

Statutory proposals for closure of St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School

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 County Council, County Hall, Northallerton, DL7 8AE, to discontinue:

St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School, Waterstead Lane, Whitby, North Yorkshire, YO21 1PZ on 9 April 2021

St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School is a 4-11 Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided primary school in North Yorkshire.

Implementation

It is proposed to close the school from 9 April 2021.

Reason for closure

Reasons for the Previous Closure Proposal in January 2020

There were three main factors leading to the closure proposal. First, the number of children at St Hilda's had fallen from 51 in 2015/16 to 24 in 2019/20. The school had only received 2 first preference applications for Reception places in September 2020 and with capacity available in every other school within Whitby Town it was unlikely that the school would be allocated any lower preference applications.

Secondly, the predicted financial position was a concern. The school had an accumulated budget deficit at the end of the 2018/19 financial year and the cumulative deficit was forecast to significantly worsen over future financial years.

Thirdly, for the Roman Catholic Church their mission and purpose is to provide education with a Catholic character to Catholic children. Out of a total role of 24 children on roll at St Hilda's at that point, only 4 of these pupils were Catholic. The Diocese confirmed that there was no evidence to support the continuation of Catholic education in Whitby, as there appeared to be no other Catholic children seeking to attend the school.

Reasons for the Current Closure Proposal in September 2020

Since the previous closure proposal ceased in April, the position regarding these three main factors has actually become more pronounced. In their letter of 4 September the Governors referred to a '*sustained funding crisis*'. At this time there were 19 pupils on roll at St Hilda's. With this school roll and the projected number of pupils going forward the Governors could not find a sustainable future for the school. The Roman Catholic Diocese had already previously made it clear that the school

would not be able to enter an academy trust without a financially sustainable future being identified.

Since the Governors and the Diocese met with parents to notify them of their decision to ask the Local Authority to consult upon closure the number of pupils on roll has fallen to 2 pupils. The majority of these pupils have taken advantage of the Diocese of Middlesbrough's offer to ensure that places at, and transport to, St Hedda's R.C Primary School, Egton Bridge would be made available for any pupils from St Hilda's. There is no reasonable prospect of the numbers of pupils at St Hilda's returning to sustainable levels.

The Diocese of Middlesbrough's position remains that their mission and purpose is to provide education with a Catholic character to Catholic children. With only 2 pupils on roll the Diocese confirmed that there was no evidence to support the continuation of Catholic education in Whitby, as there appeared to be no other Catholic children seeking to attend the school.

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 2 pupils on roll at the school as of October 2020, all of which are pupils of mainstream school age with 0 nursery-aged pupils. Both of the remaining pupils are female.

	Pupil numbers	PAN
Reception	0	15
Year 1	2	15
Year 2	0	15
Year 3	0	15
Year 4	0	15
Year 5	0	15
Year 6	0	15
Totals	2	

The school's age range is 4-11 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 up to 150 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—

- any interim arrangements;
- 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
- 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.

There are five other North Yorkshire primary schools within reasonable travelling distance with places available currently in various year groups. Across the area there are places available for both the pupils currently at St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School. Within 2 miles of St Hilda's is Airy Hill Primary School at 0.1 miles away, East Whitby Academy at 0.8 miles away, West Cliff Primary School at 1 mile away, Stakesby Primary Academy at 1.4 miles away and Ruswarp Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School. These schools have not been inspected by Ofsted since their conversion to academy status with the exception of Ruswarp which is a maintained school and was rated Good by Ofsted. The nearest Roman Catholic school is St Hedda's Roman Catholic Primary School which is 7.4 miles away from St Hilda's by road and also has places available, St Hedda's has also not yet been inspected since converting to academy status..

St Hilda's R.C Primary School does not have a distinct catchment area. There is therefore no issues associated with the redrawing of catchment areas.

For any children currently at St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School, North Yorkshire County Council would work with each family to try to meet their individual preferences for other schools.

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 schools, the 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.

- a) No interim arrangements have been necessary.
- 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.

The school does not have an Early Years unit. However, there is an Early Years provider who currently leases part of the school building from the Diocese of Middlesbrough. The future of this provision in the building is a decision for the Diocese, should the closure proposal go ahead.

In some communities the school is the only meeting space. However, in Whitby there are a number of community venues.

The school building and part of the playing field is in the ownership of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Middlesbrough. Part of playing field is owned by the County Council. Decisions about the future use of the school buildings and playing field will be taken by the owners after the closure proposal has been determined.

In a previous consultation community members particular members of the local Catholic community expressed concern over the removal of Catholic education from the town. However, one of the key reasons that this proposal has been brought forward is that there hasn't been significant demand for Catholic school places in Whitby.

Whilst the impact on the wider 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 Roman Catholic Primary School is not designated as a rural school under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order.

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 is a Roman Catholic 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 Roman Catholic school, 7.4 miles from St Hilda's by road, is St Hedda's Roman Catholic Primary School, Egton Bridge.

The Diocese is supporting the LA with the consultation and given the availability of places at St Hedda's school and the lack of significant demand for Catholic education within Whitby this proposal is not considered to create a significant imbalance in denominational provision within the area and the impact on parental choice will be limited.

Maintained nursery schools

Not applicable

Sixth form provision

Not applicable

Special educational needs provision

The existing provision at St Hilda's Roman Catholic 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 County Council's current home to school transport policy and procedures based on each child's home address and individual circumstances.

Where a child attends a school which is not their normal school or nearest school, parents are normally responsible for making transport arrangements.

Parents were, and will be, reminded of the County Council's home to school transport policy when considering alternative schools. Pupils up to the age of 8 would normally be eligible for free home to school transport if they live more than 2 miles from their normal area school (or 3 miles for those over the age of 8). Parents can always express a preference for a school other than their normal area school however they would usually be responsible for making transport arrangements

North Yorkshire County 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 nearest schools are Airy Hill Primary School (0.1 miles from St Hilda's R.C Primary School), Stakesby Primary School (0.9 miles from St Hilda's R.C Primary School), West Cliff Primary School (0.9 miles from St Hilda's R.C Primary School), East Whitby Primary Academy (1.1 miles away St Hilda's R.C Primary School). The travel times to all these schools from homes in the Whitby and the surrounding villages are well below the maximum travel time of 45 minutes for primary-aged pupils

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 Corporate Director - Children and Young People's Service, North Yorkshire County Council, County Hall, Northallerton, DL7 8AE, by 19 February 2021.

Consultation

The decision to consult on closure was taken by the Executive Member for Schools on 20 October 2020 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 in Appendix 1. The consultation period ran from 2 November to 14 December 2020. A virtual public meeting was held online on 24 November 2020, a note of that meeting is attached as Appendix 2. There has been 1 consultation response received (Appendix 3).

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Consultation Paper and list of consultees

Appendix 2 - Notes of the Public Meeting

Appendix 3 - Consultation Responses

Appendix 4 – Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix 1 Consultation Document and Consultees List



Consultation Document

**Proposal to close St Hilda's Roman
Catholic Primary School, Whitby.**

from 9 April 2021

St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School

November 2020

This paper sets out background and details of a proposal to close St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School with effect from 9 April 2021.

There will be a virtual public meeting on Tuesday 24 November at 7 pm.

If you wish to be part of this virtual meeting could you please let us know by emailing schoolorganisation@northyorks.gov.uk and joining instructions will be provided

If you do not have the facilities to participate in a virtual meeting but would still like to engage directly in the consultation process then please liaise with St Hilda's RC Primary School, Waterstead Lane, Whitby, North Yorkshire YO21 1PZ (Tel. 01947 603901)

Background

St Hilda's Roman Catholic School is a small school located in Whitby that has no distinct catchment area but has historically served a wide area consisting primarily of Whitby and the surrounding rural area.

Pupil numbers at the school have been low compared to other local schools for many years and governors and leaders of the school as well as the Diocese and NYCC as the Local Authority (LA) have been aware of the school's vulnerability. As a small school operating in an area with a significant surplus of school places the school is particularly susceptible to the effects of falling numbers due to parental preference.

Governors have worked hard to try and increase pupil numbers at the school notably by working alongside the Diocese to bring an Early Years education provider onto the school site and foster relations with these families. The governors, with support from the LA, have also attempted to make cost savings and reduce expenditure where possible.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Middlesbrough has been undergoing a process of converting all of their maintained schools into Academies under the leadership of multi-academy trusts. In December 2018 an academy order was signed for St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School. However, as with all academy conversions a process of due diligence was required before any conversion would be approved. In the case of St Hilda's, the financial situation and projected financial outlook prevented the school from been accepted into a Trust.

Decision to consult upon closure in January 2020

In January 2020 the Governing Body asked the LA to enter into consultation to seek to close St Hilda's RC Primary School due to the continued falling rolls and associated significant financial challenges faced by the school, coupled with the continued lack of applications for admission to the school from Catholic pupils.

During the consultation period in Spring 2020 a group of stakeholders made the case that they would like more time and some further engagement with the LA to explore further any options for keeping the school open. However, due to the Covid 19 Pandemic which closed the School, and the restrictions placed upon gatherings, it was not feasible to hold these kind of discussions within an appropriate timescale given the proposed closure date of 31 August

2020. Having first extended the consultation period, a decision was then taken by the LA in early April to not proceed with the proposal at that time, therefore allowing the opportunity for stakeholders to look at alternatives to closure.

Decision to consult upon closure in September 2020

As part of the work to satisfy themselves that all options had been considered, three local stakeholders, comprising two parents and County Councillor Joe Plant, joined the Schools Governing Body. Alongside this the Roman Catholic Diocese appointed further Foundation Governors to ensure a full range of expertise were available to look at the options. The changes constituted a complete restructure of the Governing Body as only two members remained from the previous board and a new Chair and Vice-Chair were appointed. The LA funded a piece of detailed financial analysis on options for the school going forward and provided additional professional support.

Following a short period of review the LA received a letter from the Governing Body of St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School in early September 2020 in which they stated, *'With enormous sadness and deep regret, and after many months of sustained efforts to identify a solution to the funding crisis faced by the school, the governors of St Hilda's RC Primary School feel they must once again ask North Yorkshire County Council to commence formal consultation on the proposed closure of our St Hilda's.'*

The Governing Body of St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School have not reached this decision lightly. They have decided that pupil numbers had fallen to an unsustainable level and found they were not able to set a balanced budget which is a legal requirement. The Diocese of Middlesbrough has confirmed that there is no evidence to require the continuation of Catholic provision in Whitby and the LA have confirmed that the school is not required to meet their duty to maintain sufficient school places.

The LA is therefore now consulting on the proposal to close the school with effect from 9 April 2021.

Factors affecting the School's viability

There are three main factors leading to this closure proposal. First, the number of children at St Hilda's has fallen from 51 in 2015/16 to 19 in September 2020/21. The total pupil number has now fallen to 2 since the closure proposal was announced earlier this term.

Secondly, with pupil numbers largely determining the school budget the finances are not sustainable. The financial outlook has significantly worsened in line with the dramatic fall in pupils numbers and there is therefore no prospect of financial recovery.

Finally, the Diocese of Middlesbrough's mission and purpose is to provide education with a Catholic character to Catholic children. Out of a total role of 24 children on roll at St Hilda's in 2019/20 only 4 were Catholic. The Diocese confirmed at that time that there was no evidence to support the continuation of Catholic education in Whitby, as there appeared to be no other Catholic children seeking to attend the school. This position has not changed given the current number on roll.

Pupil Numbers

The number of children at St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School has been falling over the past few years. There were just 19 pupils on roll at the beginning of September 2020 and this total has fallen to 2 since the closure proposal was announced. The majority of the pupils who have recently left have taken advantage of the Diocese of Middlesbrough's offer to ensure that places at, and transport to, St Hedda's R.C Primary School, Egton Bridge would be made available for any pupils from St Hilda's. Forecasts indicate there is no reasonable prospect of the numbers of pupils at St Hilda's returning to sustainable levels.

	Total pupils on roll at St Hilda's
2015/16	51
2016/17	46
2017/18	31
2018/19	28
2019/20	24
1 September 2020	19
1 October 2020	2

The pupil roll over recent years has been well below the capacity of the school, which is designed to accommodate 105 pupils if all spaces are in use.

There is a significant surplus of school places across Whitby Town. Where possible school place planners seek to maintain a 5% to 10% surplus of places in a planning area to allow for flexibility within the system and parental preference to be exercised. In Whitby there is currently a surplus of over 30%. Even if all housing identified within the local plan was constructed at expected rates the surplus is projected to stand at 28% in 24/25.

If St Hilda's were to close the surplus across the town would drop to 23% at present, and if all local plan housing was constructed at expected rates that surplus is projected to stand at 21% in 24/25.

The Financial Position

Pupil numbers determine the school budget. With reducing pupil numbers, and a reduced budget, the finances are not sustainable.

<u>Projected Budget Positions as at September 2021</u>	
In Year Deficit 2020/21	- £39.6k
In Year Deficit 2021/22	- £53.4k
In Year Deficit 2022/23	- £30.7k
Cumulative Deficit end of 22/23	- £144.7k

These projections were based on pupil number assumptions of 20 in Autumn 2020 and 26 in Autumn 2021. The financial outlook has significantly worsened in line with the dramatic fall in pupil numbers and there is therefore no prospect of financial recovery.

Schools Standards/Ofsted

The School's last Ofsted inspection was in November 2017 and it confirmed that the school continued to be 'Good'. This proposal is not based upon the quality of the education provision at St Hilda's. However, it should be noted that where numbers of pupils at a school fall very low and budgets become restricted it provides an additional challenge to school standards.

Other local schools

The nearest local school, 0.1 miles from St Hilda's Roman Catholic School, is Airy Hill Primary School, Whitby. There are also four other local Primary Schools; East Whitby Primary Academy, Ruswarp CE VC Primary School, Stakesby Primary Academy and West Cliff Primary School.

The nearest Roman Catholic School at 7.3 miles away is St Hedda's Roman Catholic Primary School, Egton Bridge.

For children currently at St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School, North Yorkshire County Council will work with each family to try to meet their individual preferences for other schools. Governors at St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School are also committed to supporting families in their choice of school and in making a smooth transition. The Diocese of Middlesbrough will seek to ensure that spaces are available at the nearest Catholic Primary School (St Hedda's Primary School, Egton Bridge) and to provide transport for those pupils currently at St Hilda's who wish to continue to receive a Catholic education. Some schools may be able to admit over their published admission numbers for some year groups.

Eligibility for home-to-school transport will be determined in line with the County Council's current home-to-school transport policy and procedures, based on travel distances from each child's home address and individual circumstances.

Parents have a right to express a preference for any school. The LA is the admissions authority for community and voluntary controlled schools and will meet that preference provided there are vacant places or the school is happy to admit above the published admission number. The governing body decides the conditions for admission to Voluntary Aided schools or Academy schools, whilst still bound by the Admissions Code. Where a child attends a school, which is not their normal school or nearest school, parents are normally responsible for making transport arrangements.

North Yorkshire County Council's Admissions Team is always happy to give advice to parents – please contact Vickie Hemming-Allen on 01609 535481 or Lisa Herdman on 01609 534953

Staff

A separate consultation process, including a staff meeting, will run in parallel with the closure process.

The School Site

The school building and part of the site is owned by the Diocese of Middlesbrough with the remainder owned by the County Council. Decisions about the future use of the school building and playing field will be taken by the owners after the closure proposal has been determined.

What Happens Next?

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

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

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

Online responses may be submitted by following this link: [St Hilda's response form](#)

The closing date for responses is 14 December 2020

All responses to the consultation received by this date will be considered by the County Council's Executive on 12 January 2021.

If the County Council's Executive decides to proceed with the closure proposal, then statutory notices would be published in the local press on Friday 22 January 2021. These notices provide a further four weeks for representations to be made. A final decision would then be taken by North Yorkshire County Council's Executive on 9 March 2021. If agreed the school would close on 9 April 2021.

Key Dates

All dates are subject to approvals at each stage.

Consultation opens	2 November 2020
Virtual Public meeting	24 November 2020 at 7pm
Consultation closes	14 December 2020
County Council's Executive considers consultation response	12 January 2021
Statutory Notices published (4 weeks for representations to be made)	22 January 2021 to 19 February 2021
Final decision by County Council's Executive	9 March 2021
Proposed school closure date	9 April 2021

Appendix 1A

St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School, Whitby
A consultation on whether the school should be closed

Link to Corporate Privacy Notice: [NYCC Privacy Notices](#)

All personal information collected by North Yorkshire County Council will be anonymised when the consultation closes. Comments submitted will help to determine the outcome of this proposal.

Do you agree with the proposal to close St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School, Whitby with effect from 9 April 2021? (Yes/No)

Observations and/or suggestions:

Interest/Status

e.g. Parent/Governor/Teacher/Community

Name of School

This information is collected to confirm your proximity to the school

Name (Block Capitals)

Address:

.....

Postcode:

Date:

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

Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

.....

.....

Under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, responses to the consultation may be published on the County Council's website where it may be accessed by members of the public. Your personal details will not be published.

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 RC

Strategic Planning

North Yorkshire County Council

County Hall

NORTHALLERTON, DL7 8AE

Or click on the following link: [St Hilda's response form](#)

and submit your response there

To be received by no later than 14 December 2020

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. We may contact you to discuss your views further. For more information about how your personal data is handled at North Yorkshire County Council please visit: [NYCC Privacy Notices](#)

St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School – List of Consultees

St Hilda's RC	Parents
	Staff and governors
	Chair of Governors
Local Primary Schools:	West Cliff Primary School
	Stakesby Primary School
	Airy Hill Primary School
	East Whitby Primary Academy
	Ruswarp CE Primary School
Unions and Professional Associations:	NAHT
	NASUWT
	NEU (formerly NUT & ATL)
	VOICE
	NUT
	UNISON
Diocese	Roman Catholic Diocese of Middlesbrough
Local church	St Hilda, Whitby
Neighbouring Local Authority:	Redcar & Cleveland
Local County Councillor:	Joe Plant
	David Chance
Scarborough Borough Council	
Mayfield Ward	David Chance
	Glenn Goodberry
Whitby Westcliff Ward	Alf Abbott
	Sue Tucker
Streonshahl Ward	Stewart Campbell
	Michael Stonehouse
Local	Whitby Town Council
Local MP	Robert Goodwill, MP for Scarborough & Whitby
Department for Education	
Regional Schools Commissioner	
11 Early Years Providers Located within 3 miles of St Hilda's R.C Primary School.	

Appendix 2 Notes of Public Meeting

Record of Public Meeting concerning St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School, Whitby

Meeting held on 24 November 2020 using Microsoft Teams (during second national Covid 19 lockdown)

Present: County Cllr Patrick Mulligan (Executive Member for Education and Skills, NYCC), Andrew Dixon (Strategic Planning Manager, NYCC) Matt Blyton (Senior Education Advisor, NYCC), Kevin Duffy (Director of Schools, Diocese of Middlesbrough), County Cllr Joe Plant (LA Governor and Local Member), Pam Crabtree (Headteacher, St Hilda's RC Primary School) Matt George (Strategic Planning Officer, NYCC) and Sue Turley (Strategic Planning Officer, NYCC)

Three governors and a National Education Union representative (North Yorkshire District) also attended.

Apologies:

13 people were present including the Headteacher, who due to connection issues joined some of the meeting via phone.

AGENDA

Meeting opens – brief welcome	Andrew Dixon – Strategic Planning Manager NYCC
Executive Members Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the Panel • Short statement about background • Handover to LA Officer for presentation 	County Cllr Patrick Mulligan
Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal • Background to the proposal • Pupil numbers • Finances • Local Schools • New Local Housing • Catchment area • How can people comment 	Andrew Dixon
Question and Answer Session	County Cllr Patrick Mulligan
Meeting Close	County Cllr Patrick Mulligan

1. Welcome

Andrew Dixon, Strategic Planning Manager at NYCC welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited County Cllr Patrick Mulligan to open the meeting.

It was highlighted that the Microsoft Teams Meeting was being recorded to support the note taking and would be deleted once the notes had been compiled.

Executive Member opening remarks

County Councillor Patrick Mulligan introduced himself and the rest of the panel, noting Kevin Duffy from the Diocese and Cllr Joe Plant who is both a Local County Councillor and also the LA Governor on the Governing Board, were in attendance. The meeting was also supported by Matt George and Sue Turley, Strategic Planning Officers from NYCC.

2. Presentation

Andrew Dixon explained that the purpose of the meeting which is part of the first informal consultation stage for the proposal that the County Council should cease to maintain St Hilda's Roman Primary Catholic School from Easter 2021. The meeting was part of the process to consider the views of all those likely to be affected by the proposal are recorded and considered as part of the decision making process.

Andrew Dixon explained the background to the proposal, noting the unusual situation having had a previous consultation and said that information throughout the meeting would look at the actions taken since then. Kevin Duffy from the Diocese would as part of the meeting set out the position from the Diocese. Andrew said the presentation would address school numbers, the financial position and places available locally at other schools.

As part of the first consultation there was a governing body resolution in January 2020 for consultation on closure and this was started before Covid restrictions came into place with a Public Meeting on 3 March 2020. During this meeting and immediately afterwards, there was representation made that in an ideal world, there would be a period of reflection in terms of what other options could be considered to avoid school closure. Whilst considering this position, the Covid situation accelerated and national lockdown occurred and the school closed. At that time representation was made for further opportunities for exploration between the LA and the Governing body on options. LA Officers at this time were heavily involved in the Covid response and the unprecedented closure of schools. A decision was therefore taken in early April 2020 to halt the closure consultation.

Between April and September 2020 a complete restructure of the Governing Body occurred and they commissioned, alongside the LA, some additional financial analysis work to look at options for a potential recovery plan for the school. After concluding that a recovery plan was not possible, the governing body took a new resolution to ask for consultation on proposed closure. The school community was informed on 10 September 2020 as part of the process. The consultation process was launched on 2 November 2020.

Andrew Dixon then asked Kevin Duffy to speak from a Diocese perspective.

Kevin Duffy Director of Schools, Diocese of Middlesbrough, explained that the Diocese expressed concern on numbers around 4 years ago and the subsequent impact on school finances. Although numbers were high in KS2, lower years in the school were not as high and it was evident that a KS1 reduced intake would work its way through the school. They could see when larger cohorts left the school last year this would present a problem with the total number of pupils on roll and the need to set a balanced budget. The School tried to address

this position from 2016 onwards and to look at attracting more pupils to the school and to manage some of the financial pressures. The Bishop of Middlesbrough had made a decision that all Roman Catholic schools would become academies as part of the regional academy trust structure in place. St Hilda's was due to join one of the trusts in September 2019 but failed the 'Due Diligence' as it was seen as not financially sustainable. The governing body were made aware of this in January 2020 and they resolved to ask for consultation. One key reason the Bishop supported the consultation was that they could see the school could not live within its means and attract numbers at the pace required. With very few Catholic children remaining in the school and low numbers of Catholic pupils coming into the school it was felt at that time there was no longer a need for a Catholic school in Whitby. It was regrettable but they agreed with the consultation on a proposed closure.

From this time there was an impetus and a heroic effort to look to find a solution and garner support of the local community at fundraising but it was too late to bring in the pupil numbers to set a balanced budget against the timeline. So, at the September governing body meeting and with huge regret, they had to look at consultation on potential closure as they were unable to set a budget which would allow them to get a licensed deficit as they could not reach a position for the school to be financially stable within the three years required.

Andrew Dixon talked through the slides relating to pupil numbers. The school's current capacity is for 105 pupils. Numbers on roll have been reducing for some time from 54 in 2013 to 28 in 2018. Significant efforts to attract additional pupils have been made over a period of time in areas including the private nursery on site, press advertisements, flyers to new housing and open days for prospective parents.

At the first consultation in March 2020, pupil numbers were at 24 for the whole school. Year 6 had 9 pupils that would be moving to secondary provision and therefore there would be a reduction overall in school numbers as the school was not recruiting additional 9 pupils. At the start of the autumn term, 19 pupils were on roll at the school including 4 in reception. Communication of the second resolution in September had resulted in a further significant drop, with now only 2 pupils in the whole of the school and they are in Year 1.

Andrew Dixon then talked through the financial projections of the school. The in-year deficit projections of £39k in 20/21 and £53k in 2021/22 would lead to a projected cumulative deficit of £144k in March 2023. These projections were based on pupil number assumptions of 20 in Autumn 20 and 26 in Autumn 21. Given the current numbers at the school, this will be a much changed position going forward with a much more severe deficit.

A number of financial strategies were deployed over time by the school including reducing the Headteacher's teaching commitment, restructured classes and latterly a shared Headteacher arrangement was explored again.

There are 5 local schools within 2 miles of St Hilda's, the four town schools are academies. All have surplus capacity. Overall, there are 1073 places available (October 2019 census) in the area and 793 pupils on roll, so there is well in excess of 200 surplus places (23%) which reduces to 21% surplus after allowing for all housing in the next 5 years including those proposed within the Local Plan within this time period.

In terms of planning places the LA would normally allow for 5-10% surplus places to allow for the more significant yield that might be expected and to take into account of parental preference.

New local housing in the area has seen 430 Local Plan dwellings proposed and is therefore by its nature, medium to long term in relation to those already with planning permission. The LA uses a ratio of 1:4 pupil yield arising from new housing developments.

Unlike Community Schools, St Hilda's does not have a defined catchment area and draws in pupil from a wider area than just Whitby Town and catchment proposals are therefore not required. Andrew highlighted that the LA would ask that parents familiarise themselves with admission arrangements for other schools and noting that Academies are responsible for their own admissions.

This consultation is not about school standards, the school was rated 'Good' by Ofsted in 2017 when there were 34 pupils on roll. The Ofsted inspection noted that although the school had only two classes, it continued to be a 'Good' school. Andrew added that with ever-decreasing numbers on roll, maintaining the quality and breadth of education will become more challenging.

Other Options were discussed and included;

1 Academy Sponsor – not possible through due diligence

2 Federate/Amalgamate – there are a number of existing federations but there would be little attraction for another school to partner with St Hilda's in that way.

3 Continue as is? what are the prospects of increased pupil numbers delivering financial sustainability? No recovery plan was identified by the restructured Governing Body over the past period.

For remaining pupils at the school, advice and assistance is available at any time. Pupils which remain on roll if a decision on closure is made, will be offered places at alternative schools, with places available in line with parental preference wherever possible. Assistance with transport would be provided to children who were eligible where this involves travel beyond 2 miles (or 3 miles for those aged 8+) to the nearest catchment school or nearest school to home address (catchment decision pending). There would be the option of transport to St Hedda's, Egton Bridge in order for pupils to continue with their Catholic education.

School staff will be supported throughout the process. There will be a parallel staff consultation. The governing body would remain in place through to the implementation of the decision, if indeed that is agreed. The Governing body would then be dis-established in April 2021.

School buildings and part of the site are owned by the Diocese with some in NYCC ownership. Future use would be a matter for the Diocese and NYCC. Decisions about the future use would be taken after determination of the closure proposal.

Andrew Dixon outlined the next steps and timeline and encouraged responses to the consultation.

- The consultation launched on 2 November 2020 and will run until 14 December 2020
- County Council Executive considers responses to the consultation on 12 January 2021, If there is a resolution to move to the next stage, there is a further four week representation period between January and March when a decision would be taken on the proposal and in the event of a closure decision is taken the school would close at Easter.

- Final decision – 9 March 2021
- School would close – 9 April 2021

The formal presentation ended and Councillor Mulligan asked for questions and for people to identify themselves when asking a question or commenting by raising the yellow hand icon within the Microsoft Teams function.

3. Questions and Answers

Cllr Plant, an LA Governor at the school, expressed his sadness at the position the school found itself today and as Kevin stated, it was a heroic effort and acknowledged the outstanding work and fundraising achieved. He acknowledged and appreciated the commitment and determination of the re-structured governing body and the work they had done. One fundraising event had raised £2k. The governing body were so determined to save the school and had the community behind them. As a LA Governor, he also threw everything at it.

Cllr Plant also thanked the commitment from the LA and Cllr Patrick Mulligan and everyone else noting that everything he asked for he had received, including the independent financial review to see where the school could go.

Cllr Plant also thanked the Governors who came on Board and who did believe something could be achieved, but it is a very disappointing evening and hard to take, as no one wants to close a school, children are our future and we need to ensure they get the best education. Unfortunately, the pupil numbers are simply not there. Catholic pupils are not coming through and generally, numbers at the school are dropping each year. Cllr Plant reflected on the parents evening held and the subsequent governing body meeting held to decide to consult on a proposal for closure. It was a good meeting, which had something else on the table in terms of a proposal from St Hedda's and one could not blame the parents for their subsequent actions sending pupils to St Hedda's. It was important that the pupils from St Hilda's received a good start to the academic year.

A final thought was to the Governing Body for their great commitment and a big thank you to them all.

Cllr Mulligan thanked Cllr Joe Plant for his comments and said it was a sad day in terms of the position we find ourselves in today.

Paul Busby, National Education Union, North Yorkshire, noted it was a real tragedy and requested more information around the statement regarding 'there was little attraction for a partner to Federate with the school'. This question was also supplemented with a further question, asking if it is the view that the Catholic community is reducing in numbers in the area which has impacted on the school or is it other factors?

Kevin Duffy responded saying that the school was never wholly supported in pupil numbers entirely by the Catholic Community and always relied on its popularity in the local area. It was able to attract 8, 9 or 10 pupils and at around 70 pupils in total, it could run and operate and it is only in recent times numbers have dropped. With very few local children being baptised it had lost its natural bedrock and no longer a school of choice for other children.

If it doesn't have the foundation of three, four or five Catholic pupils coming through, it is then fighting with community school pupils who aren't naturally going to choose a Catholic school who want to go to a small school in Whitby but not such a small school as St Hilda's.

In terms of 'partnership' the school could only enter a Catholic academy trust. As a Catholic school the Bishop would seek them to enter a Catholic academy trust but this was not achievable as it wasn't sustainable. The school financial position as seen tonight, could not get to a breakeven point in the future. As Cllr Plant alluded to, once the second resolution had taken place and parents told of going out to consultation again, there came the feeling there was an inevitability about this. Despite efforts, governors wanted to say to parents, it is bad news but what you want to know is certainty for your child at the start of the academic year and can you wait for the outcomes of the consultation. A really good offer was made to parents if they still wanted a Catholic education at the nearest Catholic school and that the academy trust would pay for free transport. It was felt that parents voted at this point for certainty and numbers at the school collapsed overnight from 18 to 2 and that was parents accepting the inevitability. If you consult twice in a calendar year, parents think closure is inevitable.

Paul Busby thanked Kevin and the Chair

At this point in the meeting Pam Crabtree was able to join the meeting via telephone and was asked if she had any questions. She responded with no further questions at that point in the proceedings.

Cllr Plant said he was interested in understanding in the current on-going Covid situation who the 'consultation link' had gone to? It was important for everyone to understand this particularly in the current Covid situation.

Andrew Dixon responded saying in accordance with normal practice, a full copy of the consultation document was emailed to known stakeholders which included parents and staff, Councillors both County and District and in addition, the Town Council, National Teaching Union, local Parish Priest, all other local schools in the area and Early Years providers were sent the consultation link.

Andrew highlighted a further reminder was sent last Thursday to everyone regarding the meeting tonight. Andrew stated that it was unusual to do a virtual meeting for a proposed school closure but this was due to the current Covid situation. In order to support this situation, a request was made to the Town Council in advance of the meeting, for their assistance with the matter. This was to ensure if they knew of anyone who wanted to take part or who wished to be engaged in the consultation but didn't have access on line, to make themselves known to the school and the LA could then look at what alternative arrangements could be put in place. Nobody had done this to date but Andrew said that group phone calls for example could happen to ensure people's views were heard.

Cllr Plant added that the Scarborough and Whitby Area Constituency Committee had recently been held and that he mentioned the proposal at this meeting including process and dates. Cllr Plant took that as a record that local councillors knew about the meeting tonight. The Press Officer also knew the meeting was going ahead tonight.

Matt Blyton said he echoed Cllr Plant's earlier words and comments and wanted to thank the governing board and those who had joined to try to mitigate against the proposed closure. Matt reiterated for the record, there were no school standards or school improvement issues in the proposal. Excellent education had been provided to pupils over many years. Matt paid his personal tribute and thanks to Pam Crabtree, Headteacher at the school and staff commenting how they had conducted themselves over a very difficult period of their professional careers. Pam had made an enormous contribution of 20 years plus to the school and latterly, wrestled

with the challenges of Covid, two consultations and a significant loss of pupils. It is their health and well-being that is really important and he will ensure whatever decision is taken that he will be standing alongside staff and providing pastoral and the school improvement agenda to the end.

Leanne Coates, parent and school governor thought it would be useful to provide the meeting with an update regarding the children who had moved to St Hedda's and it was important to end on a high note saying the children who had moved had settled in really well and were not concerned about the transport. This is all a massive credit to the Headteacher and staff St Hedda's.

Cllr Mulligan responded and thanked Leanne for her contribution said that was good to hear and as Cllr Plant had remarked, it is all about the children.

Cllr Plant, following on from Matt Blyton's comments added that the children come first and it is about the children and their health and well-being ensuring they are well served. He wanted to pay tribute to the children and their parents for their outstanding determination in coming through all of this.

Cllr Mulligan after receiving no further comments from the public, thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting, it is a sad day but good to hear positive comments about the school and how children have settled into their new school, which is encouraging.

The meeting closed at 19:46.

Appendix 3- Responses to Consultation Meeting

<u>Do you agree with the proposal to close St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School?</u>	<u>Do you have any comments or observations on the proposal?</u>	<u>What is your interest or status?</u>	<u>Name of school represented:</u>
No	Points which I made in the initial consultation process are no longer relevant as I realise that sadly since the removal of the majority of pupils in September there is now no chance for the survival of this wonderful school. The closure of St Hilda's will be a great loss to the town. It is an excellent school, staffed by caring and dedicated people. There will no longer be the choice of a faith school within the town. The Christian ethos of the school shone through everything they did.	Parent	St Hilda's RC Primary School

Appendix 4 Equalities Impact Assessment



Equality impact assessment (EIA) form: evidencing paying due regard to protected characteristics

(Form updated April 2019)

Proposal to close St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School

If you would like this information in another language or format such as Braille, large print or audio, please contact the Communications Unit on 01609 53 2013 or email communications@northyorks.gov.uk.

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে বলুন।

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。

اگر آپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے پوچھیے۔



Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are public documents. EIAs accompanying reports going to County Councillors for decisions are published with the committee papers on our website and are available in hard copy at the relevant meeting. To help people to find completed EIAs we also publish them in the Equality and Diversity section of our website. This will help people to see for themselves how we have paid due regard in order to meet statutory requirements.

Name of Directorate and Service Area	CYPS Strategic Planning Team
Lead Officer and contact details	Andrew Dixon, County Hall
Names and roles of other people involved in carrying out the EIA	Matt George, Strategic Planning officer
How will you pay due regard? e.g. working group, individual officer	LA Officers and School Governing Body
When did the due regard process start?	Consultation started on 2 November 2020

Section 1. Please describe briefly what this EIA is about. (e.g. are you starting a new service, changing how you do something, stopping doing something?)

A proposal to close (cease to maintain) St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School. A period of consultation with the community has been carried out, including written consultation and a virtual public meeting and a statutory representation period will follow.

Section 2. Why is this being proposed? What are the aims? What does the authority hope to achieve by it? (e.g. to save money, meet increased demand, do things in a better way.)

The County Council is under a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places in the area, promote high educational standards, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote fulfilment of every child's educational potential. There are three key concerns: 1) Low pupil numbers; 2) The schools financial position, and 3) Lack of Demand for Catholic Places. These issues are laid out in detail in the consultation document and the report to CYPS Executive Members on 20 November 2020.

Section 3. What will change? What will be different for customers and/or staff?

It is proposed that St Hilda's Roman Catholic Primary School should close with effect from 9 April 2021.

Section 4. Involvement and consultation (What involvement and consultation has been done regarding the proposal and what are the results? What consultation will be needed and how will it be done?)

The consultation period ran from 2 November to 14 December 2020. Consultation documents were distributed to a wide range of stakeholders, and a virtual public meeting was held. The consultation document and responses are included in the report to the Executive on 12 January 2021.

Section 5. What impact will this proposal have on council budgets? Will it be cost neutral, have increased cost or reduce costs? Please explain briefly why this will be the result.

There may be some additional pupil transport costs.

Any 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 revenue or capital balances would be made available to the receiving school in line with the Closing School Accounting Policy.

If the school closed, there could be a potential additional cost to the Local Authority in providing transport to other schools. Free home to school transport would be provided for entitled pupils in accordance with the revised catchment area arrangements in accordance with the County Council's Home to School transport policy.

Section 6. How will this proposal affect people with protected characteristics?	No impact	Make things better	Make things worse	Why will it have this effect? Provide evidence from engagement, consultation and/or service user data or demographic information etc.
Age		X	X	Currently there are only 2 pupils on roll. If the decision is taken to close the school this adversely affects the current cohort. Moving to an alternative school will increase the opportunities for pupils to work and play with children their own age.
Disability	X			Pupils – The school is mainstream offering universal provision. Expertise will be utilised from the County Council to provide appropriate SEN support. Staff – As an organisation NYCC will continue to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 which obligates us to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate disabled individuals as employees or service users.
Sex	X			No impact is anticipated.
Race	X			No impact is anticipated.
Gender reassignment	X			No impact is anticipated.
Sexual orientation	X			No impact is anticipated.
Religion or belief			X	If the decision is taken to close the School, this will adversely impact upon those pupils who wish to be educated in a Roman Catholic School in Whitby. However, the nearest Roman Catholic School, 7.4 miles from St

				Hilda's, is St Hedda's Roman Catholic Primary School.
Pregnancy or maternity	X			No impact is anticipated.
Marriage or civil partnership	X			No impact is anticipated.

Section 7. How will this proposal affect people who...	No impact	Make things better	Make things worse	Why will it have this effect? Provide evidence from engagement, consultation and/or service user data or demographic information etc.
..live in a rural area?	X			No impact anticipated.
...have a low income?	X			No impact anticipated
...are carers (unpaid family or friend)?	X			No impact anticipated

Section 8. Geographic impact – Please detail where the impact will be (please tick all that apply)	
North Yorkshire wide	
Craven district	
Hambleton district	
Harrogate district	
Richmondshire district	
Ryedale district	
Scarborough district	X
Selby district	
If you have ticked one or more districts, will specific town(s)/village(s) be particularly impacted? If so, please specify below.	
Whitby	

Section 9. Will the proposal affect anyone more because of a combination of protected characteristics? (e.g. older women or young gay men) **State what you think the effect may be and why, providing evidence from engagement, consultation and/or service user data or demographic information etc.**

All pupils and staff at the school would experience changes under these proposals that staff and governors would need to manage sensitively.

The County Council’s Officers now feel that this decision is in the best interests of children and families served by the school.

The Local Authority’s Admission Team will continue to work with families to try to meet their individual preferences for primary schools.

Home to school transport will be assessed in line with the County Council’s policy.

Section 10. Next steps to address the anticipated impact. Select one of the following options and explain why this has been chosen. (Remember: we have an anticipatory duty to make reasonable adjustments so that disabled people can access services and work for us)	Tick option chosen
1. No adverse impact - no major change needed to the proposal. There is no potential for discrimination or adverse impact identified.	
2. Adverse impact - adjust the proposal - The EIA identifies potential problems or missed opportunities. We will change our proposal to reduce or remove these adverse impacts, or we will achieve our aim in another way which will not make things worse for people.	
3. Adverse impact - continue the proposal - The EIA identifies potential problems or missed opportunities. We cannot change our proposal to reduce or remove these adverse impacts, nor can we achieve our aim in another way which will not make things worse for people. (There must be compelling reasons for continuing with proposals which will have the most adverse impacts. Get advice from Legal Services)	X
4. Actual or potential unlawful discrimination - stop and remove the proposal – The EIA identifies actual or potential unlawful discrimination. It must be stopped.	
<p>Explanation of why option has been chosen. (Include any advice given by Legal Services.)</p> <p>This proposal may be considered to have an adverse impact for those two pupils currently on role at the school as they would have to move to an alternative a school, as set out above in Section 7.</p> <p>Careful consideration has been had to alternatives to closure it is concluded that the case for closure is strong and in the best interests of educational provision in the area.</p>	

Section 11. If the proposal is to be implemented how will you find out how it is really affecting people? (How will you monitor and review the changes?)

Monitoring of standards will be carried out through the County Council’s Education and Skills Team and through Ofsted inspections. Monitoring of sufficiency of school places in the Whitby area will be undertaken by the CYPS Strategic Planning Team.

Section 12. Action plan. List any actions you need to take which have been identified in this EIA, including post implementation review to find out how the outcomes have been achieved in practice and what impacts there have actually been on people with protected characteristics.

Action	Lead	By when	Progress	Monitoring arrangements
Not applicable				

Section 13. Summary Summarise the findings of your EIA, including impacts, recommendation in relation to addressing impacts, including any legal advice, and next steps. This summary should be used as part of the report to the decision maker.

The purpose of the consultation and proposed decision is to ensure that the children are provided with the best education provision in the area in a sustainable, stable and effective manner. In order to achieve these aims, despite the adverse impacts identified, the proposal to close the school needs to be considered.

Section 14. Sign off section

This full EIA was completed by:

Name: Matt George

Job title: Strategic Planning Officer

Directorate: CYPS

Signature:

Completion date: 10/12/20

Authorised by relevant Assistant Director (signature): Amanda Newbold

Date: 18/12/20