



# ***Consultation Document***

**Proposal to close Clapham Church of England**

**Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

**from 31 August 2019**

# Clapham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

14 February 2019

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

**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March at 6.00pm**

**at Clapham CE VC Primary School, Lancaster, LA2 8EJ**

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## **The Current Position**

At a meeting on 29 November 2018 the Governing Body of Clapham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School voted to seek to consult on the school's closure. The governing body has requested that the County Council begin consulting on a proposal to close the school at the end of the current academic year. The Local Authority and the Diocese agree that this is in the best interests of current and future pupils from Clapham because numbers have fallen to a level where it will be 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, Diocese, and the Governing Body of Clapham CE VC Primary School have not reached this decision lightly and have considered a number of other alternatives, including federation with other local schools.

## **Background**

In 2009 Clapham CE VC Primary School confederated with two other small schools, Austwick CE VA Primary and Horton in Ribblesdale CE VA Primary. The three schools shared a headteacher up until the end of December 2015 when all three

Governing Bodies decided to formally end the collaboration. The Governing Body then appointed a new Headteacher who continued in post until 2018. There is currently no substantive headteacher in post at the school. The LA has secured an acting headteacher who has agreed to continue in post until the end of the current academic year.

Low pupil numbers have led to the school being in a financial deficit position, and unable to afford its own Headteacher. Despite numerous attempts by the LA to secure a shared headship arrangement with another school, this has not been successful.

There are four key concerns: 1) Very low pupil numbers; 2) Breadth of curriculum, 3) The schools financial position, and 4) Leadership

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 Clapham CE VC Primary School has been falling over the past few years. By the beginning of January 2019, there were just 28 pupils on roll in the school and these are projected to fall to just 22 by September 2020. This is well below the capacity of the school – which is designed to accommodate up to 59 pupils if all spaces are in use. Forecasts indicate that these numbers will not recover significantly in the longer term and may reduce further still in the following years as the larger year groups move into secondary education.

In these circumstances, it would be difficult to deliver and sustain quality education.

The last full Ofsted inspection was in May 2011 and was judged as being outstanding. At the time of the inspection there were 35 pupils on roll with an age range of 4-10. Pupils would then transfer to a middle school at the end of year five. The middle school provision ended in September 2012 and as a result Clapham CE VC Primary School increased its age range to include 11 year olds. For a short time this led to an increase in pupil numbers, however, since 2014 numbers on roll have been falling gradually despite its outstanding Ofsted judgement.

Total roll numbers:

2013/14 – 40  
2014/15 – 42  
2015/16 – 39  
2016/17 – 34  
2017/18 – 27  
2018/19 – 28

The latest pupil forecast indicates no more than three new reception aged starters in 2019/20. This combined with the progressive reduction in existing year groups results in a forecast total roll of 25 in 2019/20 and only 22 the following year.

## **Breadth of Curriculum**

The LA has already identified concerns around the school's ability to meet the educational need of children with such small numbers alongside existing financial issues. As numbers continue to fall it will be increasingly difficult to provide the remaining pupils with 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. With these low 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 schools ability to preserve the quality of education. The school is projecting in year deficits of £28k in 2019/20 and £47k in 2020/21, and cumulative deficit of £102k by the end of that year. These were based on pupil assumptions at the time of 27 in 2019/20 and 21 in 2020/21, so the position will deteriorate further as pupil numbers fall with no reasonable prospect of recovery.

## **Leadership**

Despite a number of attempts to recruit a substantive Headteacher this has not proved possible. The current interim arrangements cannot continue into the future. It has not been possible to identify another school locally that would be prepared to share a Headteacher. Without secure leadership the school's outstanding record is at risk.

## **The Proposal**

For the reasons outlined above it is

proposed that Clapham CE VC Primary School should close with effect from 31 August 2019.

The nearest Church of England school, 2 miles from Clapham, is Austwick CE VA Primary School. There is also, Ingleton Primary School which is 4.7 miles from Clapham School, Bentham CP School at 5.5 miles, and Giggleswick Primary School at 5.8 miles away.

It is proposed that the catchment areas of both Austwick CE VA Primary School and Bentham CP School are expanded to include the current Clapham catchment area. These schools have the capacity to take some additional pupils and have indicated a willingness to do so.

The County Council would welcome consultees' views on the proposed catchment area extension.

For children currently at Clapham 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 Clapham 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, the governing body decides 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 Vickie Hemming-Allen on 01609 535481 or Lisa Herdman on 01609 534953.

### **The School Site**

The school building is not owned by the County Council, it is held on an implied Trust for the purposes of a school. The playing field is leased in by the County Council from a private landowner. Decisions about the future use of the school buildings and 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**  
Clapham  
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=154755992143>

**The closing date for responses is**

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April 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 on 25 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	Thursday 14 February 2019
Public meeting at the school	6.00pm 7 March 2019
Consultation closes	Thursday 4 April 2019
County Council's Executive considers consultation response	16 April 2019
Statutory Notices published (4 weeks for representations to be made)	Thursday 2 May 2019
Final decision by County Council's Executive	25 June 2019
Proposed school closure date	31 August 2019



**Clapham CE VC Primary School**  
**A consultation on whether the school should be closed**

Observations and/or suggestions:

Interest/Status .....

e.g. Parent/Governor/Teacher/Community

Name of School .....

Signed .....

Date: .....

Name (Block Capitals) .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

Postcode: .....

To help us assess whether we have provided clear information, please let us know whether you found this consultation easy to understand? YES/NO

Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

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**Under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, responses to the consultation may be published on the County Council's website where it may be accessed by members of the public. Your personal details will not be published.**

Please send this response sheet to the following "FREEPOST" address. You do not need to use a postage stamp.

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

Or go to:

<https://consult.northyorks.gov.uk/snapwebhost/s.asp?k=154755992143>

and submit your response there

**To be received by no later than 4<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

*We are collecting this information for the purpose of gathering views on the proposal. Your personal data will not be published or passed to any other organisation unless a legal obligation compels us to do so. We may contact you to discuss your views further. For more information about how your personal data is handled at North Yorkshire County Council please visit: [www.northyorks.gov.uk/privacy](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/privacy)*