

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE

CORPORATE DIRECTOR MEETING WITH EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

13 December 2022

Skelton Newby Hall Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Executive Member approval to consult on a proposal that the County Council should close Skelton Newby Hall Church of England CE VC Primary School near Ripon from 31 August 2023.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Skelton Newby Hall CE VC Primary School, Ripon is located in the rural village of Skelton on Ure within the Harrogate Borough. The school is currently federated with Sharow CE VC Primary School, an arrangement that has been in place since 2012. Both schools share the same Executive Headteacher. The federation maximises available opportunities to bring together pupils to share activities and learning opportunities.
- 2.2 The School was last inspected by Ofsted in March 2020, when there were 20 pupils on roll. The overall effectiveness was judged to be 'Requires Improvement' as were the four key judgements on the quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development and leadership and management. The arrangements for safeguarding were judged to be effective.
- 2.3 The number of children at Skelton Newby Hall CE VC Primary School has been falling over the past few years. At the beginning of September 2021, there were 15 pupils on roll in the school plus two children in the nursery. This was well below the capacity of the school which can accommodate around 52 pupils. Since then there has been a further fall in numbers and the school currently has nine statutory aged pupils and one nursery child remaining on roll. Due to low numbers Key stage 2 teaching is currently taking place at Sharow Primary School.
- 2.4 The Governing Body have been active in their collective efforts to raise numbers at the school through many initiatives over recent years including the introduction of nursery provision in September 2019, which has attracted some children to the school, although numbers have been small. Marketing of the school has been a collective effort by governors, staff and parents though this has not had a long-term result.
- 2.5 The October 2021 School Census recorded that only 22% of primary aged pupils who lived in the school's catchment area at that time were attending the school (six pupils attended the school out of a total of 27 living in the school's catchment area and who attended a North Yorkshire school). Although designated a service village in the Harrogate District Local Plan, there is no new housing planned in the school's catchment area.
- 2.6 In Autumn 2022, with only nine statutory aged pupils on roll and one child in nursery, the federated governing body held an extra-ordinary meeting to discuss the future of

Skelton Newby Hall CE VC Primary School. They resolved unanimously to ask the County Council to consult on the potential closure of the school from 31 August 2023. This decision was not taken lightly by the governing body. The main issue was being able to provide such a small number of pupils with the rounded education that they deserve together with little prospect of future improvement in pupil numbers.

- 2.7 The governing body submitted a formal request to ask the County Council to consult on the potential closure of the school from 31 August 2023. The consultation, if agreed would seek views on the proposal that in the event of closure, the catchment area of Skelton Newby Hall CE VC Primary School would transfer and become part of an enlarged catchment area for Kirby Hill CE VC Primary School which is the nearest alternative school. The CE Diocese is aware of the current circumstances of the school, and is supportive of the proposed consultation regarding both the closure and the catchment area change.
- 2.8 This report seeks approval from the Executive Member to consult on the closure of the school with effect from 31 August 2023, and also the future catchment arrangements, in accordance with the process and timescale detailed below.

3.0 Skelton Newby Hall CE VC School

Pupil numbers

- 3.1 Skelton Newby Hall School is a small 3-11 CE VC Primary School and currently has nine children on roll. The school is located in the Ripon area, serving families living in the village of Skelton On Ure and the surrounding area. The number of children at the School has been falling over the past few years.

2016/17 = 50
2017/18 = 36
2018/19 = 22
2019/20 = 16
2020/21 = 15
2021/22 = 15
2022/23 = 9 (plus 1 in nursery)

- 3.2 There are currently nine statutory aged pupils plus one nursery child on roll in the School, with Key Stage 2 teaching currently taking place at Sharow CE VC due to low numbers. Skelton Primary School has two classrooms. The School has a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 7 pupils per year group. The School has capacity to accommodate around 52 pupils if all spaces are in use, and therefore has the potential to contribute 52 places in the local area. Forecasts indicate that pupil numbers will not recover significantly in the longer term and may reduce still further.

The current numbers at the school by year group are:

As at Nov 2022	
Reception	2
Year 1	2
Year 2	4
Year 3	0
Year 4	0
Year 5	0
Year 6	1
TOTAL	9

The school also offers nursery provision for children aged 3 and 4 and there is currently one child in nursery.

Four of the nine children currently on roll in Reception to Year 6 reside in catchment for Skelton Newby Hall, the remaining five children attend the School from another catchment area.

Small Schools

- 3.3 The small size of the school and the very small number of pupils in each year group will limit the range of personal and academic challenges for pupils including opportunities for child-initiated play and interaction in early years.
- 3.4 Small numbers of pupils with a wide array of starting points, inevitably results in some pupils having no-one working at the same level as they are, which creates complexities for teaching. The children at Skelton Newby Hall CE VC have very little support and opportunities for shared learning with their peers.
- 3.5 Social development throughout the school is supported by the curriculum, but real challenges exist in providing a broad opportunity for friendship groups to develop in such a small school.

School leadership and standards

- 3.6 The School was last inspected by Ofsted in March 2020, when there were 20 pupils on roll. The overall effectiveness was judged to be 'Requires Improvement' as were the four key judgements on the quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development and leadership and management. The arrangements for safeguarding were judged to be effective.
- 3.7 Sharow Primary School was last subject to a full Ofsted inspection in 2016 and judged to be 'Good' overall. A monitoring (section 8) inspection took place in January 2022. The report states that the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high (as 'Good') if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full graded (section 5) inspection.
- 3.8 The Ofsted Education Inspection Framework, introduced in September 2019, places

significant weight on curriculum provision. Delivering a curriculum that has ‘breadth and ambition’ is a particular challenge for a very small school. For example, the National Curriculum for PE states that “pupils should be taught to play competitive games (for example, cricket, football, hockey, netball, rounders)”. With a pupil count of nine (ranging in age from 5 to 11) it is very difficult for the School to provide meaningful opportunities for competitive sport. Teams are created only when the School is able to combine with another school, usually the federated school, or the School attends organised sports festivals so that children can compete in mixed teams created at such events.

- 3.9 One of the aims of the English curriculum is that pupils ‘are competent in the arts of speaking and listening, making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debate’. Holding high quality age-appropriate debate is challenging to stimulate and maintain within a small number of pupils.
- 3.10 Leaders and Governors have worked collectively to mitigate the impact of low numbers at Skelton Newby Hall, and have maximized the range of shared experiences with Sharow CE VC School. Low pupil numbers mean that even with the best endeavours of the school, it is difficult to provide education of a high quality for all year groups.
- 3.11 The Federation between Skelton Newby Hall and Sharow schools has been in place since 2012. The schools have operated an Executive Headteacher arrangement with leadership costs apportioned between each school, as is typical of federations. The potential closure of Skelton Newby Hall CE VC School would result in the existing Federation being dissolved. The governing body may will need to consider future arrangements for Sharow CE VC School subject the outcome of the consultation (if approved).

Finance

- 3.12 Pupil numbers determine the school budget. The latest financial forecast submitted to the County Council for Skelton Newby Hall CE Primary School indicates that the school will have an accumulated budget surplus position of £109.2k at the end of the 2022/23 financial year, £94.1k at the end of the 2023/24 financial year and £55.6k at the end of the 2024/25 financial year. The funding calculation in the forecast is based on 15 pupils in October 2021, 9 pupils in October 2022 and 11 pupils in October 2023.
- 3.13 The financial forecast assumes an increase in teaching staff from 1.4FTE to 2.4FTE from September 2023; this reflects the planned return to a two class structure from that point as pupils progress through the year groups into Year 3 (Key Stage 2).
- 3.14 In-year budget deficits are forecast of £15.2k for the 2023/24 financial year and £38.5k for the 2024/25 financial year. The school is however currently forecast to remain in a cumulative budget surplus position over the three year period.
- 3.15 Schools are presently facing significant cost pressures and there is continued uncertainty as to the level of cost increases for 2023/24; this may impact on the financial forecast.

4.0 PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES IN THE LOCAL AREA

- 4.1 There are five primary schools within a 4.5 mile radius of Skelton Newby Hall Primary School (shown in Appendix 1). Across the area there are places available for all pupils currently at the School. (Appendix 2).

- 4.2 The nearest school to Skelton Newby Hall CE Primary School is Kirby Hill CE VC Primary School where there are places available in all year groups. Boroughbridge Community Primary School also has places available in all year groups.
- 4.3 Roecliffe CE Academy is operating at around capacity but has some places available in all year groups apart from year 3 and year 6. Dishforth Airfield CP has places in all year groups.
- 4.4 Sharow CE VC (federated with Skelton Newby Hall CE VC) have reached PAN in all year groups, however, the facilities at Sharow offer some ability to operate over PAN in certain year groups.
- 4.5 Although Sharow has typically been oversubscribed in recent years, taking over PAN in reception, this is predominantly due to local popularity rather than an 'in area' need for places. In October 2021 there were 97 pupils on roll at Sharow. However, only 29 of these were pupils living within the Sharow catchment area. Significant numbers of pupils currently attend Sharow from a number of the Ripon Town school catchment areas and other surrounding village schools.
- 4.6 Kirby Hill CE VC Primary School, as the nearest alternative school and also a CE school, would be the appropriate choice to adopt the existing Skelton Newby Hall catchment area as an addition to its existing area in the event of a closure. This proposal would be part of the consultation (if approved)
- 4.7 Parents will be able to express a preference for any local school and if there are places available they will be accepted. Schools may also where appropriate agree to accept local children above their admission number.
- 4.8 The Harrogate District Local Plan sets out how the Borough should grow and develop to 2035. The major housing developments planned or under construction are served by schools which are closer to the developments than Skelton Newby Hall CE Primary School. Kirby Hill and Boroughbridge Community Schools have a number of large housing developments in their area, with some currently being built out. Both schools currently have surplus places and officers are monitoring how and when this may change in the medium to long term, subject to the pace and scale of new housing. Sharow CE VC School catchment area has 80 houses (one large and several smaller developments) with planning permission which could generate around an additional 20 primary pupils in total over several years.
- 4.9 **Appendix 3** provides projected numbers based on forecast birth rates, with potential additional pupils from outstanding housing permissions and proposed housing allocations in the Harrogate BC Local Plan.

5.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS AND TIMESCALE

- 5.1 Should a decision be made to initiate a consultation on the proposed closure of Skelton Newby Hall CE VC Primary School, a period of six term-time weeks is recommended. A draft timetable is set out below. A draft consultation document is attached at **Appendix 4**.
- 5.2 A separate staff consultation process, including a meeting for staff and their professional associations and unions, would run in parallel with the consultation on the closure proposal.

5.3 The final decision on closure would be taken by the Executive (or by the Executive Member for Education and Skills if there are no objections during the representation period).

5.4 Suggested key dates are shown below:

Approval to Consult by the Executive Member	13 December 2022
Consultation Opens	6 January 2023 to 24 February 2023
Public meeting (arrangements tbc)	TBC
Consultation closes	24 February 2023
County Council's Executive considers consultation response	21 March 2023
Executive decision to publish statutory notices	21 March 2023
Publication of statutory notices	30 March 2023
Representation period	30 March 2023 to 27 April 2023
Final decision by County Council's Executive	30 May 2023
Proposed school closure date	31 August 2023

5.5 The school building and site is not owned by the County Council. The owners will take decisions about the future use of the school site and buildings after the closure proposal has been determined.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 That the Executive Member for Education and Skills provide approval to consult on proposals that:

- Skelton Newby Hall CE VC Primary School should close on 31 August 2023
- In the event of closure, Kirby Hill CE CV Primary School becomes the catchment school for the existing area served by Skelton Newby Hall CE VC Primary School

Stuart Carlton

CORPORATE DIRECTOR – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE. Report prepared by Sue Turley, Strategic Planning Officer

Action AgreedExecutive Member

Date: 13 December 2022

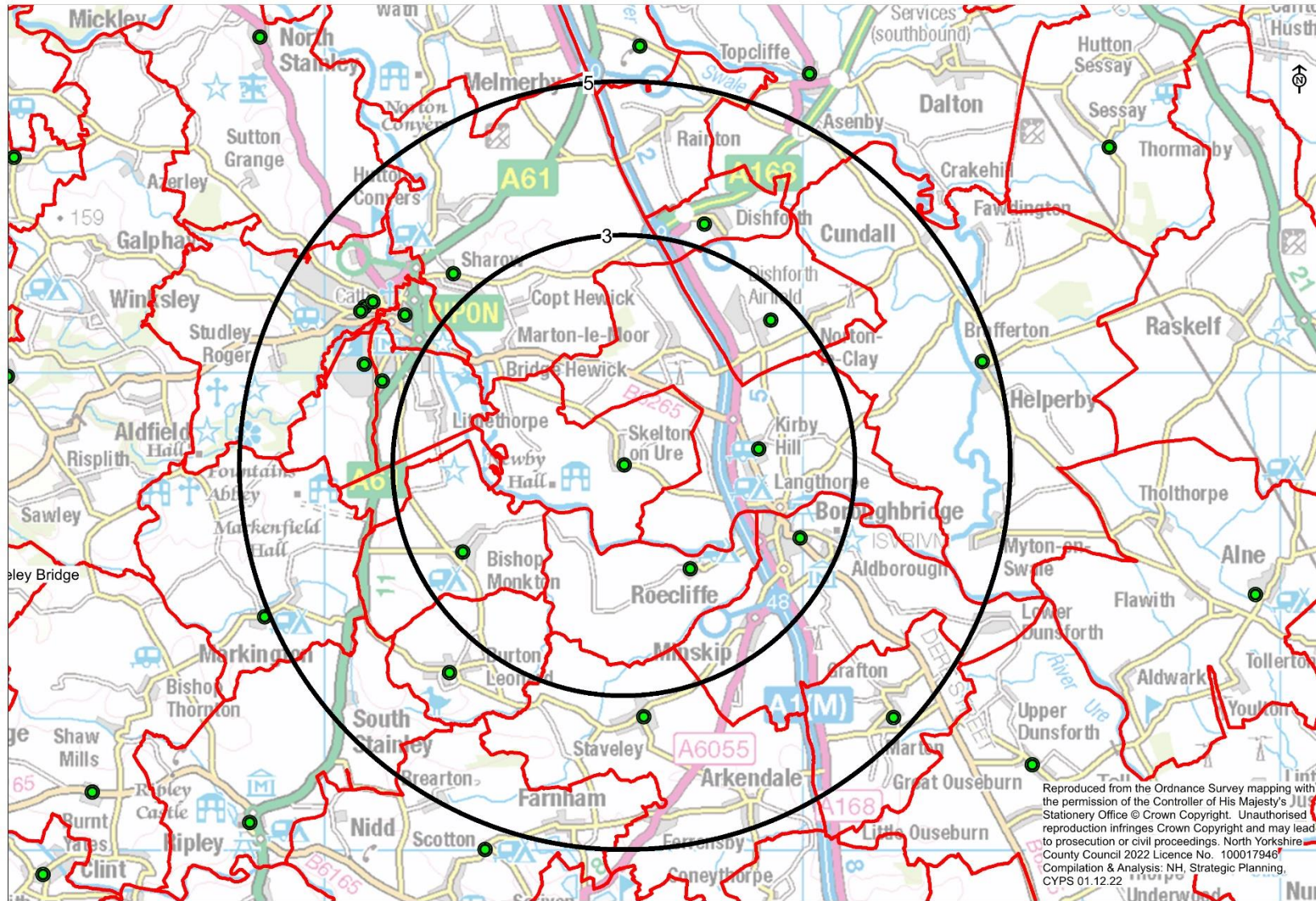
Action RequestedCorporate Director

Date: 13 December 2022

Appendix 1 - A map of the local area

Appendix 2 - Numbers by year group for local schools

Appendix 3 - Other schools – capacity and forecast



● denotes primary school locations

○ denotes primary school catchment areas

APPENDIX 2

School	Distance from Skelton Newby Hall	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total on roll	Net Capacity
Skelton Newby Hall CE	N/A	Places	Places	Places	Places	Places	Places	Places	9	52
Kirby Hill CE	2.4	Places	Places	Places	Places	Places	Places	Places	104	150
Boroughbridge CP	2.8	Places	Places	Places	Places	Places	Places	Places	182	252
Roecliffe CE Academy	4 (via Skelton Road)	Places	Places	Places	PAN	Places	Places	PAN	72	72
Dishforth Airfield CP	4.1	Places	Places	Places	Places	Places	Places	Places	85	189
Sharow CE	4.3	PAN	PAN	PAN	PAN	PAN	PAN	PAN	92	99

PAN = School year group is at published admission number, all applications will be dealt with on an individual basis and Admissions Team will have discussions with appropriate Headteacher to see if the school are in a position to admit additional pupils in that year group.

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APPENDIX 3

	Kirby Hill CE VC	Boroughbridge Community	Rocliffe Academy	Dishforth Airfield Community	Sharow CE VC (Federated with Skelton Newby Hall)
Distance from Skelton Newby Hall School by road miles	2.4	2.8	4	4.1	4.3
Last Ofsted Inspection	Good December 2021	Good July 2022	Good November 2017 (Prior to academy conversion)	Outstanding December 2021	Good January 2022
Net Capacity (total school places)	150	252	72	189	99
Current pupil roll 22/23	103	182	69	87	93
Current capacity +/-	47	70	3	102	6
Pupil roll 2023/24	106	190	67	84	90
Pupil roll 2024/25	101	197	67	76	90
Pupil roll 2025/26	103	200	67	74	88
Pupil roll 2026/27	104	200	59	75	86
Pupil roll 2027/28	105	198	60	74	85
Potential additional pupils from housing*					
Pupils from outstanding permissions 2027/28	23	141	3	1	20
Potential pupils from future housing – Local Plan (over 15 years)	0	0	0	0	0

*Based on 1 primary-aged pupil for every 4 houses

