proposed to take over the catchment area of West Woodburn First School is Bellingham Primary School which is judged ‘Good’ by Ofsted. Other primary schools in the area are also judged to be good.

**Maintained nursery schools**

West Woodburn First School does not currently have nursery provision.

**Provision for 16-19 year olds**

N/A

**Special educational provision**

There are currently no pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs/Education Healthcare Plan on roll at West Woodburn School.

**Travel**

- Transport for pupils resident in Northumberland is arranged in accordance with the Council’s Home to School Transport Policy and designated catchment areas.
- Pupils aged 4 to 9 who live in the West Woodburn First School catchment who are currently on roll at other local schools may from September 2020 become eligible for transport. It is anticipated that this would add an additional £26,000 p.a. to the Council’s Home to School Transport Budget.
- For information, the distances to alternative local first and primary schools from West Woodburn First School are as follows:
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) were complied with during the pre-publication consultation period between 12 December 2019 and 15 January 2020.

Notification of the consultation was distributed to a range of consultees in line with Department of Education guidance, including former parents and staff of West Woodburn First School, parents and staff of Otterburn Primary School and the federated Governing Body of The River Rede Federation. 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.

4 separate meetings for the former parents of the 3 pupils at the school and potential future parents, staff, Governing Body and wider community were held at West Woodburn First School during the consultation period on 9 January 2020. No parents or potential parents attended the parents meeting.

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=9495

Submission of Objections and Comments on Proposals
Within four weeks after the date of publication of the above proposals (i.e. by midnight on Thursday, 9 April 2020), any person may object to or make comments on the proposal to extend the age range of West Woodburn First School by sending their written representations to: the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children’s Services, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2EF, or by email to educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk.

Signature

Cath McEvoy-Carr
Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children’s Services
Northumberland County Council