



Swainby and Potto C of E (VA) Primary School

Consultation Document

**Proposal to close Swainby and Potto Church of
England Voluntary Aided Primary School with
effect from 31st December 2017**

Swainby and Potto Church of England Primary School

Swainby

Northallerton

Consultation on a Proposal to Close the School from 31st December 2017

I am writing to let you know that the Governing Body has decided to consult on a proposal to close the school.

The Governing Body has not reached this decision lightly and has examined different options. The Governing Body now feels that this decision is in the best interests of the school. It is proposed that the school will close with effect from 31st December 2017.

Enclosed is a copy of the Consultation Document that sets out the position in which the school finds itself and will allow you to formally provide your views on the proposal. You can also see the consultation document online by visiting the dedicated website provided by the Local Authority:

<http://northyorks.gov.uk/article/23998/Childrens-services---consultations>

You can respond to the proposal online by following this link:

<https://consult.northyorks.gov.uk/snapwebhost/s.asp?k=149200032616>

The closing date for the submission of responses is **Friday 9th June 2017**.

As part of the consultation process a Public Meeting will take place to allow anyone who wishes to make their views known in person to do so. This event will be attended by representatives of the Governing Body; the Diocese and the Local Authority. It will take place on:

Wednesday 10th May at 7pm

at Swainby Church Hall, Swainby

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continuing support for the School and to encourage you to take part in the consultation process by attending the Public Meeting and by submitting a response sheet.

There is also a separate proposal to close Ingleby Arncliffe CE VA School to the same time-scale for similar reasons. However, that is a separate consultation and if you have any comments on that proposal please respond to the separate consultation paper.

The Governing Body of Swainby and Potto Primary School, Swainby



Swainby and Potto C of E (VA) Primary School

April 2017

This paper sets out details of a proposal to close Swainby and Potto Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School with effect from 31st December 2017. It gives the background to the proposal. There will be a public meeting on:

Wednesday 10th May at 7pm

At Swainby Church Hall

The Current Position

The Governing Body of Swainby and Potto Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School has decided to consult on a proposal to close the school.

The Governors have worked closely with officers from the Diocese of York and North Yorkshire County Council. They consider that the closure is necessary to secure the interests of current and future pupils from the school.

The Governing Body has not reached this decision lightly and has already considered alternatives, such as working with other schools to make sure that good standards of teaching and learning will be available for all pupils.

There is also a separate proposal to close Ingleby Arncliffe CE VA School to the same time-scale for similar reasons. However, that is a separate consultation and if you have any comments on that

proposal please respond to the separate consultation paper.

The previous three-school "Mount Grace" federation with Ingleby Arncliffe CE VA Primary School and Osmotherley Community Primary School was dissolved in January 2017, although informal collaboration between Swainby and Potto and Ingleby Arncliffe Church of England Voluntary Aided Schools continues. The pairing of these schools reflects their shared status and Christian values as Voluntary Aided schools. There is currently no substantive Headteacher in post at the school. Interim leadership support is being provided to both schools by a single Interim Headteacher (and previously by the executive Headteacher from the Mount Grace Federation). It is not considered sustainable to continue with interim arrangements into the future even if such arrangements could be put in place.

There are four key concerns: 1) Very low pupil numbers; 2) Breadth of curriculum experience; 3) The school's financial position; 4) Leadership.

Pupil Numbers

The number of children at Swainby and Potto School has been falling gradually over the past few years. At the time of publication there are now only 9 pupils in school. However this number is subject to any changes that may be requested by parents and we will update the number at the public meeting. The school is designed to accommodate up to 84 pupils. Forecasts indicate that these numbers will not recover significantly in the longer term and may reduce still further, given the three Year 6 pupils leaving in July and that no new children are joining Reception in September.

The proportion of parents living in the catchment area and choosing to send their children to other schools has been increasing each year. In the current academic year only 9 of the 33 children living in the school's own catchment area currently attend the school.

In these circumstances, it is considered difficult for teaching staff to deliver an age appropriate curriculum to such small groups of children. This has been recognised in the informal working arrangements with Ingleby Arncliffe which the school has introduced.

Quality and Breadth of Curriculum

As numbers fall, it is increasingly difficult to provide the remaining pupils with access to the quality and full range of experiences they need.

The most recent Ofsted inspection of Swainby and Potto Church of England VA School was in June 2015. At this time Ofsted reported that the school "Requires Improvement" and that the school should improve the quality of teaching and improve the achievement of pupils.

As numbers have fallen further since then, the school governing body, the Diocese of York and North Yorkshire County Council have become concerned that pupils are not having access to a high quality curriculum and to the full range of experiences they need, particularly opportunities for working and playing with children their own age. For example, when there are only one or two children in a year group, it is difficult for pupils to share and compare the same work.

There are now only two children in Key Stage 1 and no new Reception children will join the school in September.

It is likely to become more difficult to ensure a high quality curriculum and to meet children's educational and social needs, even with the existing partnership with another local Church of England Voluntary Aided school in Ingleby Arncliffe. These concerns about being able to preserve the quality and breadth of the curriculum are the key concerns arising from the rapid decline in pupil numbers.

It is considered likely by Local Authority Education Advisors that if the school were to be re-inspected that it would not be deemed to have made the required improvements nor have the capacity to do so in the future. There is concern that the school would be at risk of being deemed inadequate. This re-inspection can take

place anytime from July 2017. It is likely to be shortly after that date since Ingleby Arncliffe has recently been inspected. The outcome of this inspection will not be known for some time.

The Financial Position

Pupil numbers determine the school budget. With these lower numbers, and a reduced budget, the school may have to further reduce staff.

Examination of the predicted financial position has led to concerns about the school's ability to preserve the quality of education. The school is predicting an in-year financial deficit for 2017/18 significantly increasing for 2018/19, and a higher deficit for 2019/20. The two schools currently operate on shared staffing and resources, including one school site, but even under these combined circumstances the schools have been unable to demonstrate financial viability going forward. In the 2017/18 financial year there is a predicted deficit of £56,900 across the two schools rising to £257,000 in 2019/20 showing the immediacy of the situation and that there is a need for consultation now. The financial forecast is based on 20 pupils across the two schools but the current pupil number now falls below that originally assumed and increases the forecast deficit further. Even with the lower numbers existing staffing levels may be required to be maintained. With the low pupil numbers predicted all children may be taught in a single class but a single class across the 4-11 age range is not advised. Changes to school funding formulas are likely to make the school even more financially vulnerable and the Local Authority will have increasingly limited ability to provide on-going financial support to schools in this

position.

Leadership

There is currently an interim Headteacher in post shared by both schools. Given the very low number of pupils entering the school it is considered that an attempt to recruit a substantive Headteacher with the caliber to make the necessary improvements is unlikely to be successful. The current interim arrangements cannot continue into the future. Without secure leadership the quality of teaching at the school is at further risk.

The Proposal

For the reasons outlined above it is proposed that Swainby and Potto CE VA Primary School should close with effect from 31 December 2017.

The nearest local school, 3.4 miles from Swainby and Potto School, is Carlton and Faceby Church of England VA School. This is also a Church of England Voluntary Aided School.

There is also Hutton Rudby Community Primary School which is 3.5 miles from Swainby and Potto School. However, this school may be nearer for some pupils. Those living within the parish boundary of Potto would be closer to this school.

Both of the above schools have capacity to take additional pupils and both have indicated a willingness to do so.

There are also places available at Stokesley Primary School, which is 6.2 miles from the school, and Osmotherley Community Primary School, which is 5.7 miles from it. Both schools are approximately six miles away and a

similar travelling time by road.

It is proposed that the current catchment area is divided to take account of the geography of the area. This would mean that the catchment area of Hutton Rudby Community Primary School would be expanded to include the Potto parish area of the current Swainby and Potto catchment area.

The catchment area of Carlton and Faceby CE VA School would be expanded to include the remainder of the Swainby and Potto catchment area. A map of the proposed new catchment area is attached.

Consultees may prefer to see a different arrangement for future catchment areas and they are invited to comment on this in the response to the consultation. The views expressed in the consultation on redrawing catchments will be considered and factored in to any final closure proposal.

For any children currently at the school, North Yorkshire County Council would work with each family to try to meet their individual preferences for other schools.

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.

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.

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.

Staff

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

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 facility. 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. 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

Any decision about the future of the site and the buildings would be taken separately from the decision on whether

to close the school. However, for information the following might happen, should the proposal be supported.

The school playing field is owned by the County Council. If the playing field were sold, Section 77 of the Schools Standards and Frameworks Act 1998 determines that the proceeds have to be spent on sport and in this case it would probably be on improving sport in the school(s) whose catchment area is expanded.

At this stage it is unclear what would become of the school buildings. The trustees of the Swainby and Potto school buildings are the vicar and church wardens from the parish of Whorlton on behalf of the Diocese of York. However, since the school was publically funded rather than by payment from the trustees, the local authority can lay claim to the sale proceeds. Therefore the decision on the building's future would be a Diocese and a local authority decision. One option is for the Diocese to lease out the building. Another is for it to be sold and any capital receipt from the disposal of the school would be determined with reference to the appropriate legislation and regulation which includes Schedule 1 to the Academies Act 2010 and also reference to the above point about lack of private investment by the trustees.

Should the proposal be supported, the grounds and building would be maintained while decisions on its future are taken. While the options are appraised, the grounds and building would be maintained, in a reduced form, in partnership between the Diocese and the LA. Also, at this stage, there are no proposals to secure the site with security fencing and if there were ever a proposal to erect security fencing, this would be the subject of planning approval.

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, who are administering this consultation on behalf of the governors of the school, at the address below:

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

Online responses may be submitted by following the link on the response form below.

The closing date for responses is **9th June 2017**. All responses to the consultation received by this date will be considered by the School's Governing Body in July 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 representations to be made. A final decision would be made by North Yorkshire County Council's Executive Committee in September 2017. If agreed the school would close on 31 December 2017.

Key Dates

All dates are subject to approvals at each stage.

Consultation opens	28 April 2017
Public meeting	10 May 2017
Consultation closes	9 June 2017
Governing body considers consultation response	4 July 2017
Statutory Notices published	7 July 2017
Representation period ends	4 August 2017
Final decision by NYCC	5 Sept 2017
School closure	31 Dec 2017

