



# *Consultation Document*

Proposal to close  
St Hilda's Ampleforth Church of England Voluntary  
Controlled Primary School  
from 31 August 2024

## **Appendix 2**

### **St Hilda's Ampleforth Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

March 2024

This paper sets out details of a proposal by North Yorkshire Council to close St Hilda's Ampleforth Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School with effect from 31 August 2024. It gives the background to the proposal. There will be a public meeting at Ampleforth Village Hall, West End, Ampleforth, York, YO62 4DU on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March at 6pm.

#### **Background**

At a meeting of the Governing Board of the St Hilda's Ampleforth Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School on 17 January 2024 it was reluctantly resolved, following a full discussion about pupil numbers, financial prospects and future sources of leadership, to invite North Yorkshire Council to commence a consultation on closure of this school.

St Hilda's Ampleforth Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, is located in the village of Ampleforth. The 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 have brought forward this proposal to consult on the closure due to low pupil numbers and an expected Reception intake of no 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. The school's current leadership arrangement is only in place until the end of the summer term 2024. Governors have 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

#### **Factors Affecting the School's Viability**

##### **Pupil Numbers**

St Hilda's is a small rural 3-11 CE VC Primary School and currently has 13 children of statutory school age on roll. The School has operated with 36 pupils or less for the last 15 years. According to the October census each year there has been a downward trend in the number of pupils on roll since 2018/19:

2016/17 – 20 pupils

2017/18 – 27

2018/19 – 36

2019/20 – 35

## **Appendix 2**

2020/21 – 28

2021/22 – 29

2022/23 – 20

2023/24 – 13 (October 2023)

The current breakdown of the number of pupils of statutory school age at St Hilda's CE VC Primary School is as follows:

<b>Year Group</b>	<b>Number on Roll</b>
Reception	1
Year 1	4
Year 2	0
Year 3	0
Year 4	3
Year 5	1
Year 6	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

Therefore with 4 pupils in the current Year 6 and the school projected to have no new Reception pupils in September 2024 it likely that the number on roll will have dropped to 9 by Autumn Term 2024.

The school has a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 7 pupils per year group. The school has capacity to accommodate up to 49 pupils if all spaces are in use, and therefore has the potential to contribute 49 places in the local area.

### **School Leadership, Standards and Curriculum**

There have been changes in leadership at the School in the recent past and the following paragraphs describe the position from the Governing Board's perspective.

In late August 2022 the Governing Board learned that the headteacher of the Federation would not be returning at the start of the autumn term. This left the Governing Board having to source alternative leadership at very short notice. Council officers provided guidance and assistance to secure Executive Leadership from another Federation, with a main focus on securing the education provision at St.Hilda's CE VC Primary School. At the start of autumn term 2022 there were no pupils on roll at Hovingham which would in turn affect the future financing of the school, so in October the then Federated Governing Board invited NYC to embark on a consultation on closure of Hovingham school. With intense efforts on exploring all options to help secure the future of both St Hilda's and Hovingham, the Governing Board contacted the Ryedale Learning Trust (RLT) to ascertain what leadership support they could offer the Federation Governing Board and schools in the short term. It was the view of Governors that the RLT had the vision and resources to provide inspirational leadership the schools required. In addition, the affirmative response to the question of whether the Trust was open to exploring the possibility of both CofE schools joining the Academy Trust in the medium term (or St Hilda's in the event of Hovingham being closed) was key to the decision. Following positive discussions and having reviewed all other options, the Federation Governors voted unanimously on 1 December 2022

## **Appendix 2**

to become Associate Members of the RLT from January 2023, with a view to one, or should it remain open, both schools joining the Trust in the future.

The statutory consultation process on the closure of Hovingham school between autumn 2022 and March 2023 had a significant impact on St. Hilda's as the other school in the Hovingham & St. Hilda's Federation, and Governors feel that the uncertainty may have impacted pupil numbers in the last academic year. It is the board's view that St Hilda's CE VC Primary School has benefitted significantly from the experienced executive leader provided by RLT since January 2023, and the school has been on a journey of transformation to being a vibrant local primary school providing high quality educational provision and delivering strong outcomes. Sadly, despite this improved educational provision and a lot of publicity and promotion of the school, pupil numbers have not grown sufficiently to ensure that the funding available will be sufficient going forward. Consequently, while the diocese had positive dialogue about the required steps for the school to join the trust and RLT discussed academy conversion with DfE although an application did not reach the DfE's advisory board due to the low and falling numbers and questions over the viability of the school. Governors have expressed that despite this, RLT have been very generous in agreeing to continue their support of the school to try and make it a viable and sustainable school for the community it serves.

RLT provided the support for the school free of charge for the spring and summer term in 2023 and is providing the executive leadership support for the school this academic year (2023-24) for a contribution of £5k, as they understand the financial pressures St Hilda's is facing and want to help. RLT has offered to continue to provide executive support for the school for the next academic year (2024-25) on the same basis if the school's circumstances changed and the Council determined not to proceed with the closure of the school.

The most recent full graded Ofsted inspection for St Hilda's was in March 2020. At that time there were 38 pupils on roll. Ofsted judged the school to be 'Good'. As numbers fall, it is increasingly difficult to provide the remaining pupils with access to the full range of experiences and the quality of education they require.

### **The Financial Position**

Pupil numbers are a significant factor in determining the school budget under the national funding formula, and the fall in pupil numbers has undermined the school's future financial position.

Based on the 2023/24 Revised Budget submitted in December 2023 the school had a budget surplus of £84.7k at the end of the 2022/23 financial year; the funding for the 2023/24 financial year was based on 27 pupils. The school is projecting an in year budget surplus of £10.4k giving a carry forward budget at the end of March 2024 of £95.1k.

However, the school is projecting in-year budget deficits of £66.8k in 2024/25 and £84.5k in 2025/26 and an overall cumulative budget deficit of £56.2k at March 2026. The budget projections are based on pupil number assumptions of 13 in 2024/25 and 11 in 2025/26, so the position will deteriorate further if pupil numbers fall below that level. It is understood that these current budget projections assume future leadership

## **Appendix 2**

costs continue at the same level as the current interim arrangements. However, it is likely that the leadership costs would significantly increase if the school were to appoint a substantive headteacher (either full time or part-time) which would result in a further deterioration of the budget position. Therefore, there appears to be no reasonable prospect of longer-term financial viability for the school.

In the event of St Hilda's closing on the 31 August 2024, any legacy costs associated with the operation of the school incurred in the 2024/25 financial year would need to continue to be charged to the school budget. Any final deficit on the school budget, after all costs have been accounted for, would need to be met from local authority funds. Any annual savings to the Dedicated Schools Grant arising from the closure, if approved, would remain within the ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant as part of the funding for all schools. Any surplus revenue or capital balances would be allocated in line with the Closing School Accounting Policy.

### **Primary School places in the local area**

There are currently 13 pupils of statutory school age on roll at St Hilda's Ampleforth. The Council has a Statutory Duty to ensure the sufficiency of school places. This section will consider the availability of school places in the local area.

There are six neighbouring schools which are located within 10 miles of St Hilda's by road: St Benedict's Catholic Primary School, Helmsley Community Primary School, Hushwaite Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Terrington Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Slingsby Community Primary School and Crayke Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School. These schools along with their distances from St Hilda's are listed in the accompanying documents which are also available on the Council Website at the link below. This highlights which schools currently have spaces and in which year groups.

At the October 2023 school census there were 94 pupils living within the St Hilda's catchment area and attending North Yorkshire schools. Of those 13 were attending St Hilda's CE VC Primary School, 55 were attending St Benedict's Catholic Primary School, 10 were attending Helmsley Community Primary School and the remainder were attending a variety of local schools.

The accompanying information provides projected numbers based on forecast birth rates, with potential additional pupils from outstanding housing permissions and proposed housing allocations in the Ryedale District Local Plan, prepared and adopted by the former Ryedale District Council in 2013. The figures in the accompanying information illustrate that there is currently a surplus of school places across the local area and it is not necessary to maintain St Hilda's CE in order to ensure a sufficiency of school places.

### **The Proposal**

For the reasons above it is proposed that St Hilda's Ampleforth CE VC Primary School should close with effect from 31 August 2024.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Admissions and Catchment Areas**

Officers, having consulted with Diocesan representatives, have identified a proposal to split the catchment area of St Hilda's between three other local schools. The current catchment and proposed catchments are shown on maps available on the Council website at the link below.

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 taking account of the revised catchment area arrangements in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.

### **Staff**

A separate staff consultation process, including a meeting for staff and their professional associations and unions, will run in parallel with this consultation on the closure proposal. Staff are also welcome to comment on the proposal as part of this consultation.

### **The School Site and Buildings**

The ownership of the school site is split between the Diocese of York and North Yorkshire Council. Decisions about the future of the school site would be separate to any closure decision itself and would follow at a later date.

### **Additional Information**

This consultation document should be read in conjunction with the following documents which can be found here [www.northyorks.gov.uk/your-council/consultations-and-engagement/current-consultations](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/your-council/consultations-and-engagement/current-consultations)

- Maps showing the current local catchment areas including the proposed catchment areas should St Hilda's Ampleforth Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School close.

## **Appendix 2**

- Other schools – capacities and forecasts

### **What Happens Next?**

Your views about this proposal are welcomed. You can either complete and return the attached response sheet, or submit an online response

Paper responses should be returned to North Yorkshire Council at the address below:

FREEPOST RTKE-RKAY-CUJS

St Hilda's Ampleforth

Strategic Planning

North Yorkshire Council

County Hall

NORTHALLERTON

DL7 8AE

Online responses may be submitted by following this link:

#####

Responses to the consultation will be published on the Council's website. Your personal details, and those of others you may refer to, will not be published.

### **The closing date for responses is 5pm on Friday 19 April 2024**

All responses to the consultation received by this date are scheduled to be considered by the Council's Executive on 7 May 2024.

If the Council's Executive decides to proceed with the closure proposal, then statutory notices would be published in the local press on 17 May 2024. These notices would provide a further four weeks for representations to be made. A final decision is then scheduled to be taken by North Yorkshire Council's Executive on 16 July 2024. If agreed, the school would close on 31 August 2024.

### **Anticipated Key Dates**

All dates are subject to approvals at each stage.

Consultation opens	1 March 2024
Public meeting	18 March at 6pm
Consultation closes	19 April 2024
Council's Executive considers consultation response	7 May 2024
Statutory Notices published (4 weeks for representations to be made)	17 May – 14 June 2024

## **Appendix 2**

Final decision by Council's Executive	16 July 2024
Proposed school closure date	31 August 2024



## **Appendix 2**

### **St Hilda's Ampleforth Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School Consultation**

This is a consultation on proposals to close St Hilda's Ampleforth Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School from 31 August 2024.

We are collecting this information for the purpose of gathering views on the proposal. Your personal data will not be published or passed to any other organisation unless a legal obligation compels us to do so.

Reading our Privacy Notice will help you understand how and why we process your personal data. [www.northyorks.gov.uk/privacy-notices](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/privacy-notices)

Do you have any comments about the closure proposal?  
(Please do not disclose any personal information in your answer)

## Appendix 2

Do you have any comments about catchment areas?  
(Please do not disclose any personal information in your answer)

What is your interest/status? Parent / Governor / Teacher / Community / Other

Other (please state)

Name of school:  
(if applicable)

To confirm your proximity to school and to prevent duplicate responses we are asking you to provide your name and address. This information will be removed from any analysis or reports.

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

To help us assess whether we have provided clear information, please let us know whether you found this consultation easy to understand? **Yes / No**

Please send this response sheet to the following "FREEPOST" address. You do not need to use a postage stamp.

FREEPOST RTKE-RKAY-CUJS  
St Hilda's Ampleforth  
Strategic Planning  
North Yorkshire Council  
County Hall  
NORTHALLERTON  
DL7 8AE

Or to submit your response online go to:

[#####](#)

To be received by no later than 19 April 2024