

Cabinet

14 September 2016

Proposal to Close Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2016



Key Decision: CAS/02/16

Report of Corporate Management Team, Margaret Whellans, Interim Corporate Director, Children & Young People's Services, and Councillor Ossie Johnson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder of Children and Young People's Services

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To seek Cabinet approval to close Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2016, taking account of the Local Authority's duties as prescribed in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to secure sufficient school places, and to secure good outcomes for all children and young people in their local area.

Background

- 2 The school can accommodate 112 pupils but pupil numbers have been falling significantly in recent years from 63 pupils in 2012/13 to 36 pupils in 2015/16. It is expected that as few as 21 pupils would attend the school from September 2016. The long term sustainability of the school is uncertain due to a lack of leadership and management capacity in the school to provide consistently high standards of education to improve outcomes for children. There is currently no substantive Headteacher in post although some part-time leadership has been provided by a Headteacher of an outstanding school elsewhere in the County. A further concern is that the reduction in pupil numbers means that funding has reduced significantly (formula funding in 2013-14 was £372,000, but for the current year is £285,000).
- 3 Consultation on the proposed closure followed many attempts by the County Council, Church of England Diocese, Governors and other schools in the area to explore various options to secure primary education in Startforth in the long term, but none have proved fruitful.
- 4 Durham County Council has provided dedicated support to the school since March 2014 when it was judged "Requires Improvement" by Ofsted. A School Scrutiny Group (SSG) made up of School Governors, School Senior Leaders, Diocesan representatives and officers of the council have met regularly since March 2014 to support Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School and discuss various options to partner the school with another school, to enhance education provision and strengthen leadership and management of the school.

- 5 At the SSG meeting held on 25 April 2016 the Chair, Vice Chair of Governors, the Acting Headteacher and the Headteacher of an Outstanding School who the council had arranged to provide leadership support to Startforth Morritt during the past year, were all in agreement that as no other options had been able to be developed it would now not be sustainable for the school to remain open. In light of this, plans were put in place to begin consultation on proposed closure of the school.
- 6 As Startforth is a Church of England School it was important for the Diocese to confirm that they agreed on plans for consultation on proposed closure. This confirmation was given by the relevant Diocesan Director of Education who had already shared the rationale for proposed closure with his Diocesan Board of Education.
- 7 The school was inspected by Ofsted again on 28 – 29 June 2016 when consultation had already been undertaken on proposed closure of the school. Ofsted judged the school once more as “Requires Improvement”.
- 8 Key areas of concern were leadership and management, teaching and learning, outcomes for pupils and early years provision. Personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils were judged as ‘Good’. Further details of the Ofsted inspection are highlighted in paragraph 21.

Decision Making Process

Factors to be considered by Cabinet

(a) Consideration of Consultation and Representation Period

- 9 Cabinet needs to be satisfied that the appropriate consultation and representation period have been carried out and that the proposer (in this case the Local Authority) has had regard to the responses received. If the Local Authority has failed to meet the statutory requirements, this proposal may be deemed invalid and therefore should be rejected.
- 10 The statutory process for closing a school has five stages:
 - Stage 1 – Consultation**
This was undertaken between 16 May – 24 June 2016 (6 weeks).
 - Stage 2 – Publication**
The statutory notice was published on 7 July 2016.
 - Stage 3 – Representation**
This period was from 7 July – 4 August 2016.
 - Stage 4 – Decision**
The decision will be made by Cabinet on 14 September 2016.
 - Stage 5 – Implementation**
If agreed by Cabinet the proposals will be implemented on 31 December 2016.
- 11 Cabinet must consider all the views submitted, including all objections and comments on the proposal. Details of the consultation are included in paragraphs 12-18. The Statutory Notice published on 7 July 2016, which

expired on 4 August 2016 (**the representation period**) is attached as Appendix 3. The process undertaken complied with statutory requirements.

12 The report attached as Appendix 2 provides full details of the responses received during the **consultation period** from 16 May 2016 – 24 June 2016. In summary:

- Stakeholders were invited to respond in a variety of ways: written responses using the response form attached to the consultation document, letter, email, or completing the response form online via the County Council's website or attending meetings.
- 86 people attended the Information Sharing Evening at Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School.
43 people attended the meeting for parents at Starforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School.
9 Governors attended the Governing Body meeting at Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School.
14 members of staff attending the staff meeting at Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School.
- 314 responded using the written response form, letters and email. Of these responses, 288 were presented to the Council by a group of parents, pupils and residents together with a petition entitled 'Save Our School – Petition to Save Startforth Primary' comprising of 1673 signatures. There was also an online petition with the same title which had one signatory. The 288 written responses received on 21 June 2016 were addressed to various Members and Officers of the council including the Leader, Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services, the Chief Executive and the Head of Education.
- It should be noted that 117 of those responses were on the same pre-typed letter which was subsequently signed by respondents. A number of other responses were also the same letter which had been photocopied and subsequently signed by respondents.
- Some people submitted more than one response, for example, one respondent submitted 27 responses.
- The petition comprising 1673 signatures included approximately 700 who were not from the areas of Startforth or Barnard Castle. Addresses included London, Leeds, The Wirral, Dunfermline, Newcastle, Sunderland, Stanley, Spennymoor, Bishop Auckland, Brandon, Darlington and Trimdon.
- 135 responded using the online response form (DCC website).

Summary of Written Responses

13 The following information provides a summary of the 449 responses received using the response form, letter:

- 6 respondents support the proposal to close Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2016.

- 443 respondents do not support the proposal to close Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England primary School on 31 December 2016.

Due to the way that the majority of responses had been written it was not clear as to what capacity the respondent was replying to the consultation eg: parent, member of staff, Governor, resident etc.

Themes that emerged from the written responses were:

- The school will be needed to accommodate the extra pupils from the houses being built in the area and therefore it should not close. There are insufficient places at other schools in Barnard Castle.
- A new management and leadership team should be put in place to enable to school to improve.
- The proposal to close the school is short-sighted. It provides a happy atmosphere for children and is local so that the children do not have far to walk to get to and from school.
- The school is at the heart of a rural community and its closure would risk the viability of the village and wider community.
- The SATs results are better than those at other schools in the area and if Ofsted returned now the school would not be judged 'Requires Improvement'.
- The school should be given more time to recover from the uncertainty caused by the proposed amalgamation with Bowes Hutchinson Church of England Primary School in 2015. The additional housing will bring about increases in pupil numbers which will help to turn the school around.
- The timing of the proposal needs looking at. To close a school in the middle of a school year is unfair to staff, children and parents.
- The school also acts as a facility for community activities therefore it should remain open.
- The school has many positives such as outdoor areas and a large hall and provides an excellent environment for children and the local community.
- Pupils are familiar with and like the small school and classes which have helped them emotionally as well as educationally. Moving them to a larger school they are not familiar with will have a detrimental impact.
- The County Council has failed to provide the school with sufficient support since the Ofsted Inspection and therefore has an obligation to keep the school open.
- Traffic congestion in Barnard Castle will be made worse if pupils have to travel to other schools.

- There has been no sound financial argument put forward by the council that the proposal is cost effective.

Issues Raised at Consultation Meetings

14 At the meetings held between 23-26 May 2016, officers explained the reasons for the proposal and invited those present to express views and ask questions. The key issues discussed at the meetings are summarised as follows:

- Questions were asked as to what help and support the Local Authority had provided to the school since the last Ofsted Inspection in 2014. Officers explained that a Headteacher from an outstanding Primary School had been placed in the school on a temporary basis and that the Local Authority had been working with different bodies including the Diocese and other schools to seek alternative solutions to proposed closure but none of these have been fruitful.
- Questions were asked as to how the Local Authority could state that the school had not made sufficient improvement since the last Ofsted Inspection for it to be moved from the 'Requires Improvement' judgement as Ofsted had not returned to inspect the school again. Officers explained that all schools are required to continue to 'self evaluate' their own effectiveness. At the last meeting with council officers, Governors and Senior Leaders of the school it was the view of the supporting Headteacher from an outstanding school and the school's substantive Deputy Headteacher, as well as the school's Education Development Partner that if the school was inspected now it would still be at risk of being judged 'Requires Improvement' as it is still not providing the pupils with a consistently good quality of education.
- Concerns were expressed that Ofsted had not visited the school to carry out an Inspection since their visit in 2014. Officers explained that Ofsted made their own arrangements to visit schools and the Local Authority had no influence on when visits would be arranged.
- Questions were asked as to what was being done to improve leadership and management at the school. Officers explained that several options had been explored including the possibility of Startforth Morritt either Federating or amalgamating but other schools did not want to enter into such an arrangement because they considered Startforth Morritt to be unsustainable in the long term.
- Questions were asked as to how the quality of teaching would now be judged if Ofsted did an inspection of the school. Officers explained that Ofsted would look at data, witness teaching and look at children's books for evidence of progress. The standard of teaching had improved since the last inspection but it was inconsistent across the school.
- Questions were asked as to whether the school was in debt. Officers explained that a school's budget is based on pupil numbers based on the October School Census. The previous Headteacher had made savings but they had to be used to balance the 2016/17 budget.

Without using those savings, a balanced budget could not have been set.

- Questions were asked that if money was acquired independently, would the school remain open. Officers explained that the council would need to consider the risk and be assured that the school would be sustainable. Any person applying for the post of Headteacher would also need to be persuaded that a budget was available for the long term future of the school to be secure. The significant reduction in pupil numbers is also likely to be a concern for prospective Headteachers.
- Concerns were expressed that the previous consultation on a proposal to amalgamate Startforth Morritt with Bowes Hutchinson Church of England Primary School had caused the school roll to fall due to the uncertainty surrounding whether that proposal was proceeding or not as Governors had not been informed. Officers replied that an email was sent to the Chair of Governors in May 2015 and a newsletter sent to parents informing them that the amalgamation was not going ahead.
- Concerns were expressed that parents were being told by council officers that Startforth that Startforth Morritt was closing when they were enquiring about school places. Officers replied that parents were not being told the school was closing. Officers knew that we were in the period of 6 week consultation on a proposal to close the school but no decision had been made. It is only the Council's Cabinet who can make the final decision.
- Concerns were expressed that the timing of the Cabinet decision, September 2016, and the proposed date of closure of 31 December 2016 makes things difficult for the school and for parents. Officers explained that until 3 weeks before the consultation commenced, a solution to keep education provision in Startforth was still hoped for and several options had been pursued but not had proved fruitful. The Senior Leaders of the school have concerns that the school is still not consistently good. There had been 75 monitoring visits made since the last Ofsted Inspection in 2014. Although the notes of these visits showed improvement in some areas, it is the Ofsted Inspector's application of the inspection framework that determines the outcome and overall judgement of the school.
- Questions were asked as to why Startforth Morritt was not included in the review of rural schools. Officers explained that the review was not a countywide review, it was across certain local areas and those groups of schools were separate to Startforth Morritt.
- Concerns were expressed that the additional housing in the area had not been taken into account as additional pupils from those houses would make the school more sustainable. Officers explained that additional housing is taken into account when projecting pupil numbers. Any additional pupils from the housing developments in Startforth would be gradual and not sufficient to make the school sustainable.
- Concerns were expressed that the consultation document focussed on education standards and not the school budget. This suggests the

school is not a good school and it also does not refer to the improvement in SATs results. This could impact on staff when they apply for jobs elsewhere. Officers explained that staff would be supported through the process if they were seeking alternative employment. Staff could ask whoever they wanted to provide references and the Education Service could help with that so that references were written about the strengths of individual staff to help support them to move on to new posts if that is what they wanted.

- Questions were asked as to what role the Church of England Diocese has in decision making, and what happens if the Diocesan Board did not want the school to close. Officers explained that the Church of England Diocese is a statutory consultee, the proposal to close the school had been fully discussed with them and it would not have got to this stage if the Diocese had an option to avoid the consultation on proposed closure.

Responses to the Proposal Published on 7 July 2016 (the Representation Period)

- 15 In a report dated 1 July 2016, (attached as Appendix 2), the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services agreed that a statutory notice should be published proposing closure of the school on 31 December 2016. This decision was taken after considering the outcomes of the 6 week consultation on the proposal.
- 16 One response was received from Startforth Parish Council to the publication of the statutory notice of the proposed closure of the school by the end of the representation period. Startforth Parish Council is not in support of the proposal as it believes a school in Startforth is required to respond to the additional housing in the area. The Parish Council also states that the school building is the only community building in the village and is the heart of the community. To lose the school will impact on community cohesion and the community involvement with the church.
- 17 Cabinet should note that additional housing is taken into account when projecting pupil numbers. Any additional pupils from the housing developments in Startforth would be gradual and still not sufficient to make the school sustainable in the long term.
- 18 Officers are aware that the school building is used by the community and they will be discussing with the Church of England Diocese and the local community possible ways that the school building could be used in future should the school close.

(b) Education Standards and Diversity of Provision

- 19 Cabinet should consider the quality and diversity of schools in the local area that pupils from Startforth would be displaced to if the school was to close. There are another 4 primary schools in the local planning area of Startforth (1 Community, 1 Church of England Controlled, 1 Church of England Voluntary Aided, 1 Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided). As Startforth is a Church of England (CE) school there is still the opportunity for pupils to be accommodated at another CE school if that is what parents wish, but if not,

there are other 'types' of schools that parents can seek a place if Startforth was to close.

- 20 All of the other 4 schools have been judged 'Good' or 'Outstanding' in their most recent Ofsted inspection. As Startforth Morritt has been judged 'Requires Improvement' there should be no negative impact on the standard of education that pupils will receive as a result of closure.
- 21 Some of the factors raised by Ofsted in the recent inspection of Startforth, were:
- "considerable turbulence and uncertainty of leadership since the last inspection have meant that improvements to teaching have only begun since the more recent secondment of the advisory headteacher. Efforts to improve teaching have been further hampered because of frequent changes of staff and constant class reorganisation owing to falling rolls. Consequently teaching remains variable."
 - "changes to staffing and to class organisation have resulted in inconsistent implementation of policies and advice from training so that teaching remains variable and pupils' progress is not consistently good."
 - "the school works to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good."
 - "over time, inconsistent teaching has resulted in progress which remains variable. Few pupils make better than expected progress in writing and mathematics from their starting points."
 - "nearly all children start school with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age. Children make expected progress throughout the early years, and therefore reach the standard ready for year 1, but few go beyond this to make better than expected progress."

(c) School Size and Availability of School Places

- 22 Cabinet should be satisfied that there is sufficient capacity to accommodate displaced pupils in the area, taking account the overall quality of provision (refer to paragraph 19-21), the likely supply and future demand for places. It is expected that there will be around 21 pupils displaced if a decision is taken to close Startforth.
- 23 Blanket assumptions should not be made that schools of a certain size cannot be good schools, although viability and cost-effectiveness of the proposed closure are important factors for consideration. It has already been highlighted earlier in this report that the school is not providing a consistently good quality of education and because of the low pupil numbers there is pressure on the school budget. The school's governing body have considered proposals that would reduce staffing, which would make the school more viable, at least in the short-term, however the reduction in staffing would create additional challenges in terms of improving the quality of education. These factors combined have led to the concerns about the viability of the school.

24 To assist the council with its pupil place planning function, primary schools are grouped into specific local planning areas. Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School is in the planning area entitled Barnard Castle which comprises four other primary schools, Montalbo Primary School, Green Lane C of E Primary School, Bowes Hutchinson C of E Primary School and St. Mary's RC Primary School. Across the group of four other schools in the planning area there is expected to be up to 120 spare places each year for the next 5 years. This is more than adequate to accommodate the pupils from Startforth. This takes account of the housing developments that have been approved for the Barnard Castle area. The admissions arrangements for all schools are compliant with the National Schools Admissions Code. All of the schools follow the National Curriculum. All of the pupils displaced from Startforth Morritt could therefore attend one of these schools.

(d) Rural Schools and the presumption Against Closure

25 Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England School is designated by the DfE as a rural school. The DfE have defined the area as "rural town and fringe". This means that Startforth is neither remote nor sparse and is on the fringes of a larger settlement. In this case the larger settlement is Barnard Castle and there are other primary schools in Barnard Castle which are between 1.09 miles and 1.81 miles from Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School. 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.

26 Cabinet should be satisfied that the following factors have been considered before making its decision on the proposal to close the school:

- That a range of alternatives, including potential for a federation with another local school or conversion to academy status, and joining a multi-academy trust or umbrella trust to increase the school's viability have been explored.
- The scope for an extended school to provide local community services and facilities.
- The transport implications.
- The overall and long term impact on local people and the community of closure of the village school and of the loss of the building as a community facility.

27 In response to the factors highlighted in paragraph 26:

- In an attempt to secure education provision in Startforth, consultation was undertaken in March 2015 on a proposed amalgamation of Bowes Hutchinson's CE Aided Primary School and Startforth. This would create a split site primary school but retain provision for both communities. The proposal did not progress after consultation stage for a number of reasons, particularly when it became evident that the schools did not appear to be working as closely together as originally suggested by governors which would lead to difficulties in establishing the single school.

- Both the Diocese and Local Authority have approached other local schools in the area with the aim of beginning discussions about federated arrangements with Startforth. The other schools that were contacted were not in favour of this model.
- Governors of Startforth have approached individual schools in their own local authority areas as well as neighbouring local authorities to see if there was an opportunity to convert to becoming an Academy and / or to join a multi-academy trust. The Local Authority has not received any alternative proposal from Governors that would address the current issues at the school and the issues raised by Ofsted.
- Although there is a pre-school at Startforth there are only 6 pupils currently attending this provision. There is other pre-school provision in the local area where such low numbers could be accommodated.
- There are four other schools in the planning area between 1.09 and 4 miles from Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School. The majority of pupils may still be within walking distance of the next nearest school from their home address. Although the journey time for the majority of pupils travelling to alternative schools may be longer than they currently spend travelling to Startforth Morritt, the journey times are not considered unreasonable in respect of pupils accessing an alternative primary school.
- Whilst the school building is sometimes used by the community, officers consider that it is not reasonable to maintain a school that Requires Improvement with surplus places and budgetary issues, solely for the benefit of the community. The primary purpose of a school has to be the educational provision for pupils attending that school, and as such, the community benefit of the school, whilst a factor to consider, cannot be the primary reason for maintaining the school.
- The council will approach the community groups that currently use the school building to seek their views about how they would see the building being used and maintained in the future if that is what the community wished. In addition, the council will liaise with the Diocese about the future of the school site and buildings. In the meantime, the council will continue to secure the building.

Recommendations and Reasons

- 28 This report summarises the concerns that the council has about the low pupil numbers attending Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School which is exacerbating the difficult budgetary situation the school is in. The low pupil intake is not expected to increase sufficiently in the foreseeable future to improve the budgetary situation. There are other schools in the local area that can accommodate the pupils from Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School.
- 29 In addition, in the view of officers, the existing educational performance is of significant concern. The school was judged 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted in March 2014. The school was inspected by Ofsted again on 28-29 June 2016 and once more the school was judged as 'Requires Improvement'. The other schools in the local area have been judged 'Good' or 'Outstanding' in the most recent Ofsted inspection therefore there should be no negative

impact on the standard of education that pupils will receive as a result of the closure of Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School.

- 30 Cabinet should be aware of a likely scenario that could emerge if a decision is taken to close the school on 31 December 2016. Parents may request to transfer their child to another school prior to the actual date of closure, leaving very few pupils at the school until 31 December 2016. In addition, staff may have secured alternative employment. In the event of this happening, officers would support families to ensure that there was minimum disruption to their child's education.
- 31 When issuing a decision, Cabinet, can:
- Reject the proposal;
 - Approve the proposal without modification;
 - Approve the proposal with modifications eg: the school closure date.

Recommendations

- 32 Cabinet is recommended to:
- (i) consider the contents of this report, specifically in relation to concerns relating to low pupil numbers, the school's budgetary situation, long term viability of the school, education standards and Ofsted judgements in the two most recent inspections, balanced against the strong feelings of the governors, staff, parents, pupils and the local community to keep the school open; and
 - (ii) take all the factors into account in this report, and approve the proposal to close Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2016, without modification.

Background papers

Appendix 2 – Delegated Decision Report 30 June 2016

Appendix 3 – Statutory Notice

Appendix 4 – Equality Impact Assessment

Contact: Sheila Palmerley

Tel: 03000 265 731

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – Funding of approximately £2,000 per year will be required to enable the building to be secured until a decision is made about its future use. Costs would be met from the Capital Maintenance Grant provided from the Government to the Local Authority. There may be additional home to school transport costs if pupils require free home to school transport to attend another school. There may be costs associated with any redundancies.

Staffing – Staff would be considered for alternative employment through Durham Council Council’s existing scheme and the School Brokerage Scheme.

Risk – The risk of not proceeding with the proposal is that the school becomes unviable and pupils’ education is affected as the budget available is reduced, with staffing levels not being able to be maintained which will impact on the standard of education that can be provided.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – As a public body, the Council must take into account the Equality Act 2010, a consolidating Act which brings together previous Acts dealing with discrimination. Decisions must be reviewed for potential impact on persons with “protected characteristics”. An Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment has been carried out to assess the likely impact of the proposal on specific groups. Appendix 4 provides further details about the impact of the proposal on specific groups.

S149 of the 2010 Act also lays down the Public Sector Equality Duty whereby from the 5 April 2011, local authorities and other organisations exercising public functions must have due regard to 3 key areas:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don’t; and
- Foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don’t.

Accommodation – The Local Authority, Diocese and Community representatives (including local church representatives) will consider the short-term use of the building until a longer term plan is agreed within a period of 2 years.

Crime and Disorder – N/A

Human Rights – Human Rights will not be affected by this proposal.

Consultation – Details about the consultation are included in the main body of the report.

Procurement – N/A

Disability Issues – N/A

Legal Implications – Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act requires a Local Authority to publish statutory proposals where it is considering discontinuing a maintained school. Section 16 of the Act requires the Local Authority to consult such people as they feel to be appropriate and to have regard to guidance published by the Secretary of State before publishing such proposals. The current Department for Education Guidance is “Opening and closing maintained schools: Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers – April 2016”.

At Stage One the council is required to consult interested parties and in so doing must have regard to the Secretary of State’s guidance. The report sets out how these requirements were met.

The Guidance also sets out requirements for Stage 2, Publication and for Stage 3, Representations. At Stage 2, the Council is required to publish a statutory notice containing specified information in a local newspaper and in a conspicuous place on the school premises and at all of the entrances to the school. The notice was published in the Northern Echo newspaper covering the Barnard Castle area on 7 July 2016.

A copy was posted at the entrance to the school and posted on the Council website. It was also sent to other local schools, Elected Members, MP, Trade Unions, RC and CE Diocese, neighbouring Local Authorities, Barnard Castle Library, Parish Council / local groups via the Area Action Partnership. A copy of the complete proposal was sent to the school, the RC and CE Dioceses, the Governing Body and the Secretary of State as required.

The Local Authority is the ‘Decision-Maker’ following the publication of notices to discontinue the school.

DECISION RECORD (Version August 2014)*Please complete all sections***DECISION MAKER**

Rachael Shimmin
Corporate Director
Children and Adults Services

**AUTHORITY BY REFERENCE TO
SCHEME OF DELEGATION/COMMITTEE
REPORT**

2. Table 3
Paragraph 1.4

SUBJECT

3. To seek approval from the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services to issue a statutory notice proposing to close Startforth Morritt Memorial C of E Primary School on 31 December 2016.

DECISION

4. **If Key Decision insert No.**
CAS/02/16 – Proposed date for Cabinet September 2016

ELECTORAL DIVISION/S

5. Barnard Castle West.

CONSULTATION – CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER, OTHER MEMBERS & DATE

6. The Cabinet Portfolio Holder was consulted on 28 June 2016. The Local Members were consulted on 30 June 2016.

RECORD OF ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARED BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

7. None.

**A NOTE OF DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE IN
RELATION TO THE ABOVE CONFLICT**

8. N/A.

ACCESS TO THE REPORT

Is the report open to the public (Part A)

Yes

9. Is the report exempt (Part B) – if so please specify the exemption paragraph and the reason for exemption applying the Public Interest Test

CONTACT PERSON

Sheila Palmerley

CONTACT No.

03000 265777

AUTHORISED SIGNATORY

10

DATE

11.

This form must be sent electronically to delegations@durham.gov.uk within 24 hours of the decision being made.

NOTES

1. The reference No. will be assigned by Democratic Services.
2. The relevant paragraph within the decision makers delegated powers should be identified.
3. A brief heading should be inserted.
4. Brief details of the decision should be inserted. This note must set out the substance of the decisions, options considered and the reasons for the chosen option. Take care not to divulge any commercially sensitive information. If it's a Key Decision insert the No.
5. List the electoral division/s that will be affected by the decision.
6. Set out the consultation you have undertaken with Cabinet portfolio holder and others.
7. See Guidance "Consultation with Portfolio Holder".
8. **See Guidance "Consultation with Portfolio Holder".**
9. Please refer to the Access to Information Requirements that came into force from 1 March 2006 and the internal guidance that has been issued in this respect.
10. Person authorised to make the decision. When sent to democratic services, this will be an electronic signature.
11. Enter the date the decision was made.

DELEGATED DECISION

Children and Adults Services

30 June 2016



Outcome of Consultation on a Proposal to close Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2016

Report of Children and Adults Services

Rachael Shimmin, Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide details on the outcome of consultation which was undertaken between 16 May 2016 and 24 June 2016 proposing to close Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2016, and to seek approval to move to the next stage in the statutory process, which is to issue a statutory notice.

Background

- 2 The Council's constitution sets out how its responsibilities will be discharged. It provides that the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services is authorised to discharge any function of the Executive in relation to 'The Council's powers and duties in relation to the provision and commissioning of education and training opportunities for young people as determined by the Education Act 1996 and Education and Skills Act 2008 and all other legislation and guidance relating to education and training for young people'. This provides that the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services can decide to proceed to publish statutory proposals within the remit of her delegated authority.
- 3 This proposal has been decided upon following attempts by the County Council, Church of England Diocese, Governors and other schools in the area to explore various options to secure primary education in Startforth in the long term, but none have proved fruitful.
- 4 Durham County Council has provided dedicated support to the school since March 2014 when it was judged "Requires Improvement" by Ofsted. A School Scrutiny Group (SSG) made up of School Governors, School Senior Leaders Diocesan representatives and officers of the council have met regularly since March 2014 to support Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School and discuss various options to partner the school with another school, to enhance education provision and strengthen leadership and management of the school.
- 5 At the SSG meeting held on 25 April 2016 the Chair, Vice Chair of Governors, the Acting Head Teacher and the Head Teacher of an Outstanding School who the council had arranged to provide leadership support to Startforth

Morrith during the past year, were all in agreement that as no other options had been able to be developed it would now not be sustainable for the school to remain open. In light of this, plans were put in place to begin consultation on proposed closure of the school.

- 6 In a report dated 10 May 2016 (attached as Appendix 2) the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services agreed that consultation on a proposal to close Startforth Morrith Memorial Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2016 should begin.
- 7 Consultation documents (attached as Appendix 3) were distributed widely (distribution list is attached as Appendix 4) and meetings were held between 23-26 May 2016 for Governors, staff, parents and the wider community. This presented an opportunity for officers of the Council to provide more detailed information and answer questions about the proposal.

Responses to Consultation

- 8 Stakeholders were invited to respond in a variety of ways: written responses using the response form attached to the consultation document, letter, email or completing the response form online via the County Council's website or attending meetings.
- 9 86 people attended the Information Sharing Evening at Startforth Morrith Memorial Church of England Primary School.
43 people attended the meeting for parents at Startforth Morrith Memorial Church of England Primary School.
9 Governors attended the Governing Body meeting at Startforth Morrith Memorial Church of England Primary School.
14 members of staff attended the staff meeting at Startforth Morrith Memorial Church of England Primary School.
- 10 314 responded using the written response form, letters and email. Of these responses, 288 were presented to the Council by a group of parents, pupils and residents together with a petition entitled 'Save Our School - Petition to Save Startforth Primary' comprising 1673 signatures. There was also an online petition with the same title which had one signatory. The 288 written responses received on 21 June were addressed to various Members and Officers of the Council including the Leader, Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, The Chief Executive and the Head of Education.
- 11 It should be noted that 117 of those responses were on the same pre-typed letter which was subsequently signed by respondents. A number of other responses were also the same letter which had been photocopied and subsequently signed by respondents.
- 12 Some people submitted more than one response, for example, one respondent submitted 27 responses.
- 13 The petition comprising 1673 signatures included approximately 700 who were not from the areas of Startforth or Barnard Castle. Addresses included London, Leeds, The Wirral, Dunfermline, Newcastle, Sunderland, Stanley, Spennymoor, Bishop Auckland, Brandon, Darlington and Trimdon.

14 135 responded using the online response form (DCC website).

Summary of Written Responses

The following information provides a summary of the 449 responses received using the response form, letter:

- 6 respondents support the proposal to close Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2016.
- 443 respondents do not support the proposal to close Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2016.

Due to the way that the majority of responses had been written it was not clear as to what capacity the respondent was replying to the consultation e.g. parent, member of staff, Governor, resident etc.

Themes that emerged from the written responses were:

- The school will be needed to accommodate the extra pupils from the houses being built in the area and therefore it should not close. There are insufficient places at other schools in Barnard Castle.
- A new management and leadership team should be put in place to enable the school to improve.
- The proposal to close the school is short-sighted. It provides a happy atmosphere for children and is local so that children do not have far to walk to get to and from school.
- The school is at the heart of a rural community and its closure would risk the viability of the village and wider community.
- The SATS results are better than those at other schools in the area and if Ofsted returned now the school would not be judged 'Requires Improvement'.
- The school should be given more time to recover from the uncertainty caused by the proposed amalgamation with Bowes Hutchinson Church of England Primary School in 2015. The additional housing will bring about increases in pupil numbers which will help to turn the school around.
- The timing of the proposal needs looking at. To close a school in the middle of a school year is unfair to staff, children and parents.
- The school also acts as a facility for community activities therefore it should remain open.
- The school has many positives such as outdoor areas and a large hall and provides an excellent environment for children and the local community.
- Pupils are familiar with and like the small school and classes which have helped them emotionally as well as educationally. Moving them to a larger school they are not familiar with will have a detrimental impact.
- The County Council has failed to provide the school with sufficient support since the Ofsted Inspection and therefore has an obligation to keep the school open.

- Traffic congestion in Barnard Castle will be made worse if pupils have to travel to other schools.
- There has been no sound financial argument put forward by the council that the proposal is cost effective.

Issues Raised at Consultation Meetings

15 At the meetings held between 23-26 May 2016 officers explained the reasons for the proposal and invited those present to express views and ask questions. The key issues discussed at the meetings are summarised as follows:

- Questions were asked as to what help and support the Local Authority had provided to the school since the last Ofsted Inspection in 2014. Officers explained that a Head Teacher from an outstanding Primary School had been placed in the school on a temporary basis and that the Local Authority had been working with different bodies including the Diocese and other schools to seek alternative solutions to proposed closure but none of these have been fruitful.
- Questions were asked as to how the Local Authority could state that the school had not made sufficient improvement since the last Ofsted Inspection for it to be moved from the 'Requires Improvement' judgement as Ofsted had not returned to inspect the school again. Officers explained that all schools are required to continue to 'self evaluate' their own effectiveness. At the last meeting with council officers, Governors and Senior Leaders of the school it was the view of the supporting Head Teacher from an outstanding school and the school's substantive Deputy Head Teacher, as well as the school's Education Development Partner that if the school was inspected now it would still be at risk of being judged "Requires Improvement" as it is still not providing the pupils with a consistently good quality of education.
- Concerns were expressed that Ofsted had not visited the school to carry out an Inspection since their visit in 2014. Officers explained that Ofsted made their own arrangements to visit schools and the Local Authority had no influence on when visits would be arranged.
- Questions were asked as to what was being done to improve leadership and management at the school. Officers explained that several options had been explored including the possibility of Startforth Morritt either Federating or amalgamating but other schools did not want to enter into such an arrangement because they considered Startforth Morritt to be unsustainable in the long term.
- Questions were asked as to how the quality of teaching would now be judged if Ofsted did an inspection of the school. Officers explained that Ofsted would look at data, witness teaching and look at children's books for evidence of progress. The standard of teaching had improved since the last inspection but it was inconsistent across the school.
- Questions were asked as to whether the school was in debt. Officers explained that a school's budget is based on pupil numbers based on the October School Census. The previous Head Teacher had made savings but they had to be used to balance the 2016/17 budget.

Without using those savings a balanced budget could not have been set.

- Questions were asked that if money was acquired independently, would the school remain open. Officers explained that the council would need to consider the risk and be assured that the school would be sustainable. Any person applying for the post of Head Teacher would also need to be persuaded that a budget was available for the long term future of the school to be secure. The significant reduction in pupil numbers is also likely to be a concern for prospective Head Teachers.
- Concerns were expressed that the previous consultation on a proposal to amalgamate Startforth Morritt with Bowes Hutchinson Church of England Primary School had caused the school roll to fall due to the uncertainty surrounding whether that proposal was proceeding or not as Governors had not been informed. Officers replied that an email was sent to the Chair of Governors in May 2015 and a newsletter sent to parents informing them that the amalgamation was not going ahead.
- Concerns were expressed that parents were being told by council officers that Startforth Morritt was closing when they were enquiring about school places. Officers replied that parents were not being told the school was closing. Officers knew that we were in the period of 6 week consultation on a proposal to close the school but no decision had been made. It is only the council's Cabinet who can make the final decision.
- Concerns were expressed that the timing of the Cabinet decision, September 2016, and the proposed date of closure of 31 December 2016 makes things difficult for the school and for parents. Officers explained that until 3 weeks before the consultation commenced a solution to keep education provision in Startforth was still hoped for and several options had been pursued but none had proved fruitful. The Senior Leaders of the school have concerns that the school is still not consistently good. There had been 75 monitoring visits made since the last Ofsted Inspection in 2014. Although the notes of these visits showed improvement in some areas, it is the Ofsted Inspector's application of the inspection framework that determines the outcome and overall judgement of the school.
- Questions were asked as to why Startforth Morritt was not included in the review of rural schools. Officers explained that the review was not a countywide review, it was across certain local areas and those groups of schools were separate to Startforth Morritt.
- Concerns were expressed that the additional housing in the area had not been taken into account as additional pupils from those houses would make the school more sustainable. Officers explained that additional housing is taken into account when projecting pupil numbers. Any additional pupils from the housing developments in Startforth would be gradual and not sufficient to make the school sustainable.
- Concerns were expressed that the consultation document focussed on education standards and not the school budget. This suggests the school is not a good school and it also does not refer to the improvement in SATs results. This could impact on staff when they apply for jobs elsewhere. Officers explained that staff would be supported through the process if they were seeking alternative

employment. Staff could ask whoever they wanted to provide references and the Education Service could help with that so that references were written about the strengths of individual staff to help support them to move on to new posts if that is what they wanted.

- Questions were asked as to what role the Church of England Diocese has in decision making, and what happens if the Diocesan Board did not want the school to close. Officers explained that the Church of England Diocese is a statutory consultee, the proposal to close the school had been fully discussed with them and it would not have got to this stage if the Diocese had an option to avoid the consultation on proposed closure.

Analysis of Consultation Responses and Current Position

- 16 The large majority of stakeholders who attended the consultation meetings and/or who responded to the consultation do not want the school to close.
- 17 Views have consistently been expressed that the County Council has failed to provide the level of support required to enable Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School to improve its education standards and to provide a more effective education. Furthermore stakeholders believe that the County Council has contributed to the reduction in pupil numbers by the uncertainty caused by the previous consultation in 2015 on the proposed amalgamation with Bowes Hutchinson Church of England Primary School.
- 18 Concerns have been raised about the proposed closure date of 31 December 2016. Stakeholders believe that is not an appropriate date regarding children starting new schools and members of staff applying for jobs. Stakeholders are of the view that if the school has to close, the date of closure should be 31 August 2017.
- 19 Views have been expressed that if the school is in debt, someone or group should be held accountable and queries have also been raised as to why staffing levels were not addressed.
- 20 In response to the concerns and views expressed during the consultation, officers explained that:
 - Despite the level of support that the council has provided the school does not have the leadership and management capacity to improve the school. The council arranged for a Head Teacher of an Outstanding Primary School elsewhere in County Durham to provide leadership support. This support will end on 31 August 2016, when that Head Teacher goes back to his own school full time.
 - The council had waited as long as possible in the hope that a solution with another school could be secured. There are prescribed timescales regarding school reorganisation which the council must follow in accordance with guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). The agreement made with the Church of England Diocese and Governing Body to consult on the proposed closure of Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School was made at the end of April 2016. The consultation commenced week beginning 16 May 2016 for 6 weeks until 24 June 2016. If a decision is taken to proceed with the proposal, a

public notice will be published or 4 weeks. The council must make a decision on the proposal within two months of the end of the public notice period. The council's Cabinet will therefore make a decision on the proposal at its meeting on 14 September 2016. If the date of closure was for August 2017 and a decision was taken to close the school in September 2016, it is likely that staff would move on to posts elsewhere which could have a further negative impact on children's education as staff would not be replaced as a decision had been made to close the school. The other schools that children will be displaced to in the event of closure are all "Good" or "Outstanding". The Council would not wish to prolong the length of time that Startforth children are being educated in a school that requires improvement when they can be accommodated in other local schools which are "Good" or "Outstanding".

- The school is not currently in debt, but its original budget plan for the 2016/2017 financial year was for spending equal to nearly £53,000 more than its total income from local authority funding and other sources of income (e.g. school meals and grants). The school had an accumulated surplus of £68,000 at the end of the last financial year. On this basis the school will need to make significant savings in expenditure in order to balance its budget for 2017/18. Staffing levels had not been addressed because the budget could be balanced without reducing staffing levels. At that stage, the council's HR Team recommended the Governing Body to defer issuing early warnings letters. Staffing related issues are the responsibility of the Governing Body and Governors opted to follow the advice provided by HR. The school would be responsible for the redundancy payments, not the council, if staffing levels were reduced when the school had a relatively healthy surplus.
- There are projected to be 25 pupils at the school from September 2016. With such low numbers the staffing would need to be reduced which is likely to impact on the level of education that could be provided and classes would need to be organised in a very different way to what pupils currently experience.

Conclusion

- 21 The responses to the consultation have been welcomed by officers in the County Council. However, whilst the majority of respondents clearly expressed strong views in support of keeping the school open, the responses received provided no evidence that keeping the school open would address the issue of low pupil numbers and there were no alternative proposals put forward which would enhance leadership capacity in the long term. The low pupil numbers will make the outlook for the school budget very challenging, bringing increased difficulty to providing a good standard of education for the children and families around the community of Startforth.
- 22 The council must continue to have a system of education for the children of County Durham for the short, medium and long term to respond to the rapidly changing landscape. Officers remain firmly of the view that children would benefit more if they were attending other larger, more sustainable primary schools in Barnard Castle and the surrounding area.

Recommendations and Reasons

- 23 At the end of the consultation period, Senior Officers of the council met with the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors to hear if they had any other proposals which would result in long term sustainable high quality education provision in Startforth. While they had some suggestions for a new staffing model which would reduce the number of staff to help the budget position it was not clear that the model would provide effective leadership and management of the school. Governors are aware that the council wishes to progress the proposal to issue the statutory notice. In the meantime, the Governors intend to continue exploring a viable proposal to keep the school open and produce evidence of how they will provide the children with a good quality of education into the future.
- 24 After full consideration of all responses to the consultation particularly from those most directly affected by the proposals, the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services is recommended to give approval for officers to issue a statutory notice proposing to close Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2016.

Background Papers

- 24 Attached.

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

Funding of approximately £2,000 per year will be required to enable the building to be secured until a decision is made about its future use. Costs would be met from the Capital Maintenance Grant provided from the Government. There may be additional home to school transport costs if pupils require free home to school transport to attend another school. There will be costs associated with any redundancies.

Staffing

Staff would be considered for alternative employment through Durham County Council's existing scheme and the School Brokerage Scheme.

Risk

The risk of not proceeding with the proposal is that the school becomes unviable and pupils' education is affected as the budget available is reduced as a result of low pupil numbers which will prevent a good standard of education to be delivered for all children.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

As a public body, the Council must take into account the Equality Act 2010, a consolidating Act which brings together previous Acts dealing with discrimination. Decisions must be reviewed for potential impact on persons with "protected characteristics". An Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment is carried out to assess the likely impact of the proposal on specific groups.

S.149 of the 2010 Act also lays down the Public Sector Equality Duty whereby from the 5 April 2011, local authorities and other organisations exercising public functions must have due regard to 3 key areas:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don't; and
- Foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don't.

The relevant "protected characteristics" are: age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Accommodation

N/A.

Crime and Disorder

N/A.

Human Rights

Human Rights will not be affected by this proposal.

Consultation

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Adults Services and local members have been consulted on the outcomes of the consultation and about moving to the next stage in the process. The Cabinet Portfolio Holder is in agreement that the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Service uses delegated powers to approve that a statutory notice can be issued.

Procurement

N/A.

Disability Issues

N/A.

Legal Implications

The statutory process for closing Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2016 will be applied in accordance with the Department for Education's guidance.

REF No.

DECISION RECORD (Version August 2014)*Please complete all sections***DECISION MAKER**

Rachael Shimmin
Corporate Director
Children and Adults Services

**AUTHORITY BY REFERENCE TO
SCHEME OF DELEGATION/COMMITTEE
REPORT**

2. Table 3, paragraph 1.4

SUBJECT

3. To seek approval from the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services to begin consultation on a proposal to close Startforth Morrith Memorial CE (Controlled) Primary School on 31 December 2016.

DECISION

4. **If Key Decision insert No.**
Key Decision when Cabinet meets to decide on the proposal.

ELECTORAL DIVISION/S

5. Barnard Castle West

CONSULTATION – CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER, OTHER MEMBERS & DATE

6. The Cabinet Portfolio Holder and Local Members were consulted in April 2016.

RECORD OF ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARED BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

7. None

**A NOTE OF DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE IN
RELATION TO THE ABOVE CONFLICT**

8. N/A

ACCESS TO THE REPORT

Is the report open to the public (Part A)

Yes

9. Is the report exempt (Part B) – if so please specify the exemption paragraph and the reason for exemption applying the Public Interest Test

CONTACT PERSON

Sheila Palmerley

CONTACT No.

03000 265731

AUTHORISED SIGNATORY

10

DATE

11.

This form must be sent electronically to delegations@durham.gov.uk within 24 hours of the decision being made.

NOTES

1. The reference No. will be assigned by Democratic Services.
2. The relevant paragraph within the decision makers delegated powers should be identified.
3. A brief heading should be inserted.
4. Brief details of the decision should be inserted. This note must set out the substance of the decisions, options considered and the reasons for the chosen option. Take care not to divulge any commercially sensitive information. If it's a Key Decision insert the No.
5. List the electoral division/s that will be affected by the decision.
6. Set out the consultation you have undertaken with Cabinet portfolio holder and others.
7. See Guidance "Consultation with Portfolio Holder".
8. **See Guidance "Consultation with Portfolio Holder".**
9. Please refer to the Access to Information Requirements that came into force from 1 March 2006 and the internal guidance that has been issued in this respect.
10. Person authorised to make the decision. When sent to democratic services, this will be an electronic signature.
11. Enter the date the decision was made.

DELEGATED DECISION

CHILDREN AND ADULTS SERVICES

10 May 2016



Proposal to close Startforth Morritt Memorial CE (Controlled) Primary School on 31 December 2016

Report of CHILDREN AND ADULTS SERVICES

Rachael Shimmin, Corporate Director, Children and Adults Service

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services to begin consultation on a proposal to close Startforth Morritt Memorial CE (Controlled) Primary School on 31 December 2016.

Background

- 2 Startforth Morritt Memorial CE (Controlled) primary School is a small school located in Barnard Castle. It has the capacity to accommodate 112 pupils but there are currently 36 pupils on roll (68% surplus places). About 25% of pupils currently attending the school have other schools, where there are spare places, nearer to their home address.

Education Standards

- 3 The most recent Ofsted report in November 2014 judged the school as 'Requiring Improvement'. It is the belief of Senior Officers in the Education Service that improvements have not been sufficient in the meantime to move the school forward from that judgement should it be inspected again in the near future. There is currently no Head Teacher in post. Although some part-time leadership was being provided by a Head Teacher of an Outstanding school elsewhere in the County that arrangement came to an end at Easter 2016. Officers believe that children would benefit from attending other larger primary schools in the Barnard Castle and surrounding area, where the quality of education has been judged by Ofsted as 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.

Changes to the way schools are funded

- 4 The Government has recently announced proposed plans for a national funding formula to be introduced from 2017/18, with local Councils and Schools Forum having no involvement in formula funding arrangements for individual schools from 2019/20. The aim is to replace a system which the Government believes is 'outdated, inefficient and unfair'. Currently, there are inconsistencies in the amount of funding that is allocated to each school / per pupil across the Country and the funding reforms aim to create a more consistent, fairer way of distributing schools funding. Such discrepancies exist because funds are still distributed on the basis of historic calculations made when the demography of some regions looked very different to now.

- 5 One of the key proposals in these reforms is to introduce a formula where the funding that each pupil attracts to their school is determined nationally. This will include a nationally set lump sum factor and nationally determined allocations for deprivation and prior attainment etc. Whilst the Government has said they will protect small rural schools through the use of a sparsity factor, the council believes that the new national formula could still adversely impact on small schools, such as Startforth Morritt, which could lead to them potentially becoming financially unviable.

School Budget and Pupil Numbers

- 6 At the time of the last Ofsted Inspection there were 57 pupils on roll. There are currently 36 pupils on roll which is 9 pupils fewer than was projected for the school year 2015/16. In addition, a parent contacted the school recently to explain that her two children would be moving to another school from September 2016. This parent explained that other parents were also considering moving their children to alternative schools.

Based on the schools budget plan agreed by the Governing body, the school is projected to have an in-year deficit budget for 2016-17 of £52k.

- 7 With the significant drop in pupil numbers and the fact that pupil numbers are not likely to rise in future years, there is little prospect of the school's budget position improving in the short to medium term.

School	Capacity	Current Roll	Sept 2016	Sept 2017	Sept 2018	Sept 2019	Sept 2020
Startforth Morritt Memorial CE (Controlled) Primary	112	36	28	28	28	28	28

Details of any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected when Making the Decision

- 8 Consultation was undertaken in March 2015 to amalgamate this school with a neighbouring school but this did not progress. Following that, the Diocese, in discussion with the council, approached another Church of England School to ask if Governors would consider supporting Startforth. Governors of that school did not wish to pursue this. The Diocese has continued to approach various schools and considered alternative options but none have been fruitful. The only option now is to propose closure. Officers have also considered taking no action which would mean that the school would run as it does now. However this would not resolve the budgetary issues and standard of education provided.
- 9 The preferred option is to consult on closing Startforth Morritt CE (Controlled) Primary School on 31 December 2016. Pupils displaced by this option could be accommodated at other neighbouring schools. The option of amalgamating the school with another primary school was rejected as was the option of keeping the school open because there is no Headteacher in post and there is no evidence of improvement to address the issues raised by Ofsted which puts the school at risk of failing an imminent Ofsted Inspection.

Consultation and Timescales

- 10 It is intended that consultation on the proposal would commence in May 2016 for 6 weeks. Consultation documents would be widely distributed to key stakeholders including the Diocese, Governors, staff, parents, Local Members, MP, Parish Councils, Community Groups, neighbouring schools, Children's Centres, AAP groups etc. Meetings with Governors, staff, parents and the wider community would also be held for officers to provide information and answer queries.
- 11 At the end of the consultation all responses would be carefully considered. If it is decided to proceed with the proposal at that stage, a statutory notice would be published for four weeks. Cabinet would be asked to make a decision on the proposal after the four week statutory notice period.

Recommendation and Reasons

- 12 Officers in the County Council believe that children attending Startforth Morritt Memorial CE (Controlled) Primary School would benefit from being educated in a larger, more financially viable and higher performing school.
- 13 There are sufficient places available at other primary schools in Barnard Castle and across the local planning area, for pupils who would be displaced by the proposed closure of the school. Parents would be able to state a preference for which school to send their child(ren) without having to travel a long distance to another school. 9 pupils will leave Year 6 in July 2016 and it is expected that only 5 will enter the school in Reception in September 2016.

Decision

- 14 The Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services agrees that consultation can begin on a proposal to close Startforth Morritt Memorial CE (Controlled) Primary School on 31 December 2016.

Contact: Sheila Palmerley

Tel: 03000 265731

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

Should the school close, the Council would incur costs to maintain the building until an alternative use is found for the building. The Council would also incur any accumulated deficit at the point of closure, which would need to be met from CAS Cash Limit General fund budgets. Funding allocated on a per pupil basis would be transferred to the schools taking on the pupils displaced from this school. Lump sum provisions are non-transferrable and would be retained within the DSG and included in formula funding allocations the following year.

Staffing

It is anticipated there may be redundancies if staff are not successful in being appointed to posts in other schools.

Risk

The risk of not proceeding with the proposals is that the school becomes unsustainable and education standards do not improve.

Equality and Diversity

As a public body, the Council must take into account the Equality Act 2010, a consolidating Act which brings together previous Acts dealing with discrimination. Decisions must be reviewed for potential impact on persons with "protected characteristics". An Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment would be carried out.

S.149 of the 2010 Act also lays down the Public Sector Equality Duty whereby from the 5 April 2011, local authorities and other organisations exercising public functions must have due regard to 3 key areas:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don't; and
- Foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don't.

The relevant "protected characteristics" are: age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Accommodation

Pupils could be accommodated in other primary schools in Barnard Castle and the surrounding area. The Startforth Morritt site would be declared surplus to

requirements and appropriate action taken to consider alternative use of the premises or disposal of the site, in line with DfE permissions.

Crime and Disorder

N/A

Human Rights

Human rights will not be affected by this proposal.

Consultation

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Adults Services and the Local Members have been consulted about the proposal. Full consultation with Governors, parents and the wider community would be undertaken in May/June 2016.

Procurement

N/A

Disability Issues

N/A

Legal Implications

The statutory process for closing Startforth Morritt Memorial CE (Controlled) Primary School would be applied in accordance with the Department for Education's guidance.

**Proposal to close Startforth Morritt Memorial
Church of England Primary School on
31 December 2016**



Introduction

Durham County Council has a responsibility to plan school places across the county to ensure that the highest quality of education is offered to children in County Durham.

Schools need to be sustainable in the long term to meet the challenges in a rapidly changing educational environment. A current example of such a challenge is the proposed National Funding Formula which is planned to be introduced by the Government from as early as 2017.

The council undertakes a review of school places each year which can sometimes lead to proposals for re-organisation if it is felt that some schools may not be sustainable in the long term.

The council has a number of concerns about Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England (CE) Primary School and has been discussing these with the Governors of the school and the Diocese. The outcome of these discussions has led to this consultation on proposed closure of the school on 31 December 2016.

You may have some questions to ask about this proposal. This document attempts to answer some of these questions and also explains how you can let the County Council know what you think about the proposal.

1. Why is the council proposing to close Startforth Morritt Memorial CE Primary School?

(i) Education Standards

The most recent Ofsted inspection, held in March 2014, judged the school as 'Requiring Improvement'. Improvements have not been sufficient in the meantime to move the school forward from that judgement should it be inspected again in the near future. There is currently no substantive Head Teacher in post. Although some part-time leadership has been provided by a Head Teacher of an Outstanding school elsewhere in the County, that arrangement will cease altogether from August 2016. The council believes that children would benefit more if they were attending other larger primary schools in the Barnard Castle and surrounding area, where the quality of education has been judged by Ofsted as 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.

(ii) Changes to the way schools are funded

The Government has recently announced proposed plans for a national funding formula to be introduced from 2017/18, with local Councils and Schools Forum having no involvement in formula funding arrangements for individual schools from 2019/20. The aim is to replace a system which the Government believes is 'outdated, inefficient and unfair'. Currently, there are inconsistencies in the amount of funding that is allocated to each school / per pupil across the Country and the funding reforms aim to create a more consistent, fairer way of distributing schools funding. Such discrepancies exist because funds are still distributed on the basis of historic calculations made when the demography of some regions looked very different to now.

One of the key proposals in these reforms is to introduce a formula where the funding that each pupil attracts to their school is determined nationally. This will include a nationally set lump sum factor and nationally determined allocations for factors such as deprivation and prior pupil attainment. Whilst the Government has said they will protect small rural schools through the use of a sparsity factor, the council believes that the new national formula could still adversely impact on small schools, such as Startforth Morritt, which could lead to them potentially becoming financially unviable.

(iii) School Budget and Pupil Numbers

At the time of the last Ofsted Inspection there were 57 pupils on roll. There are currently 38 pupils attending the school (pupils from Reception to Year 6) which is a significant reduction. The school has the capacity to accommodate 112 pupils but projected rolls indicate that there are likely to be about 28 pupils attending the school in future years which means there could be about 75% surplus places.

The school budget will continue to reduce with the fall in pupil numbers which will make it difficult to maintain the same staffing levels and provide an effective curriculum.

2. There are going to be new houses built in the area. If this meant that there are more children looking for a school place, could the school not stay open?

Additional housing does not necessarily mean additional pupils overall – people buying houses may be moving from other areas within the Local Authority with knock-on effects on other schools. There are many instances where families move house but the children do not change the school they attend.

Based on the known timescales of any developments in the area, it is unlikely that the school would see any real impact of additional children before 2021/22. If it is assumed that approximately 30% of pupils from these developments would attend Startforth Morritt, by the time the developments were completed, there may only be an additional 30 pupils gradually attending the school between 2021/22 and 2029/30. This is still not sufficient to make the school sustainable in the long term. Due to the immediate concerns about the school, there needs to be urgent action. It would be too late to wait until 2030 to address the key issues currently causing concern at the school.

3. Startforth is in a rural area. Has the council considered the impact on the community of closing Startforth Morritt Memorial CE Primary School?

The council is fully aware that Startforth is in a rural area and has carefully considered the impact of the proposal on the community. It is possible that the local community may wish to continue to use the school building for other activities. The council, in collaboration with the Diocese, would provide support to help groups look into this as an option, if required. There are another 5 schools in the surrounding area that pupils could attend without increasing travelling times unreasonably.

4. How would pupils travel to a different school if Startforth Morritt Memorial CE Primary School closed and which school would they go to?

Currently, for about 25% of the pupils who attend the school, they have either one or two schools closer to their home address.

There are sufficient primary school places at other schools in the local planning area to accommodate pupils should the school close. As part of the consultation process parents will be invited to attend a meeting with officers from the council so that they can say what their preferred options would be for a place at another school if the school was to close. Part of this process would also include determining if free home to school transport would be provided.

The council's policy is to provide free home to school transport for pupils under 8 years of age to the nearest school with places available where that school is more than 2 miles from the home address. For pupils age 8 or over, free home to school transport is provided where the nearest school with places available is more than 3 miles from the home address. It is recognised by the council that for those pupils not entitled to free home to school transport, the journey to and from school may lead to an increase in the use of motor vehicles. However because of the small number of pupils involved the likely effects of this on the community are considered to be minimal.

5. What other options have been considered?

Options other than closure have been considered.

Consultation was undertaken in March 2015 to amalgamate the school with a neighbouring school but this did not progress.

Following that, the Diocese in discussion with the council, approached other schools to ask if Governors would consider supporting Starforth Morritt. Governors of these schools did not wish to pursue this. The Diocese has continued to approach various schools and considered alternative options but none have been fruitful.

'Do nothing' would not resolve the concerns about the low pupil numbers, standard of education provided and the budgetary issues.

6. What is the timescale for the consultation process?

The table below sets out the timescales for the process:

Date	Stage
16 May – 24 June 2016 (6 weeks)	Initial Consultation All responses received by the closing date will be considered and included in a report for Durham County Council to decide whether to take the proposal forward.
End June 2016 (4 weeks)	If the Council decides to proceed with the proposal, statutory notices would be published in the local newspaper, posted on school gates and on the DCC website. These notices would provide a further opportunity for comments or objections to be made.
September 2016	Decision made by Durham County Council whether to agree the proposal or not.

September - December 2016	If the proposal is approved, support would be provided to parents to secure an alternative school place and support given to school staff to manage the closure process.
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7. How do you respond to this consultation?

We would like to hear what you think about this proposal. Parents will be invited to a meeting with officers from the council so that the proposal can be fully explained to them and parents can discuss the process for applying for a school place at other schools should the school close.

An Information Sharing meeting has also be arranged for wider groups to attend, who have an interest in this proposal. This meeting will be held at Startforth Morritt school on:

Thursday 26th May 2016 at 7pm

You can respond to this consultation in one of the following ways by:

- (i) Send in the attached response form or write to: Adam Williams, School Places and Admissions Team, Children and Adults Services, Business Reply Service, Licence No. DU63 (Freepost), Durham County Council, County Hall, Durham, DH1 5BR by **24 June 2016**.
- (ii) Email your views to schoolorganisation@durham.gov.uk or complete the response form online via the Current Consultation Section of the County Council's website @ www.durham.gov.uk by **24 June 2016**.

RESPONSE FORM

CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL TO CLOSE STARTFORTH MORRITT MEMORIAL CHURCH OF ENGLAND (CE) PRIMARY SCHOOL ON 31 DECEMBER 2016

1. Please tick **one** box from the list below to let us know if you are responding to this consultation mainly as a:

Parent/Carer of a pupil(s) at

Startforth Morritt Memorial CE Primary School

* Other School

*Please state which school:

OR a Pupil at

Startforth Morritt Memorial CE Primary School

* Other School

*Please state which school:

OR a Governor/Member of Staff (circle to indicate which) at

Startforth Morritt Memorial CE Primary School

* Other School

*Please state which school:

OR a

Resident

Councillor

Trade Union Representative

Parish/Town Council Representative

Community Group

Diocese

Neighbouring Authority

MP

Other (please state):

2. Looking at the information in this document do you support the proposal to close Startforth Morritt Memorial CE Primary School on 31 December 2016.

Yes

No

3. Do you have any comments on this proposal including any impact the changes would have on you?

Please return this form by 24 June 2016 to:

Mr Adam Williams, School Places and Admissions Team, Children and Adults Services,
Business Reply Service Licence No DU63 (Freepost), Durham County Council, County Hall,
Durham DH1 5BR

(The information that you send may need to be passed to colleagues or shared with partners. It may also be published in a summary of responses received to this consultation but results will not contain your name or anything that could identify you. If you require an acknowledgement to your response, please provide details below.)

Name:

Address:

.....

Signed: **Date:**

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO

Children and Adults Services

Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form for Consultation

We want to make it easy for everyone to tell us what they think. Our aim is to be fair and your answers to the following questions will help us find out the views from a wide range of people and understand any differences in the answers of particular groups. Your answers will be confidential and used for this consultation only.

You only need to answer if you feel happy to do so.

1. Are you

Male

Female

2. How old are you?

Under 18

18-24

25-44

45-64

65+

3. Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?

(This may include any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity which has a substantial effect on your day to day life. Long-standing means it has lasted, or is likely to last, for over a year.)

Yes

No

4. What is your religion or belief?

Christian

Hindu

Jewish

Muslim

Sikh

Buddhist

Other (please specify)

5. How do you describe your sexuality?

Heterosexual/Straight

Gay Woman/Lesbian

Gay Man

Bisexual

Other (please specify)

6. To which of these groups do you belong?

White

Asian or Asian British

Black or Black British

Travelling Community

Mixed

Arab or Middle Eastern

Other (please specify)

PROPOSAL TO CLOSE STARTFORTH MORRITT MEMORIAL CE (CONTROLLED) PRIMARY SCHOOL
CONSULTATION DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION LIST
 MAY-JUNE 2016

School	Govs	Staff	Pupils	Total	How Delivered	Date Del/Posted
Startforth Morritt CE (Controlled) Primary	13*	20	36**	75	AW*	17/05/16
Bowes Hutchinson's CE (Aided) Primary		N/A			SP*	17/05/16
Cotherstone Primary		N/A			SP*	
Green Lane CE Primary		N/A			SP*	
Montalbo Primary		N/A			SP*	
St. Mary's RCVA Primary, Barnard Castle		N/A			SP*	
Teesdale School		N/A			SP*	17/05/16

*Governors consultation document posted First Class (17/05/16)

** 8 pre-school pupils also given personal letter and document

AW* – delivered by hand

SP* - emailed to school

TOTAL number of hard copies of consultation documents distributed = 200

Consultation document was placed on the DCC website – page went live 18/05/16

Elected DCC Members	
Simon Henig, Ossie Johnson, Richard Bell, Ted Henderson	Emailed 18/05/16
MPs	
Helen Goodman MP goodmanh@parliament.uk	Emailed 18/05/16
INTERNAL – Email (18/05/16)	
CAS SLT (Rachael Shimmin, Caroline O'Neill, Peter Appleton, Carole Payne, Anna Lynch, Lesley Jeavons, Jane Robinson), Julian Wilson, Barry Piercy, Gerard Darby, Joanne Barker, School Places & Admissions Team, Julie Amett, Joanne Walt, Ian Jacques, Lynn Elliott, Linda Bailey, Chris Young, David Shirer, Adrian White, Phil Hodgson, Sheila Palmerley, Sarah Armstrong, Linda Bailes, Jill Robson, Janet Bennett, Kath Allison, David Grimes, Jennifer Morris, Vanessa Glover, Lyndsay Greathead, Anna Wills, Barbara Brown, Mark Kirkup, Donna Caterer	
RC and CE Diocese and DfE	
RC Diocese Director education@dioceseshn.org.uk	Emailed 18/05/16
CE Diocese Director richard.noake@westyorkshiredales.anglican.org	
paul.rickeard@dmnewcanglican.org	
DfE SchoolOrganisation.NOTIFICATIONS@education.gsi.gov.uk	
Trade Unions	
c.d.thompson@hotmail.co.uk john.kesterton@ascl.org.uk ksmith@atl.org.uk terry.scarr@gmb.org.uk dan.lister0@gmail.com northern@nut.org.uk trevorblacklock@hotmail.com unison@durham.gov.uk	Emailed 18/05/16
Directors of CYPs of Neighbouring LAs	
Murray Rose DARLINGTON murray.rose@darlington.gov.uk	Emailed 18/05/16
Peter Dwyer NORTH YORKSHIRE pete.dwyer@northyorks.gov.uk	
Library	
Barnard Castle Library, 2 Hall Street, Barnard Castle, County Durham, DL12 8JB	Posted 19/05/16
Parish Councils (CM passing on to Parish Councils and AAPs in Barnard Castle/Startforth area)	
Craig Morgan craig.morgan@durham.gov.uk	E-Mailed 18/05/16



PUBLIC NOTICE

**Proposal to close Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School
on 31 December 2016**

Notice is given in accordance with Section 15(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that Durham County Council intends to close Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School (Voluntary Controlled), Startforth, Barnard Castle, DL12 9AQ on 31 December 2016.

Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School is a rural school which was judged 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted in March 2014. There remains concerns about the long term sustainability of the school and the capacity to sustain improvement in outcomes for children. The school has low pupil numbers and a balanced budget could not be set for 2016/17 without using savings from previous years. The continuing low pupil numbers will mean that the school will have increased difficulty in setting a budget for future years without making significant savings.

There are projected to be 25 pupils on roll at the school in September 2016, the school can accommodate 112 pupils. The pupils are both male and female and provision is made for pupils aged between 4 and 11 years. There are also 6 pupils in Startforth Morritt pre-school aged between 2 and 3 years. There are sufficient places at other primary schools in the local area to offer places to pupils displaced from Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School. Two of the schools are Church of England Primary Schools. All pupils on the roll of Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School with Special Educational Needs who would be displaced by this proposal would continue to have their needs met in any school they transferred to.

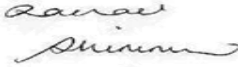
The County Council and Diocese could make available the school building for future community use, where appropriate. The County Council's home to school transport policy will be applied to determine whether the displaced pupils will be entitled to free home to school transport to an alternative school. The schools that displaced pupils will attend are within 4 miles of Startforth.

This Notice is an extract from the full proposal. Copies of the full proposal can be obtained from: Mr Graeme Plews, School Places and Admissions Team, Children and Adults Services, Durham County Council, County Hall, Durham, DH1 5UJ. It is also available on the County Council's website at www.durham.gov.uk/consultations

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal any person may object or make comments on the proposal by sending them to:

Mr Adam Williams, School Places and Admissions Team, Children and Adults Services,
Business Reply Service, Licence No. DU63 (Freepost), Durham County Council, County
Hall, Durham, DH1 5BR. Objections and comments can also be emailed to
schoolorganisation@durham.gov.uk

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rachel Shimmin', written in a cursive style.

Rachel Shimmin
Corporate Director
Children and Adults Services

Publication Date: 7 July 2016

Durham County Council Equality Impact Assessment

NB: The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires Durham County Council to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people from different groups. Assessing impact on equality and recording this is one of the key ways in which we can show due regard.

Section One: Description and Screening

Service/Team or Section	School Places and Admissions, Education CAS
Lead Officer	Sheila Palmerley
Title	Strategic Manager, School Places and Admissions
MTFP Reference (if relevant)	
Cabinet Date (if relevant)	14 September 2016
Start Date	16 May 2016
Review Date	14 September 2016

Subject of the Impact Assessment

Please give a brief description of the policy, proposal or practice as appropriate (a copy of the subject can be attached or insert a web-link):

Proposal to close Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2016.

The school has been judged as "Requires Improvement" by Ofsted, has significantly low pupil numbers and has budgetary issues. The proposal has been put forward to address these issues. It is believed that pupils would be provided with a more effective education at other primary schools in the local area which have been judged as either "Good" or "Outstanding" by Ofsted and have higher pupil numbers and will therefore be more sustainable in the long term.

Who are the main stakeholders? (e.g. general public, staff, members, specific clients/service users):

General Public, Governors, Staff, Parents, Pupils, Elected Members, MPs, Neighbouring Schools, Trade Unions, Diocese, DfE, Community Groups, Parish Councils, Residents' Associations, AAP Board, Neighbouring Authorities, CAS/DCC Staff

Screening

Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following protected characteristics?

Protected Characteristic	Negative Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure	Positive Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure
Age	Y	Y
Disability	?	?
Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)	?	?
Pregnancy and maternity	?	?
Race (ethnicity)	?	?
Religion or Belief	?	?
Sex (gender)	Y	N
Sexual orientation	?	?
Transgender	?	?

Please provide **brief** details of any potential to cause adverse impact. Record full details and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

The proposal to close Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2016 will affect pupils, their families/carers, staff and the local community.

How will this policy/proposal/practice promote our commitment to our legal responsibilities under the public sector equality duty to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
- advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations between people from different groups?

The proposal to close Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School is expected to bring about educational improvement for children by them being educated in larger, more sustainable primary schools in Barnard Castle and will continue to provide equal access for all regardless of protected characteristic.

There are four other Primary Schools in the local area – Montalbo Primary School, Green Lane CE Primary School, Bowes Hutchinson CE Primary School and St. Mary's RCVA Primary School who have all been judged as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in their most recent Ofsted Inspection.

Durham County Council has a statutory duty to ensure that all pupils in County Durham can have a place at a school in County Durham.

Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your findings?

Please **outline** your data sets and/or proposed evidence sources, highlight any gaps and say whether or not you propose to carry out consultation. Record greater detail and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

A six week consultation was carried out on the proposal between 16 May – 24 June 2016 with Governors, staff, parents, pupils and other stakeholders. 449 responses were received to the consultation. Six respondents supported the proposal and 443 respondents did not support the proposal.

The proposal to close Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2016 will affect pupils, their families/carers, staff and the local community. This means that there are potential impacts across all of the protected characteristics but the most likely impacts are in relation to age, gender, religion and disability. If the proposal is agreed there are likely to be redundancies. Opportunities for redundancy will be discussed with staff if the decision is taken to close the school for them to put forward their own proposals. There is also a redeployment scheme and Brokerage Service, the latter of which is specifically for school staff.

There are projected to be 25 pupils on roll at the school in September 2016, the school can accommodate 112 pupils. The school has low pupil numbers and a balanced budget could not be set for 2016/17 without using savings from previous years. The continuing low pupil numbers will mean that the school will have increased difficulty in setting a budget for future years without making significant savings.

Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School was judged "Requires Improvement" by Ofsted in March 2014. At the last meeting with Council officers,

Governors and Senior Leaders of the school, the supporting Head Teacher from an outstanding school elsewhere in Co. Durham, the school's substantive Deputy Head Teacher, and the school's Education Development Partner it was the view of the that if the school was inspected now it would still be at risk of being judged "Requires Improvement" as it is still not providing the pupils with a consistently good quality of education. The school was inspected again in June 2016 by Ofsted and once more the judgement was "Requires Improvement."

We have a statutory duty to ensure that all pupils in County Durham can have a place at a school in County Durham and this proposal does not deny them that opportunity. The council must continue to have a system of education for the children of County Durham for the short, medium and long term to respond to the rapidly changing landscape.

Screening Summary

On the basis of this screening is there:	Confirm which refers (Y/N)
Evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics which will proceed to full assessment?	Y
No evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics?	

Sign Off

Lead officer sign off:	Date: 08.08.2016
Strategic Manager, School Places and Admissions	
Service equality representative sign off:	Date: 08.08.2016
Strategic Manager, Service Quality and Development	

If carrying out a full assessment please proceed to section two.

If not proceeding to full assessment please return completed screenings to your service equality representative and forward a copy to equalities@durham.gov.uk

If you are unsure of potential impact please contact the corporate research and equalities team for further advice at equalities@durham.gov.uk

Section Two: Data analysis and assessment of impact

Please provide details on impacts for people with different protected characteristics relevant to your screening findings. You need to decide if there is or likely to be a differential impact for some. Highlight the positives e.g. benefits for certain groups, advancing equality, as well as the negatives e.g. barriers for and/or exclusion of particular groups. Record the evidence you have used to support or explain your conclusions. Devise and record mitigating actions where necessary.

Protected Characteristic: Age		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Record of evidence to support or explain your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>Children aged 2-11. Children attending Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School and Startforth Morritt pre – school will not be able to have a place at those establishments from 31 December 2016 if the proposal is agreed.</p> <p>There are currently 15 staff employed at the school aged between 24 – 54 but any individual impact would be considered as part of the HR process.</p>	<p>Other schools in the local area are able to accommodate displaced pupils regardless of age.</p>	<p>If the proposal is agreed the Local Authority will assist parents and pupils to find a place at an alternative school.</p> <p>Work with other primary schools judged 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted and which are more sustainable in the long term.</p> <p>Follow agreed HR procedures.</p>

Protected Characteristic: Disability		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>Pupils' needs will be met as appropriate to ensure they are treated equally.</p> <p>No staff information has been included.</p>	<p>Pupils' needs will be met as appropriate.</p> <p>Any reasonable adjustments would be made.</p>	<p>Actions as appropriate to ensure the needs of pupils are met including making reasonable adjustments at the receiving schools to ensure pupils with disabilities have access.</p>

Protected Characteristic: Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
Insufficient evidence to assess impact on staff.		No further action.

Protected Characteristic: Pregnancy and maternity		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
Information on staff has not been included but any individual impact would be considered as part of the HR process. No individual impact identified.		No further action.

Protected Characteristic: Race (ethnicity)		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
No individual impact identified.		No further action.

Protected Characteristic: Religion or belief		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
There is no evidence to indicate a specific impact on pupils.	Although the school is a Church of England Primary school, there are other Church of England Primary Schools in	No further action.

Information on staff has not been included but any individual impact would be considered as part of the HR process.	the area. Other schools will also accommodate pupils regardless of their religion or belief . No individual impact identified but would be considered as part of HR Process.	
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Protected Characteristic: Sex (gender)		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
There is no evidence to indicate a specific impact on pupils Disproportionate impact on woman as all staff are female.	Startforth Morrith Memorial Church of England primary School provides education for both boys and girls. Other schools will accommodate displaced pupils regardless of gender. Currently there are 16 boys on roll and 18 girls. There are currently 15 female staff employed at the school.	Follow agreed HR procedures to ensure fair treatment

Protected Characteristic: Sexual orientation		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
Insufficient evidence to assess impact.		No further action

Protected Characteristic: Transgender		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
Insufficient evidence to assess impact.		

Section Three: Conclusion and Review

Summary

Please provide a brief summary of your findings stating the main impacts, both positive and negative, across the protected characteristics.

If the proposal is agreed there are likely to be redundancies. Opportunities for redundancy will be discussed with staff if the decision is taken to close the school for them to put forward their own proposals. There is a redeployment scheme and Brokerage Service, the latter of which is specifically for school staff. There are currently 15 members of female staff employed at Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School aged between 24 -54.

If the proposal is agreed there would no longer be a primary school in the small village of Startforth to serve pupils from the local area. There are places at other primary schools within a 4 mile radius from Startforth Morritt Memorial Church of England Primary School which it is believed can offer greater opportunities for educational improvement due to having access to a larger budget and wider curriculum and being seen as more sustainable in the long term. The other schools in the local area have bigger school rolls and larger budgets and will therefore be more sustainable in the long term.

Will this promote positive relationships between different communities? If so how?

If the proposal is implemented it is expected to promote positive relationships with other communities due to greater community cohesion. It is believed that the proposal will also bring about education improvement to benefit pupils, parents and the community.

There are four other Primary Schools in the local area – Montalbo Primary School, Green Lane CE Primary School, Bowes Hutchinson CE Primary School and St. Mary's RCVA Primary School who have all been judged as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in their most recent Ofsted Inspection.

Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescales for implementation	In which plan will the action appear?
Consultation with staff	Head Teacher and Governing Body	September 2016.	
Assisting displaced pupils to acquire a place at another school	Sheila Palmerley	31 December 2016	

Review

Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken? (Y/N)	No
When will this assessment be reviewed? Please also insert this date at the front of the template	In September 2016 when Cabinet takes the decision as to whether to close the school or not.

Sign Off

Lead officer sign off: Strategic Manager, School Places and Admissions	Date:08.08.2016
Service equality representative sign off: Strategic Manager, Service Quality and Development	Date: 12.08.2016

Please return the completed form to your service equality representative and forward a copy to equalities@durham.gov.uk