

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

THE EXECUTIVE

19 March 2024

PROPOSAL TO CEASE SIXTH FORM PROVISION AT BOROUGHBRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL, BOROUGHBRIDGE

Report by the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report details the outcomes of the public consultation carried out by the Council on the proposal to change the age range at Boroughbridge High School, effective from 31 August 2024, by ceasing the Sixth Form Provision, and asks the Executive (or the Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills if there are no objections during the representation period) to authorise the publication of proposals and statutory notices, and to schedule taking a final decision on the proposal on 18 June 2024.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The federated Governing Board of Boroughbridge High School and King James’s School, Knaresborough resolved to ask North Yorkshire Council to consult on the permanent closure of the Sixth Form at Boroughbridge High School. The sixth form has been temporarily suspended since September 2022.
- 2.2 This report details the responses to this consultation and asks the Executive to authorise the publication of statutory proposals and notices (Appendix 1), and to schedule taking a final decision on the proposal on 18 June 2024. If approved, the sixth form provision would cease from 31 August 2024.
- 2.3 The report is supported by a number of Appendices as listed below:

Appendix 1: Full draft Statutory Proposals and draft Statutory Notice
Appendix 2: Published Consultation Paper
Appendix 3: List of the Consultees
Appendix 4: Note of the Public Meeting
Appendix 5: Consultation responses
Appendix 6: Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix 7: Climate change Impact Assessment

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Boroughbridge High School has worked in collaboration with other schools since 2016

to ensure that students have access to a wide post 16 offer and to try to maintain Sixth Form provision at the school. Initially the school collaborated with Easingwold and Thirsk Schools, but this collaboration ended when Easingwold School joined the Outwood Multi Academy Trust. Boroughbridge High School has subsequently moved to post-16 collaboration with King James's School, Knaresborough. This partnership was formalised through a federation of the two schools in January 2021.

- 3.2 In response to falling numbers of sixth form pupils, and following consultation in Autumn 2021, the decision was made in Spring 2022 by the federated Governing Board to temporarily suspend entries to the Sixth Form at Boroughbridge High School for two years to take effect from September 2022. Due to the demographics of the area, numbers on roll at Boroughbridge High School have decreased, making it more difficult to maintain viable class sizes at post-16 in terms of quality of experience, subject breadth and financial viability.
- 3.4 During the autumn term 2023, the federated Governing Board of Boroughbridge High School and King James's School, Knaresborough resolved to ask North Yorkshire Council to consult on the permanent closure of the Sixth Form at Boroughbridge High School. The decision to consult on the proposal to close the school was taken by the Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills on 9 January 2024.

4.0 CONSULTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

- 4.1 The consultation period ran from 19 January to 1 March 2024. A consultation paper setting out the proposal was sent to the staff and parents at the school and also other stakeholders in accordance with the statutory guidance. A copy of the consultation paper is attached as Appendix 2 together with a list of the consultees at Appendix 3.
- 4.2 A public meeting was held on 8 February 2024 and was attended by the Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills, a local member, officers of the local authority, the Headteacher and a school governor. A note of that meeting is attached as Appendix 4.
- 4.3 By the closing date of the consultation, on 1 March, 16 consultation responses had been received to the proposals. The consultation responses received are shown in full at Appendix 5, although with the names of individuals have been removed as appropriate.
- 4.4 The following section of the report provides a summary of the main issues raised during the consultation, either by the individuals who submitted a response (by post or online).

5.0 ISSUES RAISED AND RESPONSES

- 5.1 The key issues raised during the consultation process are listed below alongside relevant responses from officers in the Council's Children and Young People's Service (CYPS).

House building

- 5.2 A number of consultees noted the additional housing under construction or planned in the catchment area, particularly in Boroughbridge and the proposed new settlement at Maltkiln, and families moving in as a consequence, and therefore questioned the proposal. Kirk Hammerton and Whixley parish councils felt that it made no sense to close teaching facilities at the school which would be responsible for educating pupils from the proposed development at Maltkiln.

Response

- 5.3 CYPS works closely with local planning teams to understand projected housing developments and to ensure that there are sufficient school places available. An allowance of potential additional secondary aged school children generated by current housing permissions are included in the forecasts of future pupil numbers. Build out rates of new housing are monitored carefully.
- 5.4 The impact of house building in Boroughbridge town on pupil numbers is beginning to be seen at Boroughbridge Primary School which is running two classes rather than one in Reception and Year 1 this year. It will clearly take several years for these increased numbers to feed through into post 16 education though, and this is only one of several primary schools which feed into Boroughbridge High School.
- 5.5 The catchment area of Boroughbridge High School includes the proposed new settlement at Maltkiln near Hammerton and Cattal. It is not expected that the size of the overall development at Maltkiln based on 3,000-4000 units would generate sufficient pupils to require the provision of a new secondary school. Instead a financial contribution will be sought to facilitate the expansion of Boroughbridge High School and this could be achieved on the existing school land and it is proposed that an additional site would solely be used to re-provide additional open space to mitigate the land that had been used for the expansion of the school. However, safeguarded land for secondary provision is indicated within proposals for Maltkiln, should this be required in the future. Again it is likely to be many years before increased numbers at post 16 could emerge as a result of this proposed development, and it is unclear how the school could be expected to maintain sixth form provision at an unviable level until this potential post 16 demand arose.

Leadership

- 5.6 It was suggested that with stronger and better leadership more pupils could be aiming for sixth form. Another consultee said that they would like to hear that the focus, goal and determined aspiration of the school will be to ensure every pupil is supported robustly to achieve exam results which keep the door to A Levels very much open. There was also a concern that highly experienced teachers, who enjoy the focus and challenge of sixth form would leave the school as a result of the closure. Kirk Hammerton and Whixley Parish Councils felt that the management of King James School should be tasked with improving the school.

Response

- 5.7 In May 2023 Ofsted judged the overall effectiveness of Boroughbridge High School as 'Requires Improvement', with the quality of education rated as 'good', behaviour and attitudes as 'requires improvement', personal development as 'good' and leadership and management as 'requires improvement'. This followed previous overall judgements of 'Good' in 2012, confirmed by a short inspection in 2016 and an initial (section 8) inspection in 2022. This latest Ofsted report sets out what the school needs to do to improve, as well as its existing strengths. School leaders, governors and the Local Authority will continue to work together on school improvement taking account of these recommendations.
- 5.8 Falling numbers at Boroughbridge High School sixth form predate the recent Ofsted judgement. The funding model for post-16 education has changed in recent years and now favours larger sixth forms than Boroughbridge High School has ever had. Other smaller school sixth forms in North Yorkshire have experienced similar challenges to those faced by Boroughbridge High School, resulting in the suspension of provision. At Wensleydale School in Leyburn, where the school currently has a Good Ofsted judgement, the Governing Board has agreed to suspend post 16 provision from September 2023 for up to two years. Recent years have also seen removal or suspension of sixth form provision at academy schools in North Yorkshire.

Courses available

- 5.9 One consultee felt the sixth form could be used to run more vocational courses than A Levels, as accessing BTech style courses meant travelling around an hour in each direction.

Responses

- 5.10 It is difficult for school sixth forms to offer a wide range of post 16 vocational courses as they generally lack the staff, specialist facilities, and student numbers which are available at larger post 16 colleges.

Places at other sixth forms

- 5.11 A consultee thought it was more beneficial for pupils to attend a larger sixth form or college post 16 and others thought King James School and Ripon Grammar School can offer good provision. One consultee wanted the 'reassurance that places at King James will be reserved for our children as a priority'. Kirk Hammerton and Whixley parish councils also asked if Boroughbridge High School sixth form closed, could their residents be brought within the catchment area for King James School as well as Boroughbridge High School.

Response

- 5.12 Applications for places at school Sixth Forms are managed by schools and places are typically allocated on the grounds of entry requirements and the availability of particular courses rather than a pupil's place of residence. At present King James's School sixth form is not oversubscribed and accepts applications from pupils currently in the main school or those who have attended other schools. King James's School is part of a collaboration with Boroughbridge High School

Transport

- 5.13 One consultee felt that it is more beneficial for the pupils to attend a larger sixth form or college post 16 but they should be able to access free transport to a variety of places offering a variety of courses.

Response

- 5.14 Boroughbridge High School run a free minibus service from Boroughbridge High School to King James's School at the beginning and end of the school day so that sixth form students can, if they wish, travel initially to Boroughbridge High School. Direct buses also run from the Boroughbridge catchment area to St. Aidan's & St. John Fisher Associated Sixth Form in Harrogate, and to York College, and there are also public transport services to Knaresborough, Harrogate and York.
- 5.15 Local authorities do not have to provide free or subsidised post 16 travel assistance, but do have a duty to prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport, or other support that the authority considers it necessary to make to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training. This is set out in North Yorkshire Council's Post 16 Transport Policy Statement. The Council provides transport assistance for students to enable them to access Post 16 education at an appropriate sixth form or further education college designated to serve the area where a student lives. Transport will be offered to eligible students in return for a contribution towards the cost of this transport.

Comments supporting the proposal

- 5.16 Some respondents said that Boroughbridge High School was too small to be able to provide and fund a range of subjects and that it was not viable to keep the sixth form open for a low number of pupils.

5.17 Conclusion

Officers acknowledge the comments that were received in support of the proposal.

6.0 PROPOSAL

- 6.1 The proposal is to change the age range of Boroughbridge High School by closing the sixth form from 31 August 2024.

The full statutory proposal is set out in Appendix 1, Section A.

- 6.2 The proposed timetable would be:

4 April 2024	Publication of Statutory Proposals
2 May 2024	Closing date for representations (4 weeks as prescribed in regulations and cannot be shortened or lengthened)
18 June 2024	Final decision by Executive
31 August 2024	Proposed date of closure of the sixth form.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 School funding

Under Local Management of Schools, schools are responsible for their own budgets. It is for heads and governors to determine at school or federation level how to optimise the use of resources and maximise value for money.

7.2 Capital implications

There are no capital implications as a result of this proposal.

7.3 Transport costs

As there are currently no pupils in the sixth form at Boroughbridge High School there would be no immediate transportation costs. Any pupils living in the current Boroughbridge High catchment area applying for post 16 places would be assessed under the Council's Post 16 Transport Policy Statement at the appropriate time. As such future transport costs cannot be estimated.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The School Organisation regulations and guidance¹ cover the processes involved in school closures. Careful regard has been paid to these provisions.

9.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no Human Rights issues in relation to this decision.

10.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken in respect of this proposal and is attached (Appendix 6).

11.0 NEXT STEPS

11.1 It is proposed to publish proposals and statutory notices on 4 April 2024. The proposals would be published on the Council's website and the statutory notice would be published in a local newspaper and displayed at the main entrances to the school. These would provide four weeks for representations to be made to the Council, by 2 May 2024.

11.2 The Executive agreed a model for decision-making on school organisation proposals on 25 September 2007. If approval is given to publish statutory proposals and notices, it is proposed that a final decision is taken by the Executive on 18 June 2024.

¹ The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and Department for Education, Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools (January 2023).

12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1 i) Statutory proposals and notices be published on 4 April 2024 proposing to change the age range of Boroughbridge High School, by ceasing sixth form provision, with effect from 31 August 2024.
- ii) The Executive (or the Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills if there are no objections during the representation period) schedule taking a final decision on these proposals on 18 June 2024.

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List of Appendices

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