



## **NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE**

This paper sets out details of a proposal for the creation of a single Church of England Voluntary Aided primary school to serve the Ingleby Arncliffe and Swainby and Potto area with effect from 31 August 2017. The proposal achieves this through the technical closure of Swainby and Potto Church of England Voluntary Aided primary school and the expansion of the catchment area of Ingleby Arncliffe Church of England Voluntary Aided primary school. It gives the background to the proposal. There will be a public meeting on:

**19 January 2017 at 6.30pm  
at Swainby and Potto Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

### **Public Consultation – 10 January 2017 to 20 February 2017**

#### **The Current Position**

The villages of Swainby and Potto and Ingleby Arncliffe and the areas around them are currently served by two separate rural primary schools, which until 3 January 2017 were working as part of the *Mount Grace Federation* with Osmotherley Primary School.

Swainby and Potto and Ingleby Arncliffe are both Voluntary Aided Church of England primary schools with close connections to the Diocese of York. Osmotherley Primary School is a community primary school. All are funded by North Yorkshire County Council.

All three schools are small with low pupil numbers. The number of pupils in the two Voluntary Aided schools has been falling in recent years and the single governing body which was responsible for the three schools in the *Mount Grace Federation* has worked closely with the Diocese of York and North Yorkshire County Council to consider how best to address the challenges faced by these schools.

Having considered a range of options governors have reached the conclusion that bringing together the two Voluntary Aided schools to create one Church of England primary school would be the best way to secure the interests of current and future pupils from the local community, because

pupil numbers have fallen to a level where it would be difficult to provide a high quality of education for pupils in the long term.

It was agreed by the federation governing body in November 2016 that the *Mount Grace Federation* would be dissolved, although informal collaboration between the schools would continue. Since then work has been undertaken to establish new governance and leadership arrangements for the three schools.

At the same time, the Governing Body decided, with the support of the County Council and Diocese that stakeholders should be consulted on a proposal to create a single primary school serving children living in the catchment areas of Ingleby Arncliffe and Swainby and Potto, from 1 September 2017.

It is proposed that this amalgamated school would be created by the retention of the Ingleby Arncliffe site and the associated technical closure of Swainby and Potto on 31 August 2017.

We would like to hear your views on what is being proposed. There will be a public meeting on:

**19 January 2017 at 6.30pm** at Swainby and Potto Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Please take time to look at the proposals we are putting forward, and then send us your views. We look forward to hearing from you.

## **How could a single school be created?**

There are two ways in which a single school could be created. The first option would be to close both schools and open a new school in existing premises. The new school would automatically be an academy.

Given the Voluntary Aided status of the schools it would need to be some form of church Multi Academy Trust. It is considered that this option would create too much uncertainty for families and staff as it would not be known for some time who the academy sponsor would be or their approach to the running of the school.

The second and preferred option would be a technical closure of Swainby and Potto Church of England VA Primary School and the retention, change of name and expansion of catchment area of Ingleby Arncliffe Church of England VA Primary School.

## **The Proposal**

It is proposed that a single Voluntary Aided Church of England primary school, serving children aged 4-11, would be created by the retention of Ingleby Arncliffe Church of England VA Primary School and the associated technical closure of Swainby and Potto Church of England VA Primary School. The single primary school would operate on the existing Ingleby Arncliffe school site and serve the two catchment areas currently served by both Swainby and Potto and Ingleby Arncliffe Primary Schools.

In order to maintain the historical link between the schools and the Diocese of York, the single school would retain its status as a Voluntary Aided Church of England school. This would allow the Church to continue to appoint foundation governors to the governing body and the governing body to employ staff.

The proposed name for the single school is the "*Mount Grace Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School*". A new single uniform would be agreed.

This change would take place from 31 August 2017 when Swainby and Potto would close as a separate school.

The Governing Body, County Council and Diocese consider that the proposed change would benefit children by providing a single structure which would allow them to continue to access the full range of experiences they need at a time of falling rolls. The single school would provide ongoing opportunities for working and playing with children of their own age.

The amalgamated school would have a single governing body, Headteacher and staff group. It would be subject to a single Ofsted inspection and would receive a single budget.

### **Why are we proposing change now?**

There are a number of reasons why now is the right time to consider this organisational change to the schools. The Governing Body has not reached

the decision to initiate consultation lightly and has already considered a large number of alternatives (with input from parents), such as splitting the younger and older children in the two voluntary aided schools across the Key Stages, ultimately settling on a "whole" school at Ingleby Arncliffe and Swainby and Potto on a rotational term and a half basis throughout the whole year. The pairing of these schools reflects their shared status and Christian values as Voluntary Aided schools.

The current informal arrangement allows larger groups of children to come together and a more effective use of limited resources. However, it is considered that this arrangement needs to be put on a more formal long term footing.

At present the two schools benefit financially from receiving two lump sums from central funding via the County Council – one for each site. The Council has indicated that this cannot continue because the pupils are being taught as a single group on a single site. Once the second lump sum is removed maintaining two school sites would be prohibitively expensive.

The proposal avoids the prospect which was raised as a concern by parents of splitting siblings across different school sites.

There are three key concerns to consider: 1) falling pupil numbers; 2) breadth of curriculum experience; and 3) the schools' financial position.

## **Pupil Numbers**

The number of children at Swainby and Potto has been falling gradually over the past few years. There are now 14 pupils on roll. The school is designed to accommodate up to 84 pupils so is significantly under-subscribed. Forecasts indicate that these numbers will not recover significantly in the longer term and may reduce still further within five years. There is no planned housing development within the catchment area.

The proportion of parents living in the catchment area and choosing to send their children to other schools has been increasing each year. Only 11 of the 33 children living in the school's own catchment area currently attend the school.

It is considered difficult for teaching staff to deliver an age appropriate curriculum to such small groups of children. This has been recognized in the informal working arrangements which the schools have introduced.

Ingleby Arncliffe Church of England VA Primary School has 12 pupils on roll. This is against a physical capacity of 86 so is significantly under-subscribed. There is a small amount of housing planned within the catchment area which would have a minimal effect on pupil numbers.

It is considered that there are too few pupils to justify the continued need for two separate schools.

The school building is considered to be

more suitable for the delivery of the curriculum than Swainby and Potto's. Pupils at Ingleby Arncliffe are drawn mainly from its own catchment area. All pupils from the two schools are already accommodated on a single site on a rotating basis. There would be a total of 26 pupils in a building designed for 84 so there is ample space and the school would be able to accept all Swainby and Potto children within their admission number.

The Swainby and Potto school site is smaller than the Ingleby Arncliffe site. In both cases the buildings, car park and playground are owned by the Diocese/Trustees and the playing field is owned by the County Council.

## **Breadth of Curriculum**

The most recent Ofsted inspection of Swainby and Potto Church of England VA School was in June 2015. At this time there were 36 pupils on roll. Ofsted reported that the school "Requires Improvement" and that the school should improve the quality of teaching and improve the achievement of pupils, though the behaviour and safety of pupils was judged to be good.

As numbers have fallen further since then the Governing Body has responded to concerns about ensuring that pupils have access to the full range of experiences they need by bringing together the pupils of Swainby and Potto with those of Ingleby Arncliffe. This ensures they have opportunities for working and playing with children of their own age.

The last published Ofsted inspection of Ingleby Arncliffe Church of England VA Primary School was made in December 2011. This report judged the school as Good. The main finding reports: "This is a good school. Outcomes for pupils are outstanding." However, its position is considered to be vulnerable in its current situation.

### **The Financial Position**

Each school has a separate budget share determined by pupil numbers. With these lower numbers, and a reduced budget, the schools have not been able to replace staff. The current informal arrangements have been driven by a need to reduce costs.

Examination of the predicted financial position led to concerns about both schools' ability to preserve the quality of education individually. Both are predicting in-year deficit budgets for 2016/17 and following years.

Changes to school funding formulas are likely to make the schools even more financially vulnerable and the Local Authority will have increasingly limited ability to provide on-going financial support to schools in this position.

### **What would the amalgamated school look like?**

Rather than continuing to maintain two separate school sites, in the future the two schools would come together and operate permanently from a single site. Since the pupils are currently working as a "whole" school at Ingleby Arncliffe

and Swainby and Potto on a rotational term and a half basis throughout the whole year it is expected that the single school would appear to be much the same for pupils.

It is important that pupils continue to feel supported and safe throughout the creation of a single school. Both Ingleby Arncliffe and Swainby and Potto received a good grading for the behaviour and safety of pupils in recent Ofsted reports. The amalgamation of the two schools would be supported by the recruitment of a suitably qualified and competent Headteacher who would bring additional leadership capacity, to include pastoral care, to ensure the continued safety and well-being of pupils.

The amalgamated school would be a Voluntary Aided school supported by the Diocese of York and would continue to be funded and supported by the Local Authority with staff employed by the Governing Body. Admissions to the school would be managed by the Governing Body in accordance with the admission policy for Voluntary Aided schools. The catchment area of the single school would be an amalgamation of the two schools' catchment areas.

Eligibility for home to school transport would be determined by the County Council's home to school transport policy. The two schools are 2.7 miles apart, approximately 7 minutes by car. Children living within the current Swainby and Potto catchment area

who live more than 2 miles from Ingleby Arncliffe (or 3 miles if over the age of 8) would be entitled to free home to school transport. This would mean that the cost which has been met by the schools of transporting children between the two school sites would be reduced. Distances for pupils to travel to alternative schools would be one of the factors to be taken into consideration when a final decision is made.

### **Impact on Staff**

It is not envisaged that there would be significant impact on teaching staff as a result of the amalgamation. Staff who left Swainby and Potto recently were not replaced and Ingleby Arncliffe staff have covered much of the “whole” school rotation. Any changes to staff terms and conditions would be consulted upon separately in line with normal policy and procedures.

### **Parental Choice**

For any children currently on roll at Swainby and Potto Church of England VA Primary School, North Yorkshire County Council would work with each family to try to meet their individual preferences for other schools. It is assumed that most children would want to transfer to the proposed Mount Grace Church of England VA Primary School on the Ingleby Arncliffe site but there are alternative schools at Carlton and Faceby, Hutton Rudby and Osmotherley within a five mile radius which may also have places available.

Pupils on roll at Ingleby Arncliffe would remain on roll at that school automatically unless parents chose otherwise.

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. Additional transport costs will be one of the factors which the County Council will take into consideration when making a final decision on whether to allow the amalgamation to go ahead.

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 Bodies 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 usually responsible for making transport arrangements.

North Yorkshire County Council's Admissions Team is always happy to give advice to parents – please contact Jill Wilson 01609 534825 or Lisa Herdman 01609 534953.

## Impact on Community

As Swainby and Potto Church of England VA Primary School is designated as a rural school it is important to take into consideration the impact on the community of any school closure. In some communities the school is the only community space. In this case there is a village hall in Swainby, refurbished in 2012, which seats 100, with a large meeting room for up to 40, a small meeting room for up to 20, a fully equipped kitchen and wi-fi available. It has been the centre of village events for 150 years, in its former guises as the Oddfellows Hall, Whorlton Village Hall and Whorlton Recreation Rooms. There is also a Church Hall behind the Parish Church.

Potto also has a Village Hall located in the centre of the village, close to the Parish Church which offers a range of facilities within accessible indoor and outdoor space which is available to hire for a range of activities and events.

## The Building

The Swainby buildings, car park and playground are owned by the Diocese/Trustees and the playing field is owned by the County. Any decisions about the future of the site and buildings would be taken separately from the decision on whether to close the school.

## What Happens Next?

Your views about this proposal are welcomed. You can either complete the attached response sheet or respond by letter. Alternatively you can complete the online response sheet

[Please submit your views here](#)

Paper responses should be returned to North Yorkshire County Council, who are administering this consultation on behalf of the governors of the school, at the address below:

FREEPOST RTKE-RKAY-CUJS  
Strategic Planning – Swainby and Potto  
North Yorkshire County Council  
County Hall  
NORTHALLERTON  
DL7 8AE

The closing date for responses is **Monday 20 February 2017**. All responses to the consultation received by this date will be considered by the School's Governing Body in March 2017.

If the Governing Body decides to proceed with the closure proposal, then statutory notices would be published in the local press. These notices provide a further four weeks for views to be made. A final decision would be made by North Yorkshire County Council's Executive Committee in May 2017.