

## Response to the Statutory Notice

### Weaverthorpe Parish Council Response

Dear Secretary of State for Education

#### **Weaverthorpe Church of England (VC) School, Weaverthorpe, North Yorkshire**

There is a statutory notice on North Yorkshire County Council's website to announce that Weaverthorpe Church of England (VC) School will close at the end of August 2022. This follows protracted consultation on the subject of closure which has been objected to by Weaverthorpe Parish Council in the interests of keeping our village alive, and from parents of children at the school.

Early in 2020 the Local Authority wrote to the Board of Governors to warn them of falling standards at the School. This Parish Council requested, under the FOI regulations, that we have a copy of that letter, but it was refused because it was not in the public interest. In January 2020 the school was classed as "Inadequate" by Ofsted and an Academisation Order was placed on the school. The Head Teacher left the school in July 2020 since then the school has been overseen by an acting part time Head Teacher who will go back to her full time role at another school at the end of this academic year. The School Governors were replaced by an Interim Executive Board. The Board of Governors did not have a Local Authority Governor since at least 2017. Although the number of pupils is falling, those numbers depend on who is living in the village. The Academisation process produced no schools who were willing to take on Weaverthorpe School, because it is not a viable proposition.

It is recognised in the meetings of the Interim Executive Board that standards have improved since the Ofsted report in 2020, but Ofsted cannot carry out a further inspection because of the fact that the Academisation Order is in place.

30% of the housing stock in the village is Social Housing, the residents of which change on a more frequent basis than the owner occupied houses. Parents who move to the village do not always want to be in our village but are placed here by the Housing Association. Therefore the number of children at the School, whilst low at present, can vary. Six years ago the number of children at the school was 41, now it has dropped to 25 which is considered unviable. But the situation could change back to higher numbers dependant on the demographics of the village.

The number of children currently attending Norton Academy which is the secondary school for our catchment area, is high because of the above numbers. The Parish Council suggested that a "pyramid" academy be considered with Norton College, but this was rejected by the Local Authority because Norton College is not a faith school. The school identified to take the pupils affected by our school closure, Luttons Primary School is not a faith school.

Luttons Primary School is situated 2.4 miles from the centre of Weaverthorpe. If no transport

were provided the children from 5 to 11 would be expected to walk 2.4 miles along a relatively busy C class road, which in places has no dedicated footpath. The road is used by many large agricultural vehicles and HGVs, 60% of the distance is on a road which has the National Speed Limit, the remaining 40% is within 30mph limits but many vehicles do not comply with any speed limits. The children, if walking will have to cross six or seven roads according to where they live in Weaverthorpe, and this route has been declared safe for walking by NYCC. Google maps which is taken by most people to be an accurate measure of distances and times taken, states that to walk from the centre of Weaverthorpe to Luttons School will take an adult 46 minutes. When considering distances for walking to school the Local Authority states that 45 minutes is the maximum walking time. That time will be considerably longer for 5 to 8 year olds, and the parents will have to walk nearly ten miles a day in all weathers and in winter some of that time will be in darkness or semi darkness. This is going back in time, we shouldn't expect parents to walk ten miles a day to access education.

The LA have announced that they will provide transport for six years from Weaverthorpe to Luttons, to cover the five years of existing pupils and those who would have been eligible to join the school in September 2022. The cost of this transport is estimated at £30K to £38K per annum. Over a six year period that equates to £180K to £228K. The school deficit at the end of the 2021/22 academic year is predicted to be £38K.

We have suggested that instead of closing the school that money could be put into the School to recruit a permanent Head Teacher and provide a plan to keep the School open and operate in the future to secure an education for our young children. We are told that this could not be done because of the fact that the transport budget and the education budgets are separate.

Since the possibility of the school closing was first announced in November 2021, various meetings connected with the consultation have taken place but we are constantly told that a process is being followed, and many of the parents and public were convinced that the decision was made in 2021 and despite the consultation, the outcome was pre-determined. What this Parish Council is frustrated with is that no one seems to be looking for alternatives. The process is being followed and the outcome was in fact pre-determined, and alternatives are not being sought.

We therefore ask that you as Secretary of State for Education and others copied in on this correspondence make some change happen and encourage those people in the Regional Schools Commissioners Office and the Local Authority to think "outside the box" to try and find a solution to keeping our School open, and preserving a community as a whole, and not letting Weaverthorpe become a retirement village, without the presence and sounds of children in our Community.

Yours Sincerely  
for and on behalf of Weaverthorpe Parish Council

Copied to: Rt Revd Dr John Thomson, Bishop of Selby  
Kevin Hollinrake MP Les Carl – Leader NYCC Cllr Janet Sanderson  
A Dixon -Strategic Planning NYCC

Department for Education Response

Dear,

Thank you for your letter of 12 April 2022 to the Secretary of State about North Yorkshire County Council's (NYCC) consultation on the proposed closure of Weaverthorpe CE VC Primary School.

In considering a sponsor for trust for Weaverthorpe, the RSC has worked closely with NYCC and the Diocese of York to look for a potential sponsor with a proven track record in primary school improvement. This concluded that the school was not viable and that there was no available sponsor trust for this school. We were unable to consider Evolution Academy Trust (Norton College) as it does not have approved sponsor status and its Articles do not in any case permit it to take in Church of England schools.

The concerns you raise about school transport to Luttons Primary School are again a matter for NYCC, but I note that the Authority has already stated that it will provide school transport for all eligible pupils.

As a local authority maintained school, the decision to close Weaverthorpe is a matter for NYCC. I understand from Andrew Dixon, who was copied into your letter, that the Parish Council has asked for the letter to be taken as its response to the consultation. I understand that the consultation has now ended and that a final decision by the NYCC will be taken on 31 May 2022.

Yours sincerely