



Consultation Document

Proposal to close
Weaverthorpe CE VC Primary School
from 31 August 2022

Weaverthorpe CE VC Primary School

January 2022

This paper sets out details of a proposal to close Weaverthorpe CE VC Primary School with effect from 31 August 2022. It gives the background to the proposal. There will be a public meeting on 20th January 2022 at 6pm

In the interests of safety to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus, this meeting will take place as a virtual (online) meeting via MS Teams. If you would like to take part in this meeting please contact: schoolorganisation@northyorks.gov.uk for further information on how to join. Parents and known stakeholders will be sent the link directly.

If you do not have the facilities to participate in the virtual (online) meeting but would still like to engage directly in the consultation process then please liaise with Weaverthorpe CE VC Primary School.

Background

Weaverthorpe CE VC Primary School, in the Ryedale area, was Inspected by Ofsted in January 2020 and found to be 'Inadequate'. The inspection report was published by Ofsted in July 2020.

The Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) issued a directive academy order (DAO) in July 2020 as the school was now eligible for intervention under the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The headteacher left the school in the summer term 2020 and an acting headteacher took over the leadership of the school in September 2020. The previous governing body was dissolved, and replaced with an Interim Executive Board (IEB) in September 2020.

For all schools who have been issued with a DAO it is the responsibility of the RSC to broker sponsorship of the school by a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). This MAT would then take on the governance and management of the school on conversion to academy status. In the period of time since the DAO was issued the RSC has been unable to identify a MAT that would be prepared to sponsor the school due to viability concerns. These concerns related to the low pupil numbers and the associated financial challenge that presents.

A potential sponsor MAT could not be identified because they did not consider Weaverthorpe to be viable as a stand-alone school. It was therefore clearly important to explore if a formal partnership with another local maintained school could be an option to sustain Weaverthorpe School both educationally and financially. Local Authority (LA) officers and the Diocese of York (the Church body with responsibility for the school) worked together to discuss the situation with the potential partner schools

in the local area during the summer and autumn terms of 2021. The schools contacted were the Federation of Luttons and Sherburn CE plus Hertford Vale and West Heslerton schools. The York Diocese also approached the Federation of Sledmere and Wetwang schools in the East Riding about the potential for collaboration with Weaverthorpe. None of those discussions resulted in an acceptable partnership proposal for the future of Weaverthorpe School.

Wold Newton is a Primary School in the East Riding. It was not among the group of schools initially contacted to establish if they had interest in collaborating with Weaverthorpe School. However, the Governing Body of Wold Newton Foundation School considered the position of Weaverthorpe School at their meeting on 2 December and confirmed that it would not be feasible for them to form a collaboration at this time.

It is considered highly unlikely that a partnership arrangement with another local school, such as federation or amalgamation, can now be identified. The School is in a vulnerable position for multiple reasons, not least because the temporary leadership arrangements cannot continue beyond the end of the current academic year.

At a recent meeting the IEB of Weaverthorpe CE VC Primary School decided, with regret, that in line with the advice of LA officers they would ask the County Council to consider a consultation on the future of the School. Governors felt they had exhausted all options open to them to secure the future provision following the Ofsted judgement, the issuing of a DAO by the RSC, the inability to secure a MAT sponsor and the absence of a collaboration option within the local maintained sector.

The Chair of the IEB has written to parents to explain the current situation and why it was considered necessary to consider consultation. This was followed by an initial meeting with parents on 10 November. This meeting was attended by officers from the LA and Diocese who provided a further explanation of the circumstances and the required statutory process. On 7 December 2021 the NYCC Executive Member for Schools approved that this consultation could be undertaken.

Where schools are subject to a DAO, the Secretary of State can also order that a school is closed if it is considered unviable. If the statutory closure process were not followed, the RSC may need to consult with the Secretary of State to determine if powers to direct closure for Weaverthorpe School should be exercised.

Factors Affecting the School's Viability

School Leadership and Standards

The Ofsted inspection in January 2020 found Weaverthorpe Church of England VC Primary School to have serious weaknesses and to be 'inadequate' overall. Significantly, leadership and management was judged to be inadequate with the result that the school was deemed inadequate overall. The Quality of Education, Personal Development and Early Years provision were judged to require improvement; Behaviour and Attitudes was judged 'good'; safeguarding was not effective.

Weaverthorpe CE VC Primary School remains vulnerable as a stand-alone school due to the uncertain nature of leadership beyond the current temporary arrangements. The

most recent substantive Headteacher left the school in the summer term of 2020. Following this, the IEB, supported by the LA, arranged for interim leadership to be provided by the headteacher of Langton Primary School. Due to the presence of the DAO, and the intention for academy sponsorship, the arrangement was initially established for a period of up to one year with an end date of the summer term 2021. Further, as a consequence of the DAO, and combined with the very low number of pupils entering the school, it is considered that the IEB is unlikely to be successful in any attempt to recruit a replacement substantive headteacher, especially of the calibre required to continue to drive the necessary improvements and at the pace required. Since a suitable sponsor had not been identified before the end of the summer term 2021, the Governing Body of Langton Primary School agreed to a one-year extension to the interim leadership arrangements but have now confirmed that the temporary arrangement cannot continue beyond July 2022. Therefore, Weaverthorpe CE VC Primary School will be without secure leadership, leaving any improvements in the quality of education that have already been achieved at further risk.

Ofsted's routine monitoring inspections were temporarily suspended during the earlier parts of the pandemic; however, Ofsted did undertake remote visits to school and noted in March 2021 that 'Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances.' This was typical of inspection visits at the time, where the range of evidence available to inspectors was narrower than would normally be the case during an on-site inspection, and so, the level of assurance provided was more limited. The interim Headteacher, the IEB and the LA were praised for the work they had carried out in the school: the interim headteacher has 'responded well to the challenges [she has] faced since taking up post in September 2020.' Furthermore, 'since its inception in September 2020, members of the IEB have focused intensively on securing improvement to the education on offer for pupils and the systems to keep them safe. Members of the IEB regularly visit the school so that they can be sure that leaders' actions are improving the school' and 'since the last inspection, the local authority has worked with leaders and the IEB to improve the school. They have provided stability in leadership by brokering the support of the current acting headteacher. They have also worked with the acting headteacher to prioritise the actions needed to improve the school.'

Ofsted resumed their monitoring visits in the summer term 2021 and Weaverthorpe CE VC Primary School was inspected in June 2021. Inspectors concluded that 'Leaders and Managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation'.

In the view of LA school improvement advisers and school leaders, despite the clear progress to date, the improvements in provision and specifically the quality of education, are not yet sufficiently well embedded to ensure all children, from their different starting points, achieve success. An additional temporary part-time leadership post (Assistant Headteacher) was added to the staffing structure in September 2021 to bring in extra capacity with a remit to improve curriculum planning which remained at the early stages of development. Leaders have planned and invested in resources to support the curriculum, but the impact of this is yet to be seen in outcomes for pupils. The school improvement service has placed the School

in the highest category of support and a principal adviser undertakes regular monitoring, challenge and support activities working closely with the interim leadership and the IEB.

Pupil Numbers

Weaverthorpe is a 3-11 Community Primary School and currently has 25 children on roll. The school is located in the Malton and Norton outer area, serving families living in the village of Weaverthorpe and surrounding area. The number of children at Weaverthorpe CE VC Primary School has been falling over the past few years:

2015/16 – 41
2016/17 – 43
2017/18 – 36
2018/19 – 41
2019/20 – 36
2020/21 – 26
2021/22 – 25 (plus 2 in Nursery)

In the recent Autumn term 22 of the 25 pupils attending Weaverthorpe School had a home address that was in the Weaverthorpe catchment area. These 22 pupils made up 71% of the 31 pupils who were living within the catchment area at the time. The remaining nine children in catchment attended other North Yorkshire schools.

The School can accommodate up to 49 pupils if all spaces are in use and therefore has the potential to contribute 49 places in the local area. Forecasts indicate that these numbers will not recover significantly in the longer term and may reduce still further.

The current numbers in each year group at the school are:

	Total
Reception	1
Year 1	6
Year 2	2
Year 3	3
Year 4	2
Year 5	5
Year 6	6
Total	25

Breadth of Curriculum

At the time of the 'inadequate' Ofsted judgement in January 2020 there were 40 pupils on roll (including nursery). As numbers have fallen since this judgement, the IEB and the LA have become increasingly concerned that, in future, pupils will not have access to the full range of experiences they need, particularly opportunities for learning and playing with children their own age. Due to the forecasted financial position and the reduction in numbers, school leaders and governors may have to make further decisions relating to reducing the number of teaching groups and increasing in the mix of age ranges in each class. Leaders and governors are obligated to consider the

impact on children’s access to age-appropriate curriculum, particularly when the present curriculum offer struggles to meet current expectations.

Primary School places in the local area

The nearest school to Weaverthorpe, 2.5 miles from Weaverthorpe CE VC Primary School, is Luttons Community Primary School, which has places available in all year groups. This school has the capacity to take any additional pupils as a result of the proposed closure, and has indicated a willingness to do so. The table below shows more detail on the hypothetical combined position for Weaverthorpe and Luttons based on numbers in January 2022.

Year Group 2021/22	Weaverthorpe (Current capacity 49)	Luttons (Current capacity 56)	Total Weaverthorpe and Luttons combined
Reception	1	5	6
Year 1	6	6	12
Year 2	2	3	5 (23)
Year 3	3	5	8
Year 4	2	5	7
Year 5	5	3	8
Year 6	6	1	7(30)
Total	25	28	53

Luttons Community Primary School currently operates a two class structure but has the flexibility and capacity to increase these arrangements should the need arise in future.

A table on the County Council website <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/current-consultations> shows the other local schools, their pupil number and the forecast position in future years which takes account of expected housing developments.

In October 2021 there were a total of 80 primary aged children living in the catchment areas of the two schools (49 Luttons, 31 Weaverthorpe). At first, this may appear a concern given that Luttons School only has a current capacity of 56 places. However, Luttons is situated closer to more North Yorkshire Schools than is Weaverthorpe and there is an established pattern of a number of families from Luttons choosing alternative schools. The latest data (October 21 census) shows that 21 of the 49 Luttons area pupils, or 42%, were attending neither Luttons or Weaverthorpe schools. There is no reason to expect that this pattern of attendance would change given we understand it is largely explained by the geographical extent of the Luttons catchment area including the settlement of Duggleby.

For the first time in July 2021 the County Council was able to access NHS data for GP registrations at postcode level. This will be incorporated into a revised methodology in the coming year as we believe it will enable a higher degree of forecast accuracy. The latest data received in October 2021 for Luttons, Weaverthorpe and Sherburn areas

is shown below. This identifies any child who is registered with a GP practice on 30 September 2021 and who lives in the schools' catchments areas:

NHS data for year group cohorts	Weaverthorpe	Luttons	Total W & L	Sherburn CE
Rec entry 2025	2	3	5	10
Rec entry 2024	5	4	9	4
Rec entry 2023	2	7	9	9
Rec entry 2022	4	13	17	9
Rec entry 2021	2	6	8	14
REC 2020 (Y1 now)	7	14	21	15
REC 2019 (Y2 now)	4	5	9	19
REC 2018 (Y3 now)	4	7	11	14
REC 2017 (Y4 now)	5	11	17	11
REC 2016 (Y5 now)	6	10	16	11
REC 2015 (Y6 now)	4	8	13	14

It is notable that the Weaverthorpe numbers are remaining at a low level for the coming years. However, this data shows a higher combined cohort for Reception entry in September 2022 driven by the number (13) for Luttons. However, this is considered to be a short-term issue, as the local cohorts for entry in the following three years are at a much lower level. A review of the data for the Sherburn CE catchment area also shows no evidence of a rise in the local pre-school population.

The Financial Position

Pupil numbers determine the school budget. The critical concerns are Ofsted's Inadequate judgement, the DAO and the inability to find a sustainable leadership solution for the school, but the fall in pupil numbers has also undermined the school's future financial position.

Based on the start budget submitted in May 2021 the school had a budget surplus of £36.7k at the end of the 2020/21 financial year; the funding for the 2020/21 financial year was based on 39 pupils. However, the school is projecting in-year budget deficits of £48.8k in 2021/22 and £26.9k in 2022/23 and an overall cumulative budget deficit of £39k at the end of 2022/23. The budget projections are based on pupil assumptions of 25 in 2021/22 and 21 in 2022/23, so the position will deteriorate further if pupil numbers fall below that level. There appears to be no reasonable prospect of financial recovery.

These budget projections already reflect a notional reduction in staffing from 3.2 FTE to 2.5 FTE in September 2022.

The School may benefit from an additional £10k sparsity funding in 2022/23; this is to subject to the completion of school budget allocations for next financial year which will be finalised in January 2022.

The Proposal

For the reasons above it is proposed that Weaverthorpe CE VC Primary School should close with effect from 31 August 2022.

It is proposed that the catchment area of Luttons Community Primary School is expanded to include the current Weaverthorpe School catchment area. There is an area of Weaverthorpe's catchment area that is currently shared with Hertford Vale CE Primary School and it is proposed that area (Butterwick) remains part of Hertford Vale's catchment area. The York CE Diocese have indicated early stage support for this approach. The LA invite all stakeholders to comment on these catchment area proposals during the consultation. These arrangements would be implemented from September 2022 only in the event of closure for Weaverthorpe School.

Admissions and Transport

LA officers are undertaking a managed and co-ordinated process for the allocation of alternative school places for September 2022, and for those allocations to be implemented in the event that the School does proceed to closure through the statutory process. Ideally, this 'preference exercise' would not have been undertaken until after the initial six week consultation and this was explained to parents at the meeting in School on 10 November. However, feedback from the parents, via the School, was that they wanted assistance sooner to reduce their period of uncertainty. This position was further evidenced by a small, but significant, number of transfer applications having already been made. The LA have therefore commenced the preference exercise in the interests of fairness for all parents and to avoid a first come first served scenario.

Parents, as is their right, may request a transfer earlier than September 2022 and the LA would be obliged to respond. However, irrespective of the required date of transfer, all applications will be managed via this single preference exercise.

LA officers will be available to support Weaverthorpe parents during the exercise with advice and guidance – please contact Vickie Hemming-Allen on 01609 535481 or Lisa Herdman on 01609 534953.

Free transport is provided to the catchment school, or nearest school to the home address, subject to qualifying distance:

- 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.

The LA Road Safety team will assess the road from Weaverthorpe to Luttons against standard criteria, and parents will be notified of the outcome as soon as possible.

Staff

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

The School Site

The Weaverthorpe school buildings and playground are owned by the Diocese of York and the school playing field is owned by NYCC. Any decisions about the future of the site and buildings would be taken separately from the decision on whether to close the school.

Any capital receipt from the disposal of the school site would be determined with reference to the appropriate legislation and regulation.

Additional Information

This consultation document should be read in conjunction with the following documents which can be found here <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/consultations> :

- A frequently asked questions document
- A map showing the local catchment areas
- Other schools – capacity and forecast (based on October 2021 Census)

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
Weaverthorpe
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/snapwebhost/s.asp?k=163958972021>

Responses to the consultation will be published on the County Council's website. Your personal details, and those of others you may refer to, will not be published.

The closing date for responses is Friday 18th February 2022

All responses to the consultation received by this date will be considered by the County Council's Executive on 22 March 2022.

If the County Council's Executive decides to proceed with the closure proposal, then statutory notices would be published in the local press on Friday 1 April 2022. These notices provide a further four weeks for representations to be made. A final decision is then scheduled to be taken by North Yorkshire County Council's Executive in May 2022. If agreed, the school would close on 31 August 2022.

Anticipated Key Dates

All dates are subject to approvals at each stage.

Consultation opens	7 January 2022
Public meeting	20 January 2022
Consultation closes	18 February 2022
County Council's Executive considers consultation response	22 March 2022
Statutory Notices published (4 weeks for representations to be made)	1 April – 29 April 2022
Final decision by County Council's Executive	May 2022
Proposed school closure date	31 August 2022

Weaverthorpe CE VC Primary School Consultation

This is a consultation on proposals to close Weaverthorpe CE VC Primary School from 31 August 2022.

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.

Reading our Privacy Notice will help you understand how and why we process your personal data. www.northyorks.gov.uk/privacy-notices

Do you have any comments about the closure proposal?
(Please do not disclose any personal information in your answer)

Do you agree with the catchment area proposals that would apply from September 2022 in the event of closure? **Yes / No**

Do you have any further comments about catchment areas?
(Please do not disclose any personal information in your answer)

What is your interest/status? Parent / Governor / Teacher / Community / Other

Other (please state)

Name of school:

To confirm your proximity to school and to prevent duplicate responses we are asking you to provide your name and address. This information will be removed from any analysis or reports.

Name:

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?

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

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

Or to submit your response online go to

<https://consult.northyorks.gov.uk/snapwebhost/s.asp?k=163958972021>

To be received by no later than 18 February 2022