



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

Drax Community Primary School

October 2016

This paper sets out details of a proposal to close Drax Community Primary School with effect from 31 August 2017. It gives the background to the proposal. There will be a public meeting on:

**23 November 2016 at 7pm
at Drax Community Primary School**

The Current Position

On 18 October 2016 the Executive Member for Schools agreed that the Local Authority should consult on a proposal to close the school with effect from 31 August 2017. This followed a request from the Governing Body of Drax Community Primary School who had unanimously agreed on 14 September 2016 that they should ask the Local Authority to consider the future of the school.

The Local Authority has reflected on the school's position and agree with the conclusion reached by the Governing Body that the school is not viable financially as a result of a falling pupil roll. Although educational standards at the School are good numbers have fallen to a level where it will be difficult to provide a high quality of education for pupils in the future.

The LA and the Governing Body of Drax Community Primary School have not reached this position lightly and have considered a number of other alternatives.

During the Autumn term 2015-16 the Governing Body took the decision to request that the school become a sponsored academy with Ebor Academy Trust. An Academy Order was issued in January 2016. However pupil numbers continued to fall and in the summer term of 2015-16 Ebor Academy Trust paused the conversion process.

Having received advice from Ebor, the Local Authority and the Department for Education the Governing Body approached Camblesforth Community Primary School to explore the potential for a federation between the two schools. Camblesforth CP School also has an Academy order in place for Ebor Academy Trust. A federation was seen as a pre-cursor to academy conversion for both schools providing it demonstrated future viability.

On 5 September 2016 the Governing Body of Camblesforth CP School rejected the federation proposal.

It is not considered that federation with another local school would in itself secure

the future viability of Drax Community Primary School given the level of financial deficits expected in the very short-term.

Pupil Numbers

Pupil numbers at Drax Community Primary School peaked in recent times at 52 on roll during 2012/13 and 2013/14. Since then there has been a decline which gathered pace significantly during 2015/16.

Total roll numbers:

2010/11 – 43

2011/12 – 44

2012/13 – 52

2013/14 – 52

2014/15 – 42

2015/16 – 26

2016/17 – 12 (as at 5 September)

There were no new Reception aged starters at the school in September 2016.

Three pupils have left the school since the start of this academic year and as the school closed for half-term on 21 October 2016 there were 9 pupils on roll.

The latest pupil forecast indicates no more than 2 new Reception aged starters in 2017/18. This combined with the progressive reduction in existing year groups results in a forecast total roll for 2017/18 of 7 pupils.

There is little chance of numbers recovering significantly above current levels in the context of parents preferring other schools for their children.

In these circumstances, it is difficult to preserve either the financial viability or the quality of education. The Local Authority is therefore proposing that it ceases to maintain Drax Community Primary School from 31 August 2017.

Quality of educational experience

Numbers at Drax have fallen very quickly over the last year or so. As numbers fall, it is increasingly difficult to provide the remaining pupils with access to the full range of experiences they need.

The most recent Ofsted inspection was in March 2016. At this time there were 27 pupils on roll. Ofsted found the school to be a Good school for the headline judgement of overall effectiveness. Similarly all five contributory assessments within the inspection were judged to be good. Some of the headline comments were as follows:

- The new headteacher and governing body have set a new direction for the school and have brought about rapid improvements.
- The headteacher's high expectations and strong purpose motivate staff and pupils.
- Good teaching usually meets the needs of different ages and abilities in the mixed-age classes. As a result, pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- High-quality marking and verbal feedback in English, mathematics and topic work enable pupils to make continuous improvements to their work.
- Pupils are gaining more experience of the wider world. They take on responsibilities in school. They are well looked after by the adults in school.
- Under the leadership of the new headteacher, the progress made by pupils has increased and current pupils are making good progress in all year groups.

However, numbers on roll have continued to fall despite this positive inspection outcome.

Although the school has only been operating for a very short period with 12 pupils on roll the Headteacher and

governors have quickly identified concerns around the school's ability to meet the educational and social needs of children with such small numbers.

The Local Authority share the school's concerns that pupils would not in future have access 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 two children in a year group, it is difficult for pupils to share and compare the same work. It will become increasingly difficult to preserve the quality and breadth of the curriculum. Maintaining the quality of the educational experience for the best interests of the pupils is, alongside financial issues, a key concern arising from the rapid decline in pupil numbers.

The Financial Position

The school has overwhelming challenges in managing its budget faced with such a sharp and unexpected drop in numbers. The current staffing structure relies heavily upon teaching input from the Headteacher. Although there may be scope for some marginal reductions in staffing costs it would not be sufficient to avoid a deficit position in the face of significantly reduced income.

Funding for 2016/17 was based on the 2015 census when 31 children were on roll. This provides a higher income figure than can be expected in future years. Despite this the forecast outturn for 2016/17 is an in-year deficit of £23k. The school brought forward a deficit balance of £4k into 2016/17.

An assessment of the position for 2017/18 based on there being 12 pupils on roll at the 2016 census sees income fall to £144k compared to £229k in 2016/17. As a result the projected in-year

deficit for 2017/18 is £78k and an overall deficit of £105k by the end of that year. With still lower numbers predicted for 2018/19 both the in-year and overall deficits will continue to rise at a significant rate.

The local authority's ability to support schools experiencing this type of financial difficulty is now limited and such schools will be vulnerable to the future introduction of a national funding formula increasingly driven by pupil numbers. The impacts of a national funding formula are still unknown but they do not have the potential, as the figures above show, to prevent the school running at a significant deficit. This is not a sustainable situation.

Other Options

As mentioned it is not considered that federation with another local school would in itself secure the future viability of Drax Community Primary School given the level of financial deficits expected in the very short-term. Under federation there would be potential financial savings from the sharing of a Headteacher but this would be limited given that the current Drax Headteacher is one of only two staff at the school with qualified teaching status. There would be opportunities for sharing resources etc and it would present opportunities for other staffing reviews but collectively they are thought insufficient to address the overwhelming financial difficulties.

The Department for Education has confirmed that the Academy Order will not be rescinded. However it is not a directive order based on standards and so can sit in place until the County Council determines the school's future. Given that Ebor Academy Trust have concluded due diligence and found that in their opinion the School is not viable as a stand-alone establishment it is

considered unlikely that another multi-academy trust would be a willing sponsor.

Consultees have the opportunity to put forward alternatives to closure which will be considered by the Executive when deciding whether to proceed to publish statutory notices.

The Proposal

It is proposed that Drax Community Primary School should close with effect from 31 August 2017.

If the proposal is approved, the area currently served by the school would in future be served by Camblesforth Community Primary School from 1 September 2017 i.e. the start of the new academic year.

Camblesforth Community Primary School is 2.2 miles from Drax and is the next nearest local school. The school is expected to have 94 pupils on roll in September 2017 including a number who have already transferred from Drax. This school has indicated its willingness to accept all the remaining Drax CP pupils and it will have space to do so.

Camblesforth Community Primary School was rated by Ofsted as a Good school at its last Ofsted inspection in April 2015 with all five contributory judgements also good. Comments in the inspection report included praise for pupils' behaviour, determined leadership, high staff morale, a focus on raising standards, good teaching, good support and challenge by governors. Pupils were reported as feeling safe in school and say that adults take good care of them.

Camblesforth Community Primary School is a relatively small village primary school and its standards and proximity to Drax make it the most appropriate alternative school.

The school is a Community Primary School maintained by the local authority who administer admissions and employ staff in the same way as at Drax. The Governing Body have however indicated a desire for Academy conversion with Ebor Academy Trust and this may be pursued to completion in future. There is potential for academy conversion to take place either before or after 1 September 2017 the date on which it is proposed Camblesforth CP would begin to serve the catchment area of Drax CP School. The expectation would be that the multi-academy trust would not change the admission arrangements or catchment area. This however would be a matter for the trust as they would be the admission authority following conversion.

For any children currently at Drax Community Primary School, the Local Authority would work with each family to try to meet their individual preferences for other schools.

For any new children moving into the Drax area, the normal school would in future be Camblesforth CP School. It may be more than 2 miles from home for some children living in the current Drax catchment area. Pupils up to the age of 8 would normally be eligible for free home to school transport if they live more than 2 miles from Camblesforth CP School (or 3 miles for those over the age of 8). Eligibility is assessed on an individual basis taking account of the child's home address.

Parents can always express a preference for a school other than their normal area school and the Authority will meet that preference provided there are vacant places. Parents would normally be responsible for making transport arrangements (unless the school they prefer is nearer their home address than Camblesforth).

The Building

North Yorkshire County Council owns the site and buildings of Drax CP School. If no alternative County Council use is identified it is likely they would be disposed of, subject to appropriate approvals. It seems unlikely that there would be a community use for the building given the presence of the village hall in Drax. Any capital receipt would go into general County Council capital funds unless Members agreed to reinvest it in schools in the area.

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 at

<https://consult.northyorks.gov.uk/snapwebhost/s.asp?k=147705830625>

Paper responses should be returned to:

Freepost RTKE-RKAY-CUJS
Drax CP School proposals
Strategic Planning
North Yorkshire County Council
County Hall
NORTHALLERTON, DL7 8AE

There will a public meeting during the consultation period at 7pm on 23 November 2016 at Drax CP School

The closing date for responses is **12 December 2016**. All responses to the consultation received by this date will be considered by the County Council's Executive on 10 January 2017.

If the Executive decides to proceed with the closure proposal, then statutory notices would be published in the local press. These notices would provide a further four weeks for views to be made. A final decision would be made by the County Council's Executive Committee on 28 March 2017.

**Drax Community Primary School
Indicative Timetable for Closure Proposal**

| Date | Activity |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 14 September 2016 | Full Governing Body Meeting – Request to consider the school's future |
| 18 October 2016 | Executive Member Approved consultation |
| 31 October 2016 | Consultation opens |
| 23 November 2016 | Public meeting 7 pm at Drax CP School |
| 12 December 2016 | End of consultation period |
| 13-23 December 2016 | Evaluation of consultation responses and production of report. |
| 23 December 2016 | Publication of Executive Report |
| 10 January 2017 | Executive meeting to consider publication of statutory notices |
| 27 January 2017 | Publication of statutory notices |
| 27 January-28 February 2017 | Representation period |
| 10 March 2017 | Assessment of representations Production of Report |
| 16 March 2017 | Publication of Report |
| 28 March 2017 | Determination by the Executive |
| 31 August 2017 | Implementation date – school closes |
| 1 September 2017 | Camblesforth Community Primary School becomes the normal school serving the area. |



Drax Community Primary School
A consultation on whether the school should be closed

Do you agree with this proposal? Yes / No

Observations and/or suggestions:

A large empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for providing 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?

.....

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.

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

**Freepost RTKE-RKAY-CUJS
Drax CP School Proposals
Strategic Planning
North Yorkshire County Council
County Hall
NORTHALLERTON
DL7 8AE**

Alternatively you can use the online response form at

<https://consult.northyorks.gov.uk/snapwebhost/s.asp?k=147705830625> or

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

To be received by no later than **12 December 2016**