



Consultation Document

Proposal to close Arkengarthdale Church of England

Voluntary Controlled Primary School

from 31 August 2019

Arkengarthdale Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

25th January 2019

This paper sets out details of a proposal to close Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School with effect from 31 August 2019. It gives the background to the proposal. There will be a public meeting on:

Monday 18th February 2019 at 6.30 pm

at Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School, Richmond DL11 6EN

The Current Position

At a meeting on 15th November 2018 the Governing Body of Arkengarthdale Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School unanimously voted to seek to consult on the school's closure, because pupil numbers have fallen to an unsustainable level. The governing body has written to request that the County Council begin consulting on a proposal to close the school at the end of the current academic year. The Local Authority agree that this is in the best interests of current and future pupils from Arkengarthdale 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 County Council is therefore now consulting on the proposal to close the school with effect from 31 August 2019.

The LA and the Governing Body of Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School have not reached this decision lightly and have already worked hard to support the school, such as introducing a shared headship and working collaboratively with Richmond Methodist School to make sure that good standards of teaching and learning are available for all pupils.

Background

Arkengarthdale School, near Langthwaite, has collaborated with

Richmond Methodist Primary School in headship and teaching since 2013. Since the outset of the collaboration, the main aim has been to provide pupils with a broad educational experience within a small rural school context. The collaboration, where leadership is shared between both schools, has provided a range of enrichment opportunities for pupils, such as competitive sports, outdoor learning and opportunities to perform in musical events. The collaboration with Richmond Methodist School has also supported the professional development of staff, providing opportunities to teach every week in a larger school context and to share ideas with other teachers. However, Richmond Methodist School's governing body has taken the decision to focus leadership on their school and, as pupil numbers will fall to 2 in September 2019, Arkengarthdale's governors 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 the fall in pupil numbers, which would inevitably result in an inability to provide the necessary breadth of curriculum experience and would also irrevocably undermine the schools future financial position.

Pupil Numbers

The number of children at

Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School has been falling over the past few years. There are 6 pupils on roll at the beginning of this Spring Term 2019 and these are projected to fall to just 2 in September 2019. This is well below the capacity of the school – which is designed to accommodate 60 pupils if all spaces are in use. 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.

Breadth of Curriculum

For demographic reasons, numbers at Arkengarthdale have fallen more quickly than anticipated. As numbers fall, it is increasingly difficult to provide the remaining pupils with access to the full range of experiences they need.

The most recent full Ofsted inspection was in February 2014. At this time there were 31 pupils on roll. OFSTED said that “The teaching is good overall”. A more recent “short” inspection in May 2018 confirmed this “good” judgement and commended the collaboration with Richmond Methodist School, particularly the ‘Enrichment Friday’ which enabled pupils to experience learning in a larger school context.

However, as numbers have fallen since then, the School’s 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 school budget. The school is projecting deficits

in year of £17.4k in 2019/20 and £35k in 2020/21, and cumulative deficit of £68k in 2021/22. These were based on pupil assumptions of 9 in 2019/20 and 5 in 2020/21, so the position will deteriorate further as pupil numbers have fallen and there appears to be no reasonable prospect of recovery.

The Proposal

For the reasons above it is proposed that Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School should close with effect from 31 August 2019.

The nearest local school, 3.7 miles from Arkengarthdale School, is Reeth Community Primary School. There is also Gunnerside Methodist Primary School, which is 5.8 miles from Arkengarthdale School.

The nearest Church of England School at 15.7 miles away is Ravensworth Church of England School.

Although the school has been collaborating with Richmond Methodist School, there are only limited places available at Richmond Methodist Primary School, which is 15.2 miles from the school.

It is proposed that the catchment area of Reeth Community Primary School is expanded to include the current Arkengarthdale catchment area. This school has the capacity to take the additional pupils and has indicated a willingness to do so. Reeth is currently federated with Gunnerside Methodist Primary School, with a single governing body and some shared staffing arrangements and resources.

The County Council would welcome consultees’ views on the proposed catchment area extension and other options.

For children currently at Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School, North Yorkshire County Council will work with each family to try to meet their individual preferences for other schools regardless of the catchment area defined. Staff and governors at Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School are also committed to supporting families in their choice of school and in making a smooth transition.

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 and, in the case of community and voluntary controlled schools, the 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 or Academy schools, the governing body decides the conditions for admission to their particular school, 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 Karen Crossland on 01609 534950 or Lisa Herdman on 01609 534953.

Staff

A separate consultation process, including a staff meeting, is running in parallel with the consultation on the closure proposal.

The School Site

The school building is not owned by the County Council. The detached playing field was gifted and there is a covenant for it to be used for community use. Decisions about the future use of the school buildings and detached 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 either complete and return the attached response sheet, or submit an online response

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

FREEPOST RTKE-RKAY-CUJS
Arkengarthdale
Strategic Planning
North Yorkshire County Council
County Hall
NORTHALLERTON
DL7 8AE

Online responses may be submitted by following this link:

<https://consult.northyorks.gov.uk/snapweb/host/s.asp?k=154529636208>

The closing date for responses is

Friday 15th March 2019

All responses to the consultation received by this date will be considered by the County Council's Executive on 16 April 2019.

If the County Council's Executive

decides to proceed with the closure proposal, then statutory notices would be published in the local press on Thursday 2 May 2019. These notices provide a further four weeks for

representations to be made. A final decision would then be made by North Yorkshire County Council's Executive in June 2019. If agreed the school would close on 31 August 2019.

Anticipated Key Dates

All dates are subject to approvals at each stage.

Consultation opens	25 January 2019
Public meeting at the school	18 February 2019
Consultation closes	15 March 2019
County Council's Executive considers consultation response	16 April 2019
Statutory Notices published (4 weeks for representations to be made)	2 - 30 May 2019
Final decision by County Council's Executive	25 June 2019
Proposed school closure date	31 August 2019