

Questions for the Horton in Ribblesdale Consultation Meeting

1. Why close the school in April, would it not be more beneficial to the children to extend the period until the end of the summer term?

The Governing Body decided to consult on a proposal to close the school in April to ensure that there was not a prolonged period of uncertainty, and because there is no leadership in place beyond the end of the autumn term. The timescales have not been set specifically to meet the end of the financial year.

2. Why can't we federate with another small school within the area?

This is a matter for the Governing Body. No potential partner has been identified that would be willing to federate with the school. Any federation arrangement would need to be sustainable. The County Council cannot make schools federate. Horton was formerly in a confederation (formal collaboration) with Austwick and Clapham schools which ended in January 2016 with the agreement of the three governing bodies.

3. By increasing the size of other schools and closing the smaller schools, surely the children from the smaller schools will struggle to integrate into larger class sizes, this could result in children not receiving the educational support they have been used to.

For pupils transferring to any school, the County Council will work with individual schools to ensure that transition is made as smooth as possible. Class sizes will not be any larger than children experience elsewhere in the County. Schools are required to meet the needs of all pupils.

4. What route would be used to transport children between Horton in Ribblesdale and Austwick? If the proposed route is the Wharfe road, would there be any provision to ensure the route is accessible all year round (gritting etc)?

The route used would depend on where children lived and their eligibility for transport to Austwick School. All school transport routes are risk assessed by the contract operators.

5. What will happen to class one after December? We understand that the present teacher is only contracted until December.

It is a matter for the Governing Body to ensure appropriate staffing while the school remains open.

6. If a supply class one teacher can be provided, why can a supply head teacher also be provided?

It was reported to the Governing Body on 17 October that a number of agencies had been contacted and no prospective Headteachers were available. The Diocese and Local Authority have also been looking at leadership support and to date, have not been able to find an appointment for January. If required the Local Authority and Diocese would continue to seek a short-term leadership solution.

7. Why can't the old system for children attending the school within their catchment area be used so that the school is attended by all of the children within this area?

The school (as its own Admission Authority) and Local Authorities are required to comply with the School Admissions Code published by the Department for Education. This states that parents can apply for a place for their child at any state-funded school in any area, and if a school is undersubscribed, any parent that applies **must** be offered a place. The local authority cannot direct parents to accept a place at any particular school.

8. If you close Horton in Ribblesdale Primary School, there will be no school between Settle and Hawes. Surely that will leave far too great a catchment area?

There is no prescribed size for catchment areas and in a rural county such as North Yorkshire there are a number of catchment areas covering large geographical areas. 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 Horton-in-Ribblesdale School catchment area would depend on which other school they attended, but the journey from Horton-in-Ribblesdale School to Austwick School is approximately 14 minutes. For some living within the current Horton catchment area, other primary schools might be closer.

9. With the proposed increase in catchment areas to 'replacement' schools, there can be a noticeable difference in weather conditions between pupils' homes and the schools. Will there be any system put in place for the schools to advise parents, and also for parents to advise the schools if access to or from school is restricted due to extreme weather.

Schools will have local arrangements in place to make sure that parents and carers are informed as soon as possible if it is necessary for the school to close due to bad weather.

10. In the case of pupils missing school due to adverse weather conditions, what strategy would be put in place to assist them in catching up on missed lessons?

This is a matter for individual schools. Schools are used to dealing with these situations.

11. What arrangements such as emergency transport or out of hours childcare would be provided by the county in the case of an unexpected school closure due to extreme weather conditions?

In the case of bad weather requiring an early departure from a school, the school will make suitable arrangements to get pupils home. Contractors will work with the schools in the local area to ensure that severe weather conditions are taken into account when transporting pupils to and from school. Please also refer to the County Council's leaflet 'Provision of school transport services during severe weather' available at http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/media/15941/Provision-of-school-transport-in-severe-weather/pdf/39630_bad_weather_Layout_1.pdf

12. Why can kids not be brought to the school from the Settle end? Schools there are filling up – providing transport UP the valley, to a school where there are better teacher/pupil ratios, and an OFSTED “Outstanding” rating, seems a no-brainer but NYCC doesn't seem to have given it any consideration or put it to families in Settle as an option. It's not good enough for NYCC simply to refuse to provide transport up the valley without a credible explanation.

The County Council has limited funding available for home to school transport, and has to offer this within the terms of its home to school transport policy. This 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. If a child attends a school which is not his/her catchment or nearest school parents will normally be responsible for any associated transport costs and arrangements for the duration of their child's time at that school.

13. At the moment the consultation process seems to be nothing more than a formality. The timetable already sets out a date for Horton school's closure, despite the fact that there's supposed to be a consultation process involved. How can a date have already been set for the closure, when the results of the consultation that is yet to take place have not been considered?

The consultation process is being conducted following the statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education. It is standard practice to provide a proposed closure date, consultees would not be able to make a considered response if they did not know when the closure was proposed to take place. Should a decision be taken at any stage not to proceed with the proposal then it would not be implemented. However, it is necessary to plan for closure in case the proposal is approved.

14. Can NYCC please be open about their long term plans for schools in this area - we hear of several in the area that are likely to be under threat - how can we make an informed choice on where to go should Horton close, without clearer information. Are they aiming for one central (presumably Settle) school with kid

bussed in? Allowing school after school to struggle and decline is a callous way of doing it if this is the long term aim. Honesty is required.

The County Council has responsibility for ensuring there are sufficient school places for the number of children within the county. Meeting the needs and expectations of families for school places, and making sure schools are sustainable into the future is a complex challenge. Schools are funded largely on the basis of pupil numbers and the County Council's ability to provide financial support to individual schools is increasingly limited. The County Council and Diocese are working with schools in North Craven to support school collaborations to help schools remain sustainable.

15. How do the funding arrangements work if a significant number go to Austwick - my understanding is that funding is based on an October census, but they could be facing a significant shortfall until next October if this is the case.

The January pupil census determines funding for financial year 17/18. If Horton-in-Ribblesdale School closed, when the school balances were finalised, any surplus balance from Horton would be transferred to **proportionally** ?? Austwick School; conversely, if Horton was in deficit this would be picked up by the County Council.

16. If a significant number go to Austwick, could there be a provision for staff to transfer if they wished - this would aid the transition and settling in stages, and take pressure off Austwick staff.

It would be for the governing body of Austwick CE School to decide on staffing arrangements at the school. Please also see the response to question 17 below.

17. At the moment the remaining teachers at Horton must be very unsettled, with a very uncertain future and the engineered threat of closure hanging over them. Yet they're persevering, doing great work. I feel we need to obtain an assurance that they are guaranteed a new job within NYCC and within reasonable commuting distance, if we're unable to prevent closure. They and their careers shouldn't suffer because of all this.

The Governing Body, rather than the County Council, is the employer for teaching staff working in Voluntary Aided schools.

All staff at the School who are put at risk of redundancy as a result of the potential closure of the School will be afforded redeployment support through NYCC. Unfortunately there can be no guarantees that a suitable post will be available and under local management of schools provisions whilst a recruiting School can be made aware of the potential redundancy situation of an individual, the local authority has no jurisdiction to require that they appoint an individual who is at risk.

The Governing Body recognises the unsettling affect the current proposal will be having on staff and a meeting was held with both staff and their unions on Friday, 14 October to appraise them of the situation in relation to potential redundancy and what support is available.

18. NYCC need to commit to providing transport when it's required by parents and not when it suits them. A suggestion that they will address this on a case by case basis is not helpful - if the best thing for the kids is to move en-mass to preserve friendship groups and minimise disruption, then the transport arrangements need to be available to all, when they are needed.

As stated in the response to question 14 above, the County Council has limited funding available for home to school transport, and has to assess eligibility within the terms of its home to school transport policy. Parents can access advice about alternative school places from the County Council's Admissions Team but they are free to take decisions about the timing of any change of schools on an individual basis and places will remain available at Horton school until any closure decision is implemented.

19. If the school has funding for a head teacher, why can the recruitment period not be extended to ensure that all recruitment avenues are fully explored before commencement of the closure consultancy process.

As stated above, the Governing Body decided to consult on a proposal to close the school in April to ensure that there was not a prolonged period of uncertainty, and because there is no leadership in place beyond the end of the autumn term. The governing body has already advertised the post and been unable to recruit a suitable candidate. It is considered unlikely that further attempts would be successful in the context of such low pupil numbers. There is a moral imperative when recruiting to ensure that candidates are informed about the uncertain future of the school.

20. Should the school close and the children be relocated, will any provision be made by the county to support parents with accessibility problems or disabilities to enable them to attend school functions/events?

This would be a matter for individual school governing bodies. All schools must comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and would work with individual families to meet their needs where possible.

21. If the children are to travel to another school by bus, what facilities will be made to ensure their safety getting to the bus, and also their physical comfort and wellbeing whilst waiting for the bus during inclement weather?

The Local Authority takes all reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of pupils using the vehicles. All the vehicles used subject to regular inspections and the drivers and assistants all have the relevant clearance to work with children. For their part, pupils are expected to behave whilst travelling and wear a seatbelt, where fitted. Parents are reminded they are solely responsible for the safety of their children both

before they board and after disembarking the vehicle and for ensuring their children get to and from the nearest pickup point on time.

22. Do the council acknowledge that the closure of the school will completely negate any encouragement of young families to move into the village? Keeping the school open surely provides a strong case to ensure that Horton in Ribblesdale doesn't become yet another retirement/second homes village with the national park.

The impact on the community if the school closes is one factor that the Local Authority, as decision maker, will need to consider if the governing body decides to proceed with the closure proposal. These impacts, however, need to be considered alongside the viability of the school and the quality of the educational experiences available when pupil numbers are so low.