

Statutory proposals and statutory notice

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

Arkengarthdale Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Arkengarthdale, Richmond, North Yorkshire, DL11 6EN, from 31 August 2019.

Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School is a 4-11 Church of England Voluntary Controlled primary school in the Richmond area.

Implementation

It is proposed to close the school from 31 August 2019

Reason for closure

There are three key concerns:

- 1) Low pupil numbers
- 2) Breadth of curriculum;
- 3) The school's financial position

1) Pupil Numbers

The number of children at Arkengarthdale Church of England VC Primary School has been falling over the past few years. As of March 2019 there are 5 children on roll in the school. The school is designed to accommodate up to 60 pupils if all spaces are in use. This number may reduce to 2 in September, since 3 of the 5 current pupils are in year 6 and will leave for secondary school in September. There have been no applications for Reception places to start in September 2019. Forecasts indicate that these numbers will not recover significantly in the longer term and, in these circumstances, it is difficult to deliver and sustain quality education.

2) Breadth of curriculum

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 last 'full' Ofsted inspection was in February 2014, when there were 31 pupils on

roll and when Ofsted judged the school and its teaching to be “good overall”. Ofsted’s more recent ‘short’ inspection in May 2018 confirmed their “good” judgment and commended the collaboration with the larger Richmond Methodist School.

However, as numbers have fallen since then to 5 and possibly to 2 next year, the school’s governing body, the Local Authority and the Anglican Diocese of Leeds have become increasingly concerned that pupils do not have access to the full range of experiences they need, particularly opportunities for working and playing with children their own age.

3) 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.

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 5 pupils on roll at the school as of March 2019. 1 pupil in year 2, 1 pupil in year 4, and 3 pupils in Year 6. Four out of these 5 pupils are female and 1 of the pupils is male.

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 60 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—

- a) any interim arrangements;
- b) 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
- c) 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.

- a) No interim arrangements have been necessary.

There are 2 other primary schools within 6 miles of Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School. Across the area there are places available for all the pupils currently at Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School.

The nearest school to Arkengarthdale is Reeth CP which has places available in all year groups apart from Reception. There is currently capacity in all year groups at Gunnerside Methodist, which is the next nearest school. There are also places available at Askrigg CE, Trinity Academy Richmond, Richmond Methodist, St Mary's RC Richmond, Ravensworth CE. All of these schools, apart from Trinity Academy Richmond were rated Good in their last Ofsted inspections.

It is proposed that the catchment area of Reeth Community Primary School shall be expanded with effect from 1 September 2019 to serve the area currently served by Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School.

For any children currently at Arkengarthdale CE VC 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.

- b) Not applicable in this case
- c) Not applicable in this case

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 communities the school is the only meeting space. In this case there is The CB Inn, Arkengarthdale, Langthwaite, (384 ft from the School), the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin Arkengarthdale (0.3 miles from the School), the Red Lion Inn, Langthwaite, Richmond (0.5 miles from the School) and the Tan Hill Inn, 7.7 miles from the School.

The school has recently been used for the following community activities: the parish council meetings six times a year and a dominoes drive once a year.

Given the small number of community uses of the school premises and the alternative venues available locally, the potential impact of the loss of the school as a meeting space for the parish council should be minimal.

The school building is not owned by the County Council. Decisions about disposal of the school site and buildings will be taken by the owners of the site after the closure proposal has been determined.

The initial legal examination of documents suggests that, due to a 1933 scheme, ownership of the building is held by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) rather than the Diocese. In addition to the PCC being the trustees, the building itself is not subject to the normal objects found in trust documents, which normally say that the building is 'only for educational use'. Therefore should that cease, there is a broader community opportunity for the building. However, the Diocese of Leeds and the PCC would need to determine future management and use of the building.

The detached playing field land was gifted. There is a covenant for it to be used for community use. Decisions about the future use of the detached playing field will be taken after the closure proposal has been determined.

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.

As Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School is designated as a rural school there are some particular considerations for the proposers of any closure. There is a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This does not mean rural schools should not close. It means that the 'case for closure should be strong and the proposal must be clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area'.

Proposers must demonstrate that they have considered the following:

- The likely effect of the discontinuance of the school on the local community;
- Educational standards at the school and the likely effect on standards at neighbouring schools
- The availability and likely cost to the LA of transport to other schools;
- Any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result in the discontinuance of the school and the likely effects of any such increase; and
- Any alternatives to the discontinuance of the school

These are examined in turn below.

The likely effect of closure of the school on the community

Please see the section above 'Impact on the Community'

Educational standards at the school and the likely effect on standards at neighbouring schools

The most recent 'full' Ofsted inspection was in February 2014. At this time there were 31 pupils on roll and Ofsted judged the school to be 'good'. In a more recent 'short' inspection in May 2018 Ofsted confirmed this 'good' judgment and commended the collaboration with Richmond Methodist School. However, as pupil numbers have fallen significantly it will become increasingly difficult to meet children's education and social needs even with the existing partnership with another local school.

The impact of falling numbers is a concern. Declining numbers make it difficult to ensure that pupils have the necessary breadth of social experiences, sufficient peer interaction and the opportunity for children to work in groups.

There are 2 other primary schools within 6 miles of Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School: Reeth CP and Gunnerside Methodist. Both schools were judged Good in their last Ofsted inspections. It is not considered that the proposed closure of Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School would have any detrimental effect on standards at neighbouring schools.

The availability and likely cost to the LA, of transport to other schools and any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the closure of the school, and the likely effects of any such increase

If the school closed, there would 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 within the enlarged catchment area in accordance with the County Council's Home to School Transport policy. The County Council's Home to School transport policy sets out that free school transport will be provided to the catchment school or nearest school to a child's home address if it is over the statutory walking distances set out by law. This is:

- Two miles for children under eight years of age;
- Three miles for children aged over eight; or
- where the route to the catchment or nearest school is not safe to walk accompanied by a responsible adult.

If the nearest catchment or nearest school is full, transport will be provided, in accordance with the authority's transport policy, to the nearest school with places available.

Children from low income families (children entitled to free school meals or whose parent are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit) have additional eligibility criteria for additional home to school transport and details are available on

the County Council's website at <http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/article/26071/School---travel-support>

Depending on the individual choices of schools by parents, potentially up to six children attending Arkengarthdale at the start of the consultation period could be eligible for home to school transport to Reeth CP School. This may require a small mini bus at a cost of £100 per day or, if there are less than 5 pupils, 1 taxi at a cost of £70 per day. Other transport costs may arise dependent on individual circumstances of individual pupils.

Staff from the County Council's Admissions and Transport team have advised some parents at Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School during the consultation on individual implications regarding home to school transport. If a parent is informed that they are not entitled to transport they may, if they wish, contact the Transport Team in writing with their particular individual circumstances, which would be reviewed by Senior Officers before an appeal would be offered.

If it is agreed to close Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School then the County Council would work with individual families of children attending Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School to look to accommodate their preferences for alternative schools where possible. Discretion can be exercised where appropriate in providing support for home to school transport outside the criteria set out in the policy.

Any alternatives to the closure of the school

The Governing Body and officers from the County Council and Diocese have explored alternatives to the closure of the school. It is considered that there is no potential for the school to convert to academy status or to join a multi-academy trust because it would not meet tests of due diligence due to its small size. The fundamental issues of very low numbers, leading to lack of curriculum breadth, remain.

Whilst collaboration between schools can enrich children's educational experiences to some extent and lead to sharing of resources or services it cannot guarantee the security of a school, which has reached a critical level in terms of pupil numbers, without other forms of support or intervention. The Governing Body has examined potential federations and amalgamations with other local schools and considered that this would not secure the future of educational provision at the school in the longer term.

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.

Arkengarthdale is a Church of England Voluntary Controlled 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 Church of England School at 15.7 miles away is Ravensworth Church of England Primary School.

Maintained nursery schools

Not applicable

Sixth form provision

Not applicable

Special educational needs provision

The existing provision at Arkengarthdale 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 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. Eligibility is assessed on an individual basis taking into account the child's home address.

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 journey time for children living within the current Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School catchment area would depend on which other school they attended and their home address. There are 2 other primary schools within 6 miles of Arkengarthdale CE VC Primary School.

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 30 May 2019.

Consultation

The decision to consult on closure was taken by the Executive Member for Schools following a request from governors on 15 January 2019. 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 is attached as Appendix 1. A list of the consultees is attached as Appendix 2. The consultation period ran from 25 January 2019 to 15 March 2019. A public meeting was held at the school on 18 February 2019, a note of that meeting is attached as Appendix 3. There have been 3 consultation responses received (Appendix 4).

Appendix 1: Consultation Paper - See Appendix 2 of the April 2019 Executive Report

Appendix 2: List of the Consultees - See Appendix 3 of the April 2019 Executive Report

Appendix 3: Notes of the Public Meeting - See Appendix 4 of the April 2019 Executive Report

Appendix 4: Consultation Responses - See Appendix 5 of the April 2019 Executive Report