



Consultation Document

Proposal to close
Hackforth and Hornby Church of England Voluntary
Controlled Primary School
from 31 August 2025

Hackforth and Hornby Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

November 2024

This paper sets out details of a proposal by North Yorkshire Council to close Hackforth and Hornby Church of England, Voluntary Controlled, Primary School with effect from 31 August 2025. It gives the background to the proposal. There will be a public meeting at Hackforth Village Hall, Hackforth, Bedale, DL8 1PE on Wednesday 4th December at 5.30pm.

The Current Position

The Governing Board of Hackforth and Hornby Church of England, Voluntary Controlled, Primary School recently resolved, with regret and reluctance, to ask North Yorkshire Council to commence a consultation on closure of this school. At a meeting, on 3rd June 2024, the Governing Board unanimously voted to seek to consult on the school's closure at the end of the current academic year, because pupil numbers have fallen to an unsustainable level.

The Local Authority and the Diocese agree that this is in the best interests of current and future pupils because numbers have fallen to a level where it is difficult to provide a high quality of education for pupils in the long term. The Council is therefore now consulting on the proposal to close the school with effect from 31 August 2025.

Background

The Governing Board of Hackforth and Hornby Church of England (CE) Voluntary Controlled (VC) Primary School have not reached this decision lightly. In September 2021 they entered a collaboration with the Federation of Snape Community and Thornton Watlass Church of England Primary Schools and have already worked hard to support the school by working collaboratively with the Federation to make sure that good standards of teaching and learning are available for all pupils.

There is leadership across the three schools, led by the Executive Headteacher of the Federation and, from the outset, the main aim of the collaboration has been to provide pupils with a broad educational experience within a small rural school context. The collaboration, where leadership is shared between schools, has provided a range of enrichment opportunities for pupils and has also supported the professional development of staff, providing opportunities to share ideas with other teachers.

However, with 8 pupils currently on roll, the Governing Body have now reached the conclusion that these measures will not offer a solution that will sustain the school in the long term. The critical concern is pupil numbers, which would inevitably result in an inability to provide the necessary breadth of curriculum experience and would also irrevocably undermine the school's future financial position.

Hackforth and Hornby CE VC Primary School is located in the rural village of Hackforth. The School serves a sparse catchment area north of Bedale and it is defined by the government as 'a rural school that serves a hamlet with isolated dwellings'. The Department for Education (DfE) expects decision makers to adopt a presumption against the closure of rural schools. However, the DfE makes 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.

Factors Affecting the School's Viability

Pupil Numbers

Hackforth and Hornby is a small rural 4-11 CE VC Primary School and currently has 8 children on roll. The School has operated with circa 30 pupils since 2016/17, reducing further each year since 2020/21. According to each October's pupil census, there has been a downward trend in the number of pupils on roll since 2016/17:

2016/17 – 45 pupils
2017/18 – 30 pupils
2018/19 – 29 pupils
2019/20 – 23 pupils
2020/21 – 32 pupils
2021/22 – 19 pupils
2022/23 – 15 pupils
2023/24 – 15 pupils
2024/25 – 8 pupils

Pupil forecasts indicate that these numbers will not recover significantly in the longer term and may reduce still further. In these circumstances, it would be difficult to deliver and sustain quality education.

The table below is based on the number of primary children living in the school's catchment area at the time of the pupil census. In October of each year the pupil census recorded a relatively small number of primary-aged children living within the school's catchment area. The table shows the catchment area having an average primary-aged cohort of around 20 children. This is not usually enough to make a school viable, especially when very few children living within the catchment area attend the school and there are surplus places in other primary schools surrounding the catchment area.

The second column in the table shows the majority of Hackforth and Hornby's in-area children consistently attending other local primary schools. Each October the census records a very low percentage attending the school. It shows that consistently over 75% of the in-area children attend other primary schools and in 2022 the percentage of in-area children attending reduced to circa 15%.

	Primary school age children living in catchment	How many of these attended Hackforth and Hornby Primary
2019 Census	16	6
2020 Census	20	5
2021 Census	21	4
2022 Census	19	3
2023 Census	20	2

The School has a Published Admission Number (PAN) of six pupils per year group, a net capacity of 42 and could contribute 42 places to the local area.

School Leadership, Standards and Curriculum

There is a leadership across the three schools within the collaboration which is led by the Executive Headteacher of the Federation of Snape and Thornton Watlass. Some subject leaders work across the collaboration of three schools.

OFSTED's overall judgement, in their full inspection of the school in 2022, was Good and OFSTED commended the collaboration with the Federation of Snape and Thornton Watlass. Their Section 8 (ie Monitoring) Inspection of the school in 2019 confirmed the Good judgement made in their previous full inspection in 2010.

As (primarily for demographic reasons) numbers fall, it is increasingly difficult to provide the remaining pupils with access to the full range of experiences they need. The Governing Body and the Local Authority have become increasingly concerned that pupils will not have access to the full range of experiences they need, particularly opportunities for working and playing with children their own age.

The Financial Position

Pupil numbers determine the funding for a school budget. The school is projecting deficits in year of £27.3k in 2024/25 and £58.5k in 2025/26, and cumulative deficit of £81.6k in 2025/26. These figures are based on current pupil assumptions, so the position could deteriorate further if pupil numbers fall.

The 2024/25 Start Budget for Hackforth and Hornby CE VC Primary School indicated the following revenue budget position:

	In year position	Accumulated balance
2024/25	£27.3k deficit	£23k deficit,
2025/26	£58.5k deficit	£81.6k deficit
2026/27	£85.6k deficit	£167.2k deficit.

There appears to be no reasonable long-term prospect of recovery for the revenue element of the budget given the very low numbers of Reception age children for 2025/26 and 26/27 intakes living with the catchment area. In the event of Hackforth and Hornby closing on 31 August 2025 any final deficit on the school budget, after all costs have been accounted for, would need to be met from local authority funds.

Primary School places in the local area

It is important to ensure that there are sufficient school places in the local area. In a sense this is already shown by the number of in area pupils already attending other primary schools.

The table above shows that in 2023 there were 20 pupils living in Hackforth and Hornby's discrete catchment area and that there were only two pupils attending the school at the time from the Hackforth and Hornby catchment area. The October 2023 Census shows that three pupils attending were from the Michael Syddall CE VA Primary School's catchment area, two were attending from the catchment area of Crakehall CE Primary School and another two were attending from Wavell Community School's catchment.

The nearest school to Hackforth and Hornby Church of England (VC) Primary School (2.5 miles away) is Crakehall CE VC Primary School where there are places available, though not in all year groups. The next nearest school (at 3.7 miles) is Michael Syddall

Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School where there are places available. Places are available at Aiskew Leeming Bar Church of England Primary School (4.6 miles away). These schools were all judged 'Good' in their last Ofsted inspection.

There are five other neighbouring primary schools within a five-mile radius of Hackforth and Hornby CE VC Primary School. Across the area there is a general surplus of places. Further details of school capacities and pupil forecasts are set out in an accompanying document.

The Proposal and Catchment Areas

For the reasons above it is proposed that Hackforth and Hornby Church of England (VC) Primary School should close with effect from 31 August 2025.

It is also proposed that should Hackforth and Hornby Primary School close, the catchment areas of Crakehall Church of England Primary School, Michael Syddall Church of England Aided Primary School, Aiskew Leeming Bar Church of England Primary School, Kirkby Fleetham Church of England Primary School, and Hunton and Arrathorne Community Primary School should each be extended to include the current Hackforth and Hornby catchment area, as a shared catchment area. This is shown on maps accompanying this consultation document. These arrangements would be implemented from September 2025 only in the event of closure for Hackforth and Hornby Church of England (VC) Primary School.

The Council would welcome views regarding the shared catchment area proposal as part of this consultation.

Admissions

Free home to school transport would be provided for eligible pupils to the nearest school in accordance with the Council's Home to School Travel Policy, September 2024.

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 school building and playing field are owned by the Diocese of Leeds, rather than the Council. Decisions about the future of a school building are separate to the 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

- Maps showing the current local catchment areas including the proposed sharing of the catchment area, should Hackforth and Hornby Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School close.

- 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
 Hackforth and Hornby CE Primary, Hackforth
 Strategic Planning
 North Yorkshire Council
 County Hall
 NORTHALLERTON
 DL7 8AE

Online responses may be submitted by following this link: [Hackforth and Hornby comments](#)

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 20 December 2024

All responses to the consultation received by this date are scheduled to be considered by the Council’s Executive on 21 January 2025.

If the Council’s Executive decides to proceed with the closure proposal, then statutory notices would be published in the local press on 31 January 2025. 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 18 March 2025. If agreed, the school would close on 31 August 2025.

Anticipated Key Dates

All dates are subject to approvals at each stage.

Consultation opens	11 November 2024
Public meeting	4 December at 5.30pm
Consultation closes	20 December 2024
Council’s Executive considers consultation response	21 January 2025
Statutory Notices published (4 weeks for representations to be made)	31 January – 28 February 2025
Final decision by Council’s Executive	18 March 2025
Proposed school closure date	31 August 2025

Hackforth and Hornby Church of England, Voluntary Controlled, Primary School - Consultation

This is a consultation on proposals to close Hackforth and Hornby Church of England (VC) Primary School from 31 August 2025.

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

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

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
Hackforth and Hornby CE Primary, Hackforth
Strategic Planning
North Yorkshire Council
County Hall
NORTHALLERTON
DL7 8AE

Or to submit your response online go to:

[Hackforth and Hornby comments](#)

To be received by no later than **20 December 2024**