

APPENDIX: A

Statutory proposals for school closures

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

Contact details

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

Hackforth and Hornby Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Station Road, Hackforth, Bedale, North Yorkshire, DL8 1PE on 31 August 2025.

Hackforth and Hornby Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a 4-11 Church of England Voluntary Controlled primary school in North Yorkshire.

Implementation

It is proposed to close the school from 31 August 2025.

Reason for closure

Hackforth and Hornby Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is located in the rural village of Hackforth. The school is defined by the government as a rural school that serves a hamlet with isolated dwellings. 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 Governing Body of Hackforth and Hornby CE VC Primary School have worked to support the School through a collaboration with the Federation of Snape and Thornton Watlass Primary Schools, which has been in place since September 2021. As part of the collaboration, there is shared leadership across the three schools, which is led by the Executive Headteacher of the Snape and Thornton Watlass Federation.

In Autumn 2024 Governors brought forward a proposal to consult on the closure due to low pupil numbers and an expected low Reception intake in September 2025 leading to a decline in the overall number on roll. This has led to financial pressures, meaning that the school will have an in-year deficit of £58.5k and cumulative deficit of £81.6k in 2025/26. 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 this academic year.

Pupil numbers and admissions

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

There are currently 8 pupils on roll at the school of compulsory school age and they are all junior age. Five of the 8 pupils are female, and three pupils are male.

	Pupil numbers	PAN
Reception	0	6
Year 1	0	6
Year 2	0	6
Year 3	1	6
Year 4	1	6
Year 5	3	6
Year 6	3	6
Totals	8	

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 around 42 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.

- No interim arrangements have been necessary

The proposal is to cease to maintain Hackforth and Hornby Church of England VC Primary School from 31 August 2025. The proposals include that, in the event of closure, the catchment area currently served by Hackforth and Hornby Church of England VC School will be shared between 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. It is proposed that the catchment areas of these schools should each be extended to include the current Hackforth and Hornby catchment area, as a shared catchment area. These arrangements would be implemented from September 2025 only in the event of closure for Hackforth and Hornby.

There are currently 8 pupils at Hackforth and Hornby CE VC Primary and there are projected to be 5 pupils in need of an alternative school place for September 2025, if the school closes. The combined number of available spaces (against Net Capacity) at the five proposed catchment schools 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 is 185. There are places available in local schools in all year groups, however some of the schools are operating at or above PAN. If the decision is made to proceed with the statutory notices and proposed closure, Council Officers will work with parents and families to identify spaces for their children. When inspected, all five proposed catchment schools were judged to be 'Good' schools.

As is currently the case, parents of pupils from any part of the existing Hackforth and Hornby catchment area and beyond could choose to apply for places at one of the proposed shared catchment area schools and would be entitled to places where available in line School admissions policy. As part of the consultation process we are asking for views on the future catchment area.

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

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

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

Impact on the community

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

In some villages the school itself may be the only building large enough to facilitate community gatherings however, in the case of Hackforth and Hornby there is Hackforth Village Hall adjacent to the school which is available for hire. Hackforth Village Hall also serves Hornby and Langthorne. Whilst the school is clearly valued by the village, of the 20 primary aged pupils living within the school's catchment area only 2 are attending Hackforth and Hornby CE VC Primary, with parental preference for other schools significantly outnumbering preference for Hackforth and Hornby in all year groups.

There is also Saint Mary's Church in Hornby, a short distance (1.8 miles) from the school. Children from the school regularly visit the Church and there would be an impact, in that these visits would decline and the proportion of church school places would reduce, should the school close. The local authority has an obligation to consider the impact on the proportion of church school places when it determines the outcome of school closure proposals. The Anglican Diocese of Leeds is supporting the local authority with the consultation and the proposal. Although the local authority should not normally approve the closure of a school with a religious character where the proposal would result in a reduction in the proportion of relevant denominational places in the area this guidance does not apply in cases where the school is severely undersubscribed.

The initial legal examination of documents suggests that ownership of the building is held by the Anglican Diocese of Leeds and the Diocese would need to determine future management and use of the building. Decisions about the school site will be taken by the owners of the site after the closure proposal has been determined.

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

Rural primary schools

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

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

- Educational standards at the school and the effect on standards at other schools
- Alternatives to closure such as federation or academy status
- The availability and cost of transport to other schools

- Any potential increase to car use
- The impact on the community

The following addresses the issues which need to be considered under the Presumption Against Closure of a Rural School statutory guidance:

A) *Educational standards at the school and the likely effect on standards at neighbouring schools.*

The standards at Hackforth and Hornby CE VC Primary School have not been a key factor in bringing forward this proposal nor are the displaced pupils expected to have any effect on the standards of neighbouring schools.

The council highly values the provision of education by small schools and, due primarily to its geography, North Yorkshire has approximately 100 primary schools with fewer than 100 pupils on roll and approximately half of these schools with fewer than 50 pupils on roll. Although there is no straightforward correlation between the number of pupils on roll at a school and its standards, it is considered that when pupil numbers get extremely low, as in this instance, it is increasingly challenging to deliver the full breadth of curriculum and enable the social and emotional opportunities required for pupils in similar age peer groups.

B) *Any alternatives to the discontinuance of the school.*

The collaboration with, and the leadership by the Executive Headteacher of, the Federation of Snape and Thornton Watlass aimed to improve viability. Other alternatives to closure have been carefully considered by the governing board and the Council, including conversion to academy status and joining a multi-academy trust and the scope is limited under due diligence and the financial position.

When the Governing Board asked the Council to commence the consultation, they did so having fully considered pupil numbers and financial prospects. The projected budget deficit was based upon previous pupil numbers continuing and it is likely that the factoring in of current pupil numbers and forecast pupil numbers would result in a further deterioration of the budget position.

Regarding the proposal for the school to join an academy trust, the pupil numbers have not grown sufficiently to ensure that the funding available will be sufficient for the school to be viable going forward. Consequently, no academy trust has discussed academy conversion with the Department for Education and no application has reached the Department for Education's advisory board due to the low and falling numbers and questions over the viability of the school.

With the current financial outlook for the school and as the school has already worked in a collaboration with the Federation of Snape and Thornton Watlass Primary Schools, no option for working with other schools is considered possible at this time.

C) *The availability, and likely cost to the local authority, of transport to other schools.*

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

pupils.

D) *Any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the discontinuance of the school, and whether the proposal will result in unreasonably long journey times.*

It is challenging to ascertain the degree to which this proposal will cause an increase in journeys and mileage of those journeys. Some of the pupils that have attended Hackforth and Hornby CE VC Primary historically will have travelled by car and this is particularly true for pupils attending from outside the catchment area. The nature of parental preference and the choice of method to get to school including taking account of any lift sharing is also difficult to account for. If all parents chose to send their children to schools further afield then this would likely increase CO² emissions from transport associated with this cohort. However, it must also be acknowledged that maintaining a school itself has an impact on energy and carbon emissions and climate change. At present the school is being heated and powered for 8 statutory school age pupils, not an efficient use of energy. A Climate Change Impact Assessment forms Appendix 7 and addresses the issue in further detail.

Attendance at any of the schools proposed as catchment schools for the current Hackforth and Hornby catchment area could be achieved without causing unreasonably long journey times. The government's maximum recommended travel time for primary age pupils is 45 minutes each way and the proposed catchment schools are considerably closer than that to the relevant settlements within the current Hackforth and Hornby catchment area.

E) *The likely effect of the discontinuance of the school on the local community.*

To summarise information provided in more detail in the 'Impact on the Community' Section above, whilst the closure of the school will have an impact on any village, there are other venues that the local community can utilise, and they currently use Hackforth Village Hall rather than the school building for community events. As stated in more detail in the Executive Member Report and the Consultation Paper (Appendix 2) in relation to whether the school is being used by the local community, the proportion of pupils attending the school from within the local community is very low.

As of October 2024, there were 20 Primary aged children who were living in the catchment area of Hackforth and Hornby CE VC Primary School and attending a North Yorkshire School. Of those, 2 were attending Hackforth and Hornby CE VC and 18 were attending elsewhere.

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

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

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.

The educational landscape of North Yorkshire includes a variety of types of educational settings and some of these have a religious character. Hackforth and Hornby primary school has a Church of England designation.

Four of the five proposed shared catchment area schools have a Church of England designation. In selecting the five proposed shared area catchment schools, should Hackforth and Hornby close, council officers have been mindful of the importance for parental choice of Church of England designation.

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

Maintained nursery schools

Not applicable

Sixth form provision

Not applicable

Special educational needs provision

The existing provision at Hackforth and Hornby CE VC Primary School is not reserved for pupils with special educational needs.

Travel

Details of length and journeys to alternative provision.

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

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

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

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

nearest schools are:

Primary School	Distance by road from Hackforth & Hornby CE VC (miles)
Hackforth & Hornby CE	N/A
Crakehall CE	2.5 miles
Aiskew Leeming Bar CE	4.6 miles
Hunton & Arrathorne CP	4.1 miles
Michael Syddall CE	3.7 miles
Kirkby Fleetham CE	5.0 miles

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

Procedure for making representations (objections and comments)

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal, any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to Strategic Planning - Children and Young People's Service, North Yorkshire Council, County Hall, Northallerton, DL7 8AE, or by email to schoolorganisation@northyorks.gov.uk by 28 February 2025.

Consultation

The decision to consult on the proposal was taken by the Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills on the 7 November 2024. A consultation paper setting out the proposal was sent to staff of the school as well as other interested parties and individuals. A copy of the Consultation Paper is attached as Appendix 2 together with a list of the consultees at Appendix 3. The consultation period ran from 11 November to 20 December 2024. A public meeting was held on 4 December and was attended by officers of the Council, a representative from that Anglican Diocese of Leeds, Governors, a number of parents, members of the local community and other local stakeholders. A record of that meeting is attached as Appendix 4. Consultation responses are shown at Appendix 5.

Appendices

- Appendix 1b: Statutory Notice
- Appendix 2: Consultation Paper
- Appendix 3: List of the Consultees
- Appendix 4: Notes of the Public Meeting
- Appendix 5: Consultation Responses
- Appendix 6: Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix 7: Climate Change Impact Assessment

(See report to Executive, 21 January 2025 for these appendices).