

## **Appendix 1a**

# **Statutory proposals for school closures**

As set out in the Establishment and Discontinuance Regulations the information below **must** be included in a proposal to close a school:

## **Contact details**

Proposal, published by North Yorkshire Council, County Hall, Northallerton, DL7 8AE, to discontinue:

St Hilda's Ampleforth Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School, Station Road, Ampleforth, York, North Yorkshire, YO62 4DG on 31 August 2024.

St Hilda's Ampleforth Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a 3-11 Church of England Voluntary Controlled primary school in North Yorkshire.

## **Implementation**

It is proposed to close the school from 31 August 2024.

## **Reason for closure**

St Hilda's Ampleforth CE VC Primary School, is located in the rural village of Ampleforth. Ampleforth village lies partially within the North York Moors National Park and partially in the Howardian Hills, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The school is defined by the government as a rural school that serves a rural village. The Department for Education expects all decision makers to adopt a presumption against the closure of rural schools. However, in their statutory guidance they make it clear that this does not mean that a rural school will never close, but that the case for closure should be strong and clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area. The school was previously in a Federation with Hovingham CE VC Primary School from April 2015 until Hovingham's closure in March 2023.

Governors asked the Council to consult on the closure due to low pupil numbers and an expected Reception intake of 0 pupils in September 2024 leading to a decline in the overall number on roll. This has led to financial pressures, meaning that the school would have an in-year deficit in 2024/25 and a cumulative deficit by 2025/6. The school's current leadership arrangement with leadership being provided by the Arete Learning Trust (formerly Ryedale Learning Trust) is only in place until the end of the summer term 2024.. Governors requested the consultation at this time as they have identified the importance of a decision on the school's future being made before the end of the academic year.

## **Pupil numbers and admissions**

The numbers (distinguishing between compulsory and non-compulsory school age pupils), age range, sex, and special educational needs of pupils (distinguishing between boarding and day pupils) for whom provision is currently made at the school.

There are currently 13 pupils on roll at the school of compulsory school age, plus 2 in nursery. Five of the 13 pupils are female, and eight pupils are male.

	Pupil numbers	PAN
Reception	1	7
Year 1	4	7
Year 2	0	7
Year 3	0	7
Year 4	3	7
Year 5	1	7
Year 6	4	7
Totals	13	

The school's age range is 3-11 years, and provision is available for boys and girls. There is no boarding provision. Information on special educational needs of pupils is not provided as this would contravene the Data Protection Act. Total pupil numbers are significantly lower than the capacity of the school which is designed to accommodate around 49 pupils.

## Displaced pupils

A statement and supporting evidence about the need for school places in the area including whether there is sufficient capacity to accommodate displaced pupils.

Details of the schools or further education colleges at which pupils at the school to be discontinued will be offered places, including—

- a) any interim arrangements;
- b) the provision that is to be made for those pupils who receive educational provision recognised by the local authority as reserved for children with special educational needs; and
- c) in the case of special schools, the alternative provision made by local authorities other than the local authority which maintain the school.

Details of any other measures proposed to be taken to increase the number of school or further education college places available in consequence of the proposed discontinuance.

- a) No interim arrangements have been necessary

The nearest school to St Hilda's Ampleforth CE VC Primary School is St Benedict's Catholic Primary School also located in Ampleforth and under 0.1 miles from the St Hilda's CE VC Primary School site. St Benedict's Catholic Primary School has places available in most year groups and the capacity to take additional pupils as a result of the proposed closure.

It is proposed that the current St Hilda's Ampleforth CE VC Primary School catchment area would be split between Husthwaite CE VC Primary School, Helmsley Community Primary School and Terrington CE VA Primary School.

This would mean the parishes of Gilling East, Grimstone, Cawton and Coulton would become part of the catchment area for Terrington CE. The parishes of Oswaldkirk and Stonegrave would become part of the catchment area for Helmsley Community Primary School. The parishes of Byland with Wass and Ampleforth would become part of the catchment area for Husthwaite CE. This would mean that the majority of the St Hilda's catchment area would continue to have a Church of England school nearby as their catchment school, with the exception of Oswaldkirk and Stonegrave which would be in catchment for the school which is nearest to them by road.

As is currently the case, parents of pupils from any part of the existing St Hilda's catchment area and beyond could choose to apply for places at St Benedict's and would be entitled to places where available in line with St Benedict's Catholic Primary School admissions policy. As part of the consultation process we are asking for views on the future catchment area.

Free home to school transport would be provided for eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.

Parents have a right to express a preference for any school and, in the case of community and voluntary controlled schools, the relevant Local Authority is the admissions authority and will meet that preference provided there are vacant places or the school is happy to admit above the published admission number. In the case of Voluntary Aided and Academy schools, the local governing body decide the conditions for admission to their particular school. Where a child attends a school which is not their normal school or nearest school, parents are normally responsible for making transport arrangements.

- b) This is a mainstream primary, and therefore, not a school that is reserved for providing to pupils with special educational needs
- c) This is a mainstream school, and therefore, not a special school that is reserved for providing to pupils with special educational needs

## **Impact on the community**

A statement and supporting evidence about the impact on the community of the closure of the school and any measures proposed to mitigate any adverse impact.

In some villages the school itself may be the only building large enough to facilitate community gatherings however, in the case of Ampleforth there is a village hall and a church hall associated with the Catholic church, both of which are available for hire. In addition to St Hilda's CE VC Primary School there is, and in the event of closure, would remain another primary school within the village. There is currently no community use of the St Hilda's school site beyond the core educational use by the school.

The St Hilda's Ampleforth CE VC Primary school buildings and playground are owned by the Diocese of York and the school playing field is owned by the Council. Any decisions about the future of the site and buildings would be taken separately from the decision on whether to close the school.

The village of Ampleforth has two other educational settings. The first is St Benedict's Catholic Primary School and the second is the Ampleforth College a Catholic Independent School for 11 to 19 year olds.

Whilst the impact on the wider economic and social sustainability of the community is an important consideration, the key consideration is to determine whether the proposal is in the best interests of children's education.

## Rural primary schools

Where proposals relate to a rural primary school designated as such by an order made for the purposes of Section 15 (Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA), a statement that the local authority or the governing body (as the case may be) considered Section 15(4) EIA.

St Hilda's Ampleforth CE VC is designated as a rural school under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order. The School Organisation regulations and guidance contain a presumption against closure of rural schools, and it is a requirement that proposers must consider the effect of the discontinuance of any rural primary school on the local community. The statutory guidance specifically states that 'This does not mean that a rural school will never close, but the case for closure should be strong and a proposal must be clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area.' The guidance states that when producing a proposal, the proposer must carefully consider:

- the likely effect of the discontinuance of the school on the local community;
- the availability, and likely cost to the local authority, of transport to other schools;
- any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the discontinuance of the school, and the likely effects of any such increase; and
- any alternatives to the discontinuance of the school.

These are examined in turn below.

### **The likely effect of closure of the school on the local community**

Please see the section above 'Impact on the Community'

### **The proportion of pupils attending the school from within the local community i.e. is the school being used by the local community**

As of October 2023 there were 94 Primary aged children who were living in the catchment area of St Hilda's Ampleforth CE VC Primary School and attending a North Yorkshire School. Of those, 13 were attending St Hilda's Ampleforth CE VC and 81 were attending elsewhere.

### **The availability, and likely cost to the LA, of transport to other schools**

Home to school travel assistance would be provided for entitled pupils in accordance with the Council's home to school transport policy. Costs will depend on the individual choices of schools by parents, and may also depend on the circumstances of individual pupils.

### **Whether the school is now surplus to requirements (e.g. because there are surplus places elsewhere in the local area which can accommodate displaced pupils, and there is no predicted demand for the school in the medium or long term)**

It is considered that there is not a need to retain the school to meet the Council's sufficiency duty. The level of demand for places at the school is low and this has been a key factor in the closure proposal being brought forward.

### **Any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the closure of the school, and the likely effects of any such increase**

It is challenging to ascertain the degree to which this proposal will cause an increase in journeys and mileage of those journeys. Some of the pupils that have attended St Hilda's CE VC Primary historically will have travelled by car and this is particularly true for pupils attending from outside the catchment area. The nature of parental preference and the choice of method to get to school including taking account of any lift sharing is also difficult to account for. If the 10 pupils currently projected to be on roll at September 2024 at St Hilda's CE VC Primary went to the nearest school to their home following the closure then 8 of them would likely be within the statutory walking distance to that school. If all parents chose to send their children to schools further afield then this would likely increase emissions from transport associated with this cohort. However, it must also be acknowledged that maintaining a school itself has an impact on energy and resource usage and therefore carbon usage, emissions and climate change. At present the school is operating and being heated and powered for 13 statutory school age pupils when the building itself could accommodate more pupils. This is not an efficient use of energy. Whichever schools the pupils subsequently attend would likely have a negligible increase in energy usage associated with the pupils joining compared to the significant reduction in energy usage from the school ceasing to operate. A Climate Change Impact Assessment forms Appendix 7 and addresses the issue in further detail.

### **Any alternatives to the closure of the school**

When the Governing Board asked the Council to commence the consultation they did so having fully considered pupil numbers, financial prospects and future sources of leadership. The projected budget deficit was based upon the current leadership costs continuing and it is likely that the leadership costs would significantly increase if the school were to appoint a substantive headteacher (either full time or a part-time

executive leadership with another school or schools) which would result in a further deterioration of the budget position.

With particular regard to the proposal for the school to join an academy trust, the pupil numbers have not grown sufficiently to ensure that the funding available will be sufficient for the school to be viable going forward. Consequently, while the Diocese previously had positive dialogue about the required steps for the school to join the Ryedale Learning Trust in the past and the trust discussed academy conversion with the Department for Education at that time, an application did not reach the Department for Education's advisory board due to the low and falling numbers and questions over the viability of the school. It should be noted that Ryedale Learning Trust no longer exists and any discussions with DfE about academy conversion have ceased.

With regards to the St Hilda CE VC Primary School working in partnership with the local Catholic primary school this would be challenging. St Benedict's Catholic Primary School is an academy which is part of the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust and so any arrangements between the two schools would need to be proposed by the trust and supported by the relevant dioceses.

With the currently financial outlook for the school and as no school or trust has come forward with a solution during the consultation, no option for working with other schools is considered possible at this time.

## **Balance of denominational provision**

Where the school has a religious character, a statement about the impact of the proposed closure on the balance of denominational provision in the area and the impact on parental choice.

St Hilda's Ampleforth is a Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School. The LA is under an obligation to consider the impact on the proportion of church places before it determines the outcome of school closure proposals.

The nearest alternative Church of England School is Husthwaite CE VC Primary School which is situated 6.4 miles from St Hilda's CE VC Primary School.

The Diocese is supporting the LA with the consultation and has expressed no specific concerns about the impact on proportionality of places in this area.

## **Maintained nursery schools**

Not applicable

## **Sixth form provision**

Not applicable

## **Special educational needs provision**

The existing provision at St Hilda's Ampleforth CE VC Primary School is not reserved for pupils with special educational needs.

## **Travel**

Details of length and journeys to alternative provision.

The proposed arrangements for travel of displaced pupils to other schools including how the proposed arrangements will mitigate against increased car use.

Eligibility for home to school transport will be determined in line with the Council's home to school transport policy and procedures based on each child's home address and individual circumstances.

Parents were, and will be, reminded of the Council's home to school transport policy when considering alternative schools. Eligibility is assessed on an individual basis taking into account the child's home address.

North Yorkshire Council's Home to School transport policy states that 'Transport will be arranged so that children will not normally spend more than 1 hour 15 minutes travelling to a secondary school or 45 minutes to a primary school. Journey times might need to be longer than this in some more rural areas and where road or weather conditions mean that these times are not practical.' This is in line with statutory guidance from the Department for Education. The journey times for children living within the current St Hilda's Ampleforth CE VC Primary School catchment area to other nearby primary schools would be well within these guidelines. The nearest schools are:

- St Benedict's Catholic Primary School which is situated 0.3 miles from St Hilda's Ampleforth CE VC Primary School.
- Helmsley Community Primary School is the next closest school and is located 4.9 miles from St Hilda's Ampleforth CE VC Primary School.
- Hustwaite CE VC Primary School is the nearest alternative Church of England Primary School, which is situated 6.4 miles from St Hilda's Ampleforth CE VC Primary School.

Pupils would be eligible for travel arrangements from NYC in line with the transport policy.

### **Procedure for making representations (objections and comments)**

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal, any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to Strategic Planning - Children and Young People's Service, North Yorkshire Council, County Hall, Northallerton, DL7 8AE, or by email to [schoolorganisation@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:schoolorganisation@northyorks.gov.uk) by 14 June 2024.

### **Consultation**

The decision to consult on closure was taken by the Executive Member for Schools on 20 February 2024 following a request from governors. A consultation paper setting out the proposal was sent to parents of pupils on roll, staff at the school as well as other interested parties and individuals. A copy of the consultation paper

and a list of the consultees is included as Appendices 2 and 3 respectively. The consultation period ran from 1 March 2024 to 19 April 2024. A public meeting was held on 18 March 2024, notes of the meeting are attached as Appendix 4. Consultation responses are set out in Appendix 5.

## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1b: Statutory Notice**

**Appendix 2: Consultation Paper**

**Appendix 3: List of the Consultees**

**Appendix 4: Notes of the Public Meeting**

**Appendix 5: Consultation Responses**

**Appendix 6: Equality Impact Assessment**

**Appendix 7: Climate Change Impact Assessment**