

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE
CORPORATE DIRECTOR MEETING WITH EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

8 October 2010

UPPER WHARFEDALE PRIMARY REVIEW

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to consult on a reorganisation of primary school provision in Upper Wharfedale.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1. On 27 November 2009 Executive Members gave approval for work to be undertaken to re-evaluate early years and primary school provision in Upper Wharfedale as a result of concerns about the anticipated falling rolls, which had in turn created concerns about both the educational and financial viability of some schools.

2.2. There are seven primary schools in the Upper Wharfedale cluster serving approximately 340 children. There have been detailed discussions with all schools and a number of alternative patterns of provision have been explored.

2.3. On 27 September Executive Members considered a report which laid out a range of alternatives and gave approval for more detailed discussions with schools in advance of formal consultation. These discussions have now concluded and a number of potential options for consultation have emerged.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1. The background was laid out in the reports considered by Executive Members on 27 September 2010

3.2. The Upper Wharfedale cluster includes the following schools

- Arncliffe C of E VC Primary School
- Burnsall VA Primary School
- Cracoe & Rylstone VC C of E Primary School
- Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School
- Kettlewell Primary School
- The Boyle and Petyt Primary School
- Threshfield Primary School.

3.3. Numbers on roll at these schools are small, ranging from 7 to 87. Challenging issues in the area include:

- financial sustainability, which is becoming increasingly difficult as a consequence of falling rolls
- difficulties in recruitment of head teachers
- the development of appropriate provision where numbers are particularly small and
- a lack of access to early years provision and childcare.

3.4. Schools in the area have a growing awareness of the need to develop alternative approaches to the management, and possibly the organisation, of schools, to establish a secure basis for education and childcare in this very rural area. There is an appetite for change amongst schools, provided that the needs of children are foremost. This is a view which has been held by some schools for several years. A growing number of head teachers and governors appreciate the benefits of exploring more sustainable provision so as to pre-empt the financial difficulties which are expected to affect many schools locally.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1. Whilst this group of schools works as a cluster, it is clear that there are differences between them in terms of the issues they face and the communities they serve. A single solution will not address the needs of all schools.

4.2. The pattern of provision across the area is diverse. There is an amount of parental choice already being exerted with children attending schools which are not their normal area school. The Boyle and Petyt Primary School tends to serve children from the Addingham area. Burnsall is a Voluntary Aided CE school largely serving its own immediate area.

4.3. Threshfield Primary School and Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School both educate children from both communities and elsewhere. Arncliffe and Kettlewell Primary schools are already working in a soft federation.

4.4. Pre-school children from across the whole area travel to Hebden Lodge Nursery, currently occupying temporary accommodation in Burnsall, to access the only day-care provision in the area. The Upper Wharfedale Children's Centre operates from new premises at Grassington Primary School.

4.5. At age 11, pupils from the entire area usually travel either to Upper Wharfedale School in Threshfield or to one of the grammar schools in Skipton. Some pupils enter the independent sector.

4.6. In any rural area it is a challenge to balance local access to services with financial sustainability. This is widely acknowledged and a number of schools are working collaboratively as a way to address this. However, whilst this collaboration is welcome, when pupil numbers are very low it does not by itself secure stable provision for the future.

4.7. Arncliffe C of E Primary School and Kettlewell Primary School are already working in a soft federation with a single Head teacher. Other schools in the area have explored federation, including shared governance, but this has not progressed. Schools have pressed for alternatives to be explored and have generally welcomed the review.

4.8. It is very difficult for some families to access services and for some children to experience the range of opportunities readily accessible elsewhere. The village of Grassington is seen as a service centre by local families, and is where they are likely to shop and use community services such as the GP surgery, Children's Centre and library super mobile. An after-school club has recently opened which is based at Upper Wharfedale School.

4.9. The Upper Wharfedale Children's Centre is a small 'hub' Centre based in Grassington. This has only recently been built although some services began by operating from community buildings across the area, and some will continue to operate in this way. There is potential though for greater family support services to develop as the Children's Centre gains a stronger footing in the area. One particular issue is the shortage of suitable childcare in the area. The only full day-care provision at present is Hebden Lodge Nursery which at the moment does not have permanent premises. The Dales pre-school group operates some sessions from community premises in Grassington and there is a Montessori school which has an early years unit 'Wharfedale Babies'. There is currently one childminder in the area and it is hoped to grow the capacity so that Upper Wharfedale Children's Centre will become a centre of excellence for child minding support with outreach activity across the area.

4.10. Numbers on Roll

Across all seven primary schools there are fewer than 330 children, and it is likely that there will be fewer than 310 by 2011, falling further to around 286 in 2015. In most schools there are fewer than 10 children in Foundation Stage, potentially leading to limited educational, social and developmental opportunities. Arncliffe C of E Primary School and Kettlewell Primary Schools have forecasts significantly below the point where the County Council would review them in line with the Small Schools Policy.

Current and forecast numbers on roll are laid out below.

School Name	NOR Sept 2010	Projected NOR 2013/14
Arncliffe C of E Primary	7	7
Burnsall VA Primary School	42	29
Cracoe & Rylstone VC C of E Primary	45	37
Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School	52	55
Kettlewell Primary	27	14
The Boyle and Petyt Primary	66	69
Threshfield Primary School	87	81
Total	326	292

4.11 Finance

For the financial year 2010/11 three of the seven schools are forecast to have in-year deficits, and for the year 2011/12 all the schools are currently forecast to be running in-year deficits totalling almost £90k. Based on the summer 2010 submissions this situation worsens for the 2012/13 financial year when the combined forecast in-year deficits increase to more than £170k. Schools in this area have higher than average per pupil funding. For example £10,196 per pupil for Arncliffe CE School, which is the highest in North Yorkshire, and £5,318 for Kettlewell School compared to the North Yorkshire primary school average of £3,389.

This is an unsustainable financial position. It creates the situation for some schools where they will have to consider reductions in staffing which then starts to impact on class sizes and structures, and potentially constrains the educational offer.

4.12 Standards

Schools in the area have done well to maintain educational standards in the face of the challenges outlined above. Attainment across the area is fundamentally sound but variable between schools and year on year. At Key Stage 1, performance in Reading, Writing, Maths and Science declined in 2009. In 2010, at the end of Key Stage 1, children's attainment was generally above the North Yorkshire average by a narrow gap. At the end of Key Stage 2 children's attainment was above the North Yorkshire average.

In some cases, there are specific concerns about the social and emotional development of children in schools where there may be very small numbers of pupils in particular key stages. This is particularly so where there is also a gender imbalance and/or a predominance of children with Special Educational Needs.

It is challenging for individual primary schools in the area to maintain a broad and balanced curriculum with small numbers on roll and increasing pressure on budgets, and it is likely to become even more difficult when action will be needed to reduce costs. Schools are likely to need to review their staffing levels to address this.

4.13 Staffing

Burnsall VA Primary School, The Boyle and Petyt Primary School and Cracoe and Rylstone VC C of E Primary School have individual permanent head teachers in post. Arncliffe C of E Primary School and Kettlewell Primary School have a joint head teacher in post as part of their soft federation arrangements.

Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School and Threshfield Primary School both have vacancies for their headships. Both were unsuccessful in recruiting replacements in the Summer Term 2010, and currently have temporary leadership arrangements in place.

No school has more than 6 teaching staff and most have fewer than 3 (full time equivalents).

5. AIMS OF THE REVIEW

5.1. The review aims to re-evaluate early years and primary school provision and to implement changes which will address the key concerns outlined above.

5.2. A set of key criteria have been developed to allow an objective evaluation to be made of how potential changes would meet the needs of the area both now and in the future. The key criteria are as follows:

- High quality provision – The approach must allow for the provision of high standards of education to be delivered and maintained across the age range and stages of development. It must allow for the provision of appropriate early years and primary provision across the area.

- Transition between phases of learning – The approach must allow for learning to be delivered effectively through transitions. Transitional arrangements must support a coherent curriculum.
- Strong leadership and governance – The approach must address issues of succession planning, recruitment, CPD and career pathways. It must allow for stable arrangements for governance.
- Sustainability – The approach must create an appropriate balance in terms of sustainability between educational, financial and environmental considerations. It must aim to create financially viable provision across the area. It must allow provision and a structure fit for purpose now and in the future.
- Stability – It must provide long term stability of provision on which parents can depend and plan.
- Community and Partnerships – It must aim to address the needs of the specific communities involved to the maximum extent possible. It should allow for the maximisation of opportunities for wider community engagement including co-location of services where possible. It should facilitate the maintenance and development of successful partnership working and create maximum opportunities for agencies to work together to best meet the needs of children and young people.
- Robust – It must be capable of robust scrutiny and able to stand up to challenge.

6. PRE-CONSULTATION DISCUSSIONS

- 6.1. The review was launched on 25 January 2010, at a meeting attended by Head teachers; Chairs of Governors; the local County Council Member; the Executive Member responsible for schools, 16-19 years education, and early years provision; the Diocesan officer; and Local Authority officers.
- 6.2. Since the launch, officers have met with the Head teacher and Chair of Governors at all the primary schools in the area for discussions. There have also been discussions with early years providers in the area.
- 6.3. An officer working group has been considering the emerging themes from these discussions, considering best practice nationally on primary provision and undertaking extensive modelling of alternative patterns of provision.
- 6.4. Falling pupil numbers and the impact on their financial and educational sustainability was a clear theme which emerged from these discussions with many schools acknowledging the desirability and inevitability of change.
- 6.5. Concerns were expressed about early years and childcare provision with much childcare provision being based on informal family arrangements. Whilst headteachers welcomed the development of children's centre services in the dale there was a concern expressed by some over the perceived lack of impact on schools so far of the new Children's Centre opened in February 2010.
- 6.6. Another clear theme was concern over the ever expanding role of the head teacher and the impact that has on leadership time. Succession planning, recruitment and the limitations of development opportunities for school staff were also stressed.

- 6.7. Whilst open to change, some schools expressed concern about loss of their individual school's identity arising out of soft and hard federation arrangements. There was some resistance to formal arrangements but enthusiasm for the cluster arrangements.
- 6.8. Transport was seen as a limiting factor in further collaborative arrangements although it was noted on several occasions that parents are used to having to travel to access services including early years provision and other services for young children. The geography of the area and travelling times/distances is likely to be key factor to be taken into consideration.

7. FORMULATING OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

- 7.1. North Yorkshire County Council has always acknowledged that small schools in very rural areas have additional and different challenges from other schools. Nevertheless, it is clear that larger units are more secure and resilient in the face of falling pupil numbers and financial resources. This means that the schools in Upper Wharfedale are particularly vulnerable.
- 7.2. In Upper Wharfedale, it is considered that there is scope for organising schools differently which would provide better educational and social opportunities for children and families, and would enable economies of scale to free resources which could be used across the area for the benefit of all children. There is a continuum of different approaches which could be pursued. At one end of the continuum the authority could simply continue to encourage and support further collaborative arrangements between schools in the form of Federation(s). Whilst this is something which the County Council could and would support, the approval of each governing body would be required to enter into any Federation agreement.
- 7.3. At the other end of the spectrum would be a proposal to make structural changes to the provision in the area to create larger and more sustainable units. This would involve closure of some schools and expansion of others. Several different options could be considered. Initial analysis and discussions with schools has shown that Federations between schools and other collaborative arrangements could potentially include all of the schools across the area. It is clear however that if the way forward is through structural change to bring schools together, it would not be necessary or desirable to include all seven schools in any proposals.
- 7.4. The Boyle and Petyt Primary School appears to belong to the Upper Wharfedale cluster of schools for historical reasons associated with informal relationships between staff rather than through serving the same community. It would see itself in future more likely to work more closely with nearby Embsay School and others in the Skipton cluster although it values its association with the Upper Wharfedale cluster. The school serves pupils living in Addingham, Ilkley and Skipton. Its numbers are stable with a rising trend.
- 7.5. Burnsall VA Primary School is a Voluntary Aided primary school with a permanent head teacher which appears to serve discrete communities, predominantly Hebden, Appletreewick and Burnsall itself. Although numbers are low and falling they are not forecast to drop below the threshold for review in the period up to 2019/20.
- 7.6. Cracoe and Rylstone VC C of E Primary School attracts a number of pupils living in and around Gargrave. It has also recently appointed a permanent head. Its numbers are relatively low but stable.

7.7. Pupil numbers in these three schools are relatively stable and none are presently forecast to drop below the point where they would need to be reviewed under the Small Schools Policy. All three are looking away from Grassington in terms of where their pupils live. For these reasons it is not considered appropriate to propose an area wide amalgamation of provision including these schools. However, under any reorganised provision there would continue to be opportunities for all of the schools to work together. Schools in the Upper Wharfedale cluster work collaboratively in a variety of ways at present, for example, joint sports coaching, foreign language teaching provision and joint after-school care. These arrangements are highly valued. It is anticipated that these schools would continue to work in partnership with other local schools through cluster arrangements and other informal arrangements. There is also the potential over time for further soft or hard Federations of schools to be developed.

7.8. It is considered that the greatest potential benefit to be gained for primary school provision in the area would be to look at some grouping of the four remaining schools – Arncliffe, Kettlewell, Grassington and Threshfield which look towards Grassington as a hub, serving the Grassington/Threshfield area and the dales beyond. Arncliffe and Kettlewell are already in a soft Federation and share a head teacher. Grassington and Threshfield are less than half a mile apart with a good deal of crossover between the two catchment areas in terms of parental preferences expressed for each school. Neither Grassington nor Threshfield have a permanent Head teacher in post, having failed to recruit last term. Both Arncliffe C of E Primary and Kettlewell Primary schools have pupil numbers forecast to fall below the threshold for review under the County Council's Small Schools Policy and are not considered to be sustainable in the current configuration.

7.9. Several different options have been considered for bringing together some or all of these four schools along a continuum from further federation arrangements up to and including an amalgamation of all the schools. The potential impacts of each approach have been assessed.

Option 1: Retain the current pattern of provision

Option 2: Encourage the creation of a hard Federation or Federations of these schools

Option 3a - c: Reduce from four schools to two or three, on two or three sites

Option 4a – b: Reduce from four schools to one, on two or three sites

8. CONSIDERATION OF OPTIONS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL ORGANISATION IN UPPER WHARFEDALE

8.1. Option 1: Retain the current pattern of provision

8.1.0. The number of children in the area is expected to continue to fall in the future with no prospect of longer term recovery. Across the four schools there is 50% surplus capacity. Numbers on roll at some of the schools are so small that they are a barrier to effective delivery of the curriculum, and to the social and emotional development of children. Children in very small schools may not have the opportunity to work with children of a similar age and/or ability, may have restricted access to suitable resources, may have reduced opportunity to access extended services, and may be taught by a very limited number of staff.

It can be difficult to challenge the most able children. It is difficult for very small schools to provide opportunities for children to work or play in teams, or to take part in competitive activities. Attendance at very small schools may reduce opportunities to develop an understanding of diversity and lead to limited friendships.

- 8.1.1. Financial challenges across all four schools are increasing with all four schools expected to be running in-year deficits totalling £105,000 by 2012/13 unless action is taken. This means that even the larger two schools are faced with difficult decisions about staffing which will further impact on the educational offer.
- 8.1.2. One of the emerging themes in discussions with the schools has been the lack of opportunity for continuing professional development for staff, and the impact on succession planning and recruitment.
- 8.1.3. For these reasons it is considered that the status quo is not a pattern of provision which will provide a suitable and sustainable education for children in the area in the long term. Recent discussions with the leaders and governors of these schools indicate that this view is shared by the schools themselves.

8.2. Option 2: Encourage the creation of a Federation or Federations of schools

- 8.2.0. Federation of schools is a proposal which can only be taken forward by the Governing Bodies of the schools concerned.
- 8.2.1. The Local Authority has worked with schools in the area over many years in an attempt to move towards soft or hard federation of the schools. Whilst Arncliffe C of E Primary School and Kettlewell Primary School are currently in a soft federation with a joint Head teacher, other schools in the area have not taken this forward in spite of Local Authority support and encouragement to do so.
- 8.2.2. Should Governing Bodies express a willingness to move federation proposals forward, the Local Authority would support them in this. However it is not considered that Federation would achieve the same permanent and stable structure that a more formal reorganisation of provision would achieve. Over time federation agreements can and do break down creating uncertainty for parents, pupils and staff.
- 8.2.3. The potential financial impact of federation is very much dependent on the structure adopted, for example, whether there is shared staffing and travel of staff and/or pupils between schools. In general terms, under the current funding formula schools would maintain a larger budget share by federating than by formally amalgamating due to the loss of the lump sum. However, this would do nothing to address the longer term structural financial issues, simply passing them on to the governing body of any federation to manage. For example, a federation of all four schools would still have a potential in-year deficit of at least £20,000.
- 8.2.4. For this reason federation is considered to be something which could supplement or work alongside a structural re-organisation but on its own would not be put forward as the sole solution to the issues across the area.

8.3. Option 3: Amalgamation of Two or Three Schools

There are a number of potential permutations for amalgamating two or three of the four schools together to reduce the number of establishments in order to create larger and more stable schools.

3a) Reduce from four schools to three on three sites

8.3.0. Notwithstanding the successful soft federation in place between Arncliffe and Kettlewell schools, it is considered that Arncliffe School is unsustainable as a separate entity given that it only has 7 pupils on roll and a forecast maximum of 7 for the foreseeable future. The cost per pupil at £10,196 is the highest in North Yorkshire and three times the County average.

8.3.1. It is assumed therefore that any proposals for amalgamation of provision would include a proposal to cease to maintain Arncliffe as a separate school. Whilst in principle it would be possible to retain the Arncliffe site as part of an amalgamated school, the retention of all four sites would be expensive for the new school to maintain and would be unsustainable longer term. Discussions with the four schools have indicated a clear consensus that any restructuring should be decisive and forward looking rather than attempting a phased and piecemeal reorganisation which would create a longer period of uncertainty for parents. Therefore all of the options which have been considered assume that the Arncliffe site will no longer form part of school provision for the area and would be declared surplus. The area which the school currently serves would in future be served by another school. Whilst it is likely that there would be community concerns about the loss of the school building as a community facility there is an alternative amenity in Arncliffe in the form of Amerdale Village Hall which would continue to be the focus of community activity.

8.3.2. Ceasing to maintain Arncliffe CE (VC) School and accommodating children for the area served by that school in Kettlewell Primary School has been considered. The two schools are currently in a soft federation and share a head teacher. The schools are 5.8 miles apart by road and there is currently some travelling of staff and pupils between the two sites. Whilst this is a shorter distance than to Grassington or Threshfield, it is not an easier journey due to the nature of the roads. An amalgamation of Arncliffe and Kettlewell would build on the strong relationship which has developed between the two schools. However, some parents in Arncliffe may consider a daily journey across to Kettlewell impracticable and may opt for a school place at either Grassington or Threshfield.

8.3.3. In spite of the loss of the Arncliffe lump sum, this option has the potential to reduce the in-year deficit across the four schools by £41,000 against the current forecast, although it would not alone balance the books. It also reduces the amount of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) by £94,000 releasing resources back to schools across the County including Upper Wharfedale.

8.3.4. Alternatively, the area currently served by Arncliffe CE VC could be served by either Grassington CE VC or Threshfield. Grassington, like Arncliffe, is a Church of England School so an amalgamation of these two schools would enable the Diocese to maintain the proportion of CE school places in the area. Threshfield is a voluntary controlled non denominational school. There is sufficient capacity in Grassington School to absorb any pupils from Arncliffe who wanted a place there. Parents could however express a preference for any

school with places available. An amalgamation of Arncliffe with Grassington would not reduce the forecast deficit due to the loss of the Arncliffe lump sum but it does create a reduction in DSG of £92,000.

- 8.3.5. Reducing the number of schools from four to three would be unlikely to achieve the efficiencies required to render provision across the area financially sustainable for the long term without other support. Seen positively, however, it would leave in place provision in three parts of the area, including Kettlewell where it is valued by the community. That said, concerns over its educational sustainability would remain, given that pupil numbers are forecast to reduce to 14 by 2013/14. The fact that Kettlewell has federated with Arncliffe shows that the school recognises the difficulty of continuing alone, and this second option could remove that link, potentially creating greater vulnerability for Kettlewell.

3b) Reduce from four schools to two on three sites

Reducing the number of schools from four to two would create a more sustainable financial position and increase educational opportunities. It would also create greater potential for sharing of staff expertise and for staff development.

Arncliffe/Kettlewell and Grassington/Threshfield

- 8.3.6. This position could be achieved by undertaking two amalgamations – Arncliffe with Kettlewell and Grassington with Threshfield. This model would reduce the number of sites from four to three, reducing costs.
- 8.3.7. Without significant capital resources it would not be feasible to bring Grassington and Threshfield onto a single site so both would have to be retained. A decision would have to be taken about whether to cease to maintain Grassington or Threshfield to achieve the amalgamation. There are issues associated with the ownership of buildings in both cases which would have to be resolved in order to implement such a proposal. Grassington's buildings are owned by the Diocese and Threshfield's by their Trustees. A transfer of ownership would have to be agreed to allow one school to make use of buildings currently owned by the other, although ultimately the Secretary of State could direct this to happen.
- 8.3.8. With regard to the potential amalgamation of Arncliffe and Kettlewell, these schools are both very small, with a combined number on roll of 21 forecast by 2013, which is below the threshold for review under the County Council's Small School's policy. In the long term it may prove very difficult for this to be sustainable, as numbers would be very vulnerable if even one or two families move out or choose to enrol their children at other schools, something we have seen in other areas.
- 8.3.9. Although costs would be reduced due to the reduced number of sites so would the schools' income as a result of the loss of one school's lump sum under the agreed funding formula. It would reduce the in-year deficit by £37,000 and release DSG of £180,000. It would therefore continue to face financial and recruitment challenges in the longer term without other support.
- 8.3.10. It is recognised that removal of all provision from Kettlewell, particularly if the authority was also proposing to remove provision from Arncliffe may well be a matter of considerable concern within the community in terms of travelling time to access school provision in Grassington. However, there is some appreciation

locally that this provision may not be sustainable in the long term and a clear sense that the restructuring should be decisive in order to create long term certainty about provision.

8.3.11. Concern about loss of provision may be most keenly felt in relation to the youngest children and there may be an opportunity to look at early years' provision in Kettlewell as an outreach from the Children's Centre possibly through funded Childminder placements. This would be dependant on the availability and willingness of Childminders in the area.

8.3.12. In terms of community amenity there is a well-used Village Hall in Kettlewell which is the focus of community activity.

Arncliffe/Kettlewell/Grassington and Threshfield

8.3.13. An alternative arrangement would be to create a single primary school to serve the area currently served by Arncliffe C of E Primary School, Kettlewell Primary School, and Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School. Children living in the area would be served by an enlarged Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School. Under this proposal, there would be no change to Threshfield Primary School.

8.3.14. There may be an opportunity to retain the Kettlewell site as part of the new amalgamated school for some provision, possibly for key stage 1 children combined with some other community services. Without other support however this option would potentially increase the size of the deficit across the area by £28,000 due to the loss of the Arncliffe and Kettlewell lump sums combined with the costs for the amalgamated Arncliffe/Kettlewell/Grassington School of operating across two sites and the remaining forecast deficit position at Threshfield. The long term viability of this arrangement is therefore questionable.

8.3.15. The table below shows the main features of this arrangement:

School size	81
Change required	Cease to maintain Arncliffe Cease to maintain Kettlewell Primary School Enlarge Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School
Sites	Dispose of Arncliffe Retain Kettlewell Retain Grassington

3c) Reduce from four schools to two on two sites

8.3.16. This option is essentially as for 3b) above but with the amalgamated Arncliffe/Kettlewell/Grassington School based only on the Grassington site. If the number of sites was reduced from three to one for the Grassington/Kettlewell/Arncliffe reorganisation, there would be a significant financial benefit, potentially reducing the in-year deficit for the four schools by £51,000 taking account of Threshfield's deficit position which would remain unaffected. This option has the potential to release more than £200,000 of DSG back to schools.

8.3.17. The table below shows the main features of this arrangement:

School size	81
Change required	Cease to maintain Arncliffe Cease to maintain Kettlewell Primary School Enlarge Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School
Sites	Dispose of Arncliffe Dispose of Kettlewell Retain Grassington

8.3.18. This option would address concerns about the viability of Arncliffe C of E Primary School and Kettlewell Primary School in a single change. It would create a less complex position than some other options because Grassington C of E (VC) Primary and Threshfield Primary schools would remain largely unchanged. Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School has sufficient capacity to take all the children currently at Arncliffe C of E Primary School and Kettlewell Primary School. Threshfield Primary School does not currently have sufficient capacity to accommodate all the children currently at Arncliffe C of E Primary School and Kettlewell Primary School. Parents would be able to express a preference for other schools in the normal way.

8.3.19. Under this arrangement Children’s Centre provision would continue to be based at the Grassington site where purpose built accommodation has recently been provided. Ideally, there would be pre-school provision on site at Grassington, although this would be subject to discussions with the local early years provider and the availability of capital. The Children’s Centre would aim to provide childminding outreach support across the area.

8.4. Option 4: Create a single primary school to serve the area currently served by the four schools

4a – Single school on two sites

The table below lays out the key features of this option

School size	176 pupils
Change required	Cease to maintain Arncliffe C of E Primary School Cease to maintain Kettlewell Primary Enlarge either Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School or Threshfield Primary School, cease to maintain the other
Sites	Disposal of Arncliffe Disposal of Kettlewell Use of both Grassington and Threshfield sites

8.4.0. This would involve the creation of a single primary school to serve the area currently served by Arncliffe C of E Primary School, Kettlewell Primary School, Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School and Threshfield Primary School.

Under this option, children living in this area would be served by either an enlarged Grassington CE VC Primary School, or an enlarged Threshfield Primary School. Both the Threshfield and Grassington school buildings and sites would remain in use, but would become a single school operating on two sites. The Arncliffe and Kettlewell sites would no longer be used for educational provision. The County Council would cease to maintain those schools.

- 8.4.1. The distances from Arncliffe C of E Primary School and Kettlewell Primary School to Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School are 7.73 and 7.22 miles respectively. The distance from Arncliffe C of E Primary School and Kettlewell Primary School to Threshfield Primary School are 7.49 and 6.98 miles respectively. The distance between Threshfield Primary School and Grassington C of E (VC) Primary schools is 0.49 miles. However, it is acknowledged that there are small numbers of children living beyond Arncliffe and Kettlewell in this large rural area for whom the journey into Grassington would be considerably longer.
- 8.4.2. The decision about which existing school should form the statutory basis for the future school (i.e. would it be the enlargement of Grassington or Threshfield) would have implications for the staff and governors' transition. The outcome would essentially be the same to families however in educational terms as in either case it creates a single educational institution offering provision across two sites which are relatively close together.
- 8.4.3. The four existing schools are a combination of a community primary school, a Voluntary Controlled non-denominational school and two Voluntary Controlled Church of England Schools. The enlargement of Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School would provide additional CE places, whereas the enlargement of Threshfield Primary School would provide additional non-denominational places. It would be necessary under any reorganisation proposals to keep the balance of denominational and non-denominational school places in mind. The Diocese is likely to wish to maintain the proportion of CE places available across the area.
- 8.4.4. Under this option, there would be a single school operating on two sites. The possibility of developing a single school on one site has been considered. However, there has been recent significant capital investment on both Threshfield Primary School site (a classroom replacement scheme costing almost £1M) and on the Grassington site where a Children's Centre development has recently been completed. Additionally, capital funding is unlikely to be available in the foreseeable future to fund the building work which would be needed to accommodate all the children on either the Grassington or Threshfield sites.
- 8.4.5. Within this option, there are alternative ways in which learning could be organised. Both sites could both offer provision for children aged 4 to 11 years. Alternatively and more likely, provision for children aged 4-7 (Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1) could be delivered at the Grassington site and provision for children aged 7-11 (Key Stage 2) could be delivered at the Threshfield site. The latter option would fit well with the presence of the Children's Centre at Grassington Primary and would simplify admissions arrangements. However, consideration would have to be given to the practical impact for parents who may have children on both sites e.g. staggering starting and finishing times.

- 8.4.6. It would be challenging to avoid the perception locally that the two predecessor schools remain, particularly if both sites offered the full age range of provision. Work would have to be undertaken by leaders and governors to create a fresh identity and ethos for the school to reflect the change of status.
- 8.4.7. Amalgamating all four schools onto two sites would reduce the forecast deficit by £27,000 and release almost £280,000 of DSG back to schools, the most significant impact on DSG of any of the options.
- 8.4.8. An alternative to the enlargement of either Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School or Threshfield Primary School would be to cease to maintain all four schools and establish one new school, on two sites. This would require a competition to determine who would run the new school. Under a competition other educational providers would be invited to consider opening a new school. This could result in a Voluntary Aided School, Voluntary Controlled School, Trust School, Foundation School, Academy, 'Free School' or a Community School. There is a lengthy process involved with running a competition, and in what is already a complex local position, it would add delay and uncertainty even beyond the period of the review.
- 8.4.9. On the whole, North Yorkshire and other local authorities have been moving away from the traditional model of separate Foundation/Key Stage 1 (Infant) and Key Stage 2 (Junior) schools. This is because all through (3-11) Primary Schools have potential for more efficient teaching and learning and use of resources. There is no sound educational or financial reason therefore for proposing to establish separate infant and junior schools for this area. The proposed model in Upper Wharfedale differs from that model as this would, in fact, be one school led by a single management team and governance structure, operating on two sites. This structure could give the opportunity for young children, who may be coming from remote areas, to enter a high quality nurturing environment at Grassington which is focused on the needs of young children. The co-location of the Foundation/Key Stage 1 site with the Children's Centre would be advantageous, allowing sharing of resources. All children attending the single school would progress through both sites, reinforcing the changed nature of provision.
- 8.4.10. Under either model, Children's Centre provision would continue to be based at the Grassington site where purpose built accommodation has recently been provided. Ideally, there would be pre-school provision on site at Grassington, although this would be subject to discussions with the local early years provider and the availability of capital.

4b – Single school on three sites

It would also be possible to consider the creation of a single school on three sites.

The table below lays out the key features of this option

School size	176 pupils
Change required	Cease to maintain Arncliffe C of E Primary School Cease to maintain Kettlewell Primary Enlarge either Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School or Threshfield Primary School, cease to maintain the

	other
Sites	Disposal of Arncliffe Use of Kettlewell, Grassington and Threshfield sites

8.4.11. This option would retain some provision on the Kettlewell site as part of the single school, potentially avoiding the need for the youngest children to travel into Grassington for their education. However, retaining the Kettlewell site is unlikely to be financially viable long term without some shared use of the building or other financial support. This option would potentially increase the deficit across the four schools by a further £39,000 bringing it to more than £140,000. It would however release £262,000 of DSG.

8.5. Appraisal of Options 3 and 4

The Options for reorganisation outlined above are therefore as follows:

Option 3a Reduce from 4 schools to 3 on 3 sites

Option 3b Reduce from 4 schools to 2 on 3 sites

Option 3c Reduce from 4 schools to 2 on 2 sites

Option 4a Reduce to a single school on 2 sites

Option 4b Reduce to a single school on 3 sites

8.5.0. Options 3 and 4 have the potential to increase the viability of educational provision in comparison to the current position across the four schools as they will bring schools together into larger establishments and create opportunities for larger numbers of children to learn together. They vary significantly, however, in the degree of future stability they offer in the long term and the amounts of change they involve in the short term. The challenge in this review is to strike the best balance between the two.

8.5.1. In terms of improving the in-year deficit position there are a range of potential impacts of Options 3 and 4 which extend from reducing it from the current forecast of £105,000 to £54,400 under the option which amalgamates Arncliffe, Kettlewell and Grassington onto the Grassington site. At the other extreme the option which amalgamates all four schools onto three sites would increase the deficit to £144,000. None of the options (including federation) create a completely sustainable position. Therefore there may need to be consideration of some exceptional support for the schools in this area to allow them to achieve the educational benefits of amalgamating while reflecting the challenge of split site operations.

8.5.2. Both Options 3 and 4 have the potential to allow savings in relation to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget share allocated to the school. These are resources which are ring-fenced for schools so any savings which are achieved are retained by schools in the DSG. Again this varies depending on the number of sites retained. For example, Option 4a (single school on two sites) would reduce the DSG share from the currently forecast of £728,700 across all four schools, to £451,400 for a single school. Option 3c, if implemented as two schools on only two sites would reduce the budget share from the currently forecast of £452,800 across all three schools, to £251,200 for a single school. However in this case, the budget share for Threshfield Primary

School would still be payable, at £275,900 These are significant sums of money which would be available to schools as a whole across North Yorkshire including those in Upper Wharfedale. A comparison of the financial impacts of each option is provided at Appendix A.

8.5.3. Options which retain provision on the Kettlewell site would make a much smaller impact on the financial position because of the costs associated with running a separate site and may not be viable long term without other use of the site.

8.5.4. No split site allowance or transitional funding is assumed in these forecasts because no split-site allowance is currently provided in the LMS formula agreed with the Schools Forum. Transitional funding is currently applied to infant/junior school amalgamations. Should the Local Authority in consultation with the Schools Forum determine that additional allowances should be provided on a transitional or recurring basis, the financial position of the amalgamated school would be improved. This might help to make options involving the retention of the Kettlewell site more viable. Realistically, however, any such help would necessarily be modest in scale because of the comparatively large proportion of the DSG resources already allocated to smaller schools. There would need to be a shared view by the Schools Forum and the local authority that there were exceptional features in this case.

Transport Costs

8.5.5. Where the Local Authority ceases to maintain a school children would normally receive free home to school transport in line with the County Council's policy i.e. if they live more than 2 miles from the school which then serves their area (or from a nearer school). Some of the options may create entitlement to free home to school transport where it currently does not exist.

8.5.6. Both Options 3 and 4 would be likely to create some additional transport requirements. These costs would fall on the Local Authority. Costs vary depending on the number of sites retained but could be up to an extra £22,000 per annum. This would have to be balanced against cost reductions associated with closure of sites. Examples of comparative costs are shown in the table below:

Option		Transport cost £	
		Per day	Per academic year (190 days)
1: Current pattern of provision		114	21660
2: Create a single primary school on two sites to serve the areas currently served by four schools	4-11 provision on 2 sites	180	34200
	4-7 provision on 1 site, 7-11 provision on other site	230	43700
3: Create a single primary school to serve the areas currently served by three schools		180	34200

- 8.5.7. As there is a presumption against closure of rural schools it is a requirement of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that the Local Authority must consider the likely effect of the discontinuance of any rural primary school on the local community, the impact on transport arrangements and whether there are any alternatives. Members will need to take full account of these issues when arriving at a decision on whether to proceed with these proposals following consultation.
- 8.5.8. Options 3 and 4 are likely to create concerns from individual schools about the loss of their individual identity although there is an acknowledgement that the Upper Wharfedale area as a whole has an identity which is shared by the schools which serve it.
- 8.5.9. Options 3 and 4 have the potential for increasing numbers of children learning together, which will benefit children in terms of learning, and in terms of social and developmental opportunities particularly where the number of sites is reduced to two. Schools with higher numbers of pupils can provide more opportunities to work with children of a similar age and/or ability, increased access to suitable resources, increased access to extended services and enrichment activities, such as trips and visits, and the opportunity to be taught by a larger number of staff. Larger schools may be able to provide greater opportunities to challenge the most able children and opportunities for children to work or play in teams, and to take part in competitive activities. Attendance at larger schools may increase opportunities to mix with children from a broader range of socio-economic backgrounds, and to develop an understanding of diversity, difference and vulnerability.
- 8.5.10. Options 2, 3 or 4 would all allow schools to increase opportunities for continuing professional development, career progression and succession planning in an area where recruitment can be challenging. They are also likely to make transition planning for pupils easier.
- 8.5.11. Options 3 or 4 would create permanent structures, not dependent on voluntary cooperation and changing sets of relationships due to staffing or governance changes. Some options under Option 3 are less financially resilient than others. Although Option 2 would create a formal structure for collaboration it is considered to be less resilient than a formal restructuring of provision.

Impact on Staff

- 8.5.12. Staff at any schools which are discontinued would be in a potential redundancy situation. Although no guarantees of employment could be given normal ring-fencing arrangements would apply as in all other school re-organisations. HR support would be offered to all schools to ensure a smooth transition.

Sites and Buildings

- 8.5.13. Part of the Arncliffe C of E Primary School site is owned by trustees, and part by NYCC. The entire Kettlewell Primary School site is owned by NYCC. There may be potential for alternative use of these sites which could be explored further, and could form part of a consultation.

8.5.14. Grassington's buildings are owned by the Diocese and Threshfield's by their Trustees. A transfer of ownership would have to be agreed to allow one school to make use of buildings currently owned by the other, although ultimately the Secretary of State could direct this to happen.

9. EARLY YEARS AND CHILDCARE

- 9.1. Children's Centre services meeting the core offer are offered across Upper Wharfedale through community bases with a hub adjacent to Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School. This hub is well-placed geographically being near the Health Centre with Grassington seen as service centre for the dale. The Grassington hub has only opened recently. In the future, it will be important to increase the availability of family-friendly space for community and other services in schools to allow the delivery of community and other services as part of the extended offer.
- 9.2. Parents and schools report that there is a shortage of childcare to meet the needs of working parents in the area. Childcare is a significant distance from some families' homes. The only current day-care provision is Hebden Lodge. This is currently based in Burnsall, but has no permanent base. There are other pre-school groups such as the Dales Pre-School Group in Grassington offering services on a sessional basis. The Local Authority has had discussions with the day-care provider regarding its future location which indicate that the provider would like a permanent base and see Grassington as the most advantageous location in terms of giving good access for families. It would appear therefore that for any procurement of childcare in a newly enhanced facility there would be at least one organisation interested in making provision.
- 9.3. There is currently one registered childminder in Upper Wharfedale. The County Council is working to develop more childminders in the area to increase local capacity. A collaborative after-school club has recently opened based at Upper Wharfedale School which makes arrangements for transport from the primary schools in the area. It would be helpful to seek wider views on childcare during the public consultation.

10. SHARED SERVICES

Schools in the area have expressed keen interest in the opportunity of shared business management arrangements. The purpose of shared business management is to provide expert support to schools in a range of areas, for example, premises management, freeing up head teachers to allow them to focus on leadership and teaching and learning. This is being explored by a separate working group, which is already piloting similar arrangements for Osmotherley and Swainby and Potto Schools. It may be possible to consider piloting a shared business manager scheme in the area. Schools Forum agreed in September to undertake a number of pilots and the Upper Wharfedale area was referenced specifically as one potential pilot. The schools would need to work together to establish the range of services to be shared in order to bid for support for the pilot. It would be helpful to seek wider views on the principle of shared services during the public consultation.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Changing the structure of school provision in Upper Wharfedale will require the publication of statutory notices to effect any school closures or other changes in line with the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the School Organisation Regulations 2007. Any increase of Admission Number for September 2011 would require approval from the

Schools Adjudicator in accordance with the School Admissions Code 2010. The timescale for statutory processes is laid out in section 13 below.

12. CONCLUSIONS

- 12.1. It is considered that the current situation cannot be allowed to continue as it is financially unsustainable and individual schools are not able to provide the best range of educational opportunities for children, something which most schools acknowledge. Therefore the status quo is not considered a viable option and this has been acknowledged by the four schools serving the Grassington/Threshfield area.
- 12.2. A federation of schools in the area could help to provide some further opportunities for shared learning and pooling of resources. However, it would have to be agreed by individual governing bodies which have so far been unable or unwilling to do so. It is considered that further collaboration between schools is welcome and could support any reorganised provision but does not in itself offer a long term stable solution for the area.
- 12.3. The only solution which has the potential to create a more educationally and financially sustainable position for the area is to bring together the provision of a number of existing schools into a larger organisational unit. Given the pupil numbers at Arncliffe C of E Primary School and Kettlewell Primary School these schools are no longer considered viable individually even with soft federation arrangements in place or as part of any future hard federation. This situation needs to be addressed through the review. However, whilst the position on pupils numbers points to early withdrawal from the Arncliffe site, the position is less immediately clear cut at Kettlewell though very worrying in the medium to longer term. There may be an opportunity to retain some educational provision in Kettlewell, possibly for the youngest pupils in conjunction with other community services. This may or may not require the retention of a school building.
- 12.4. It has been acknowledged by officers that none of the options represents a perfect solution. Each has some significant limitations and risks. It was for that reason that Executive members agreed that officers should conduct further discussions during September with all four schools to explore whether there was a consensus about one or more options which could form the basis of a consultation with parents and the wider community.
- 12.5. Those further discussions were helpful in confirming that the status quo was not a realistic or sustainable option for the future in this area and would not deliver a resilient and high quality educational offer for all of the children.
- 12.6. Whilst there was some interest in the idea of one or more hard federations the concerns held by officers about the potential vulnerability of such agreements over the long term appeared to be shared by schools and there was a sense that a permanent structural solution was more likely to deliver the right outcome. There was also a strong feeling that this restructuring should be done in a single move rather than on a phased basis in order to reduce the period of uncertainty for parents and staff.
- 12.7. There was no consensus about the various options that might bring two or three of the schools together but also no strong feeling against such an option in principle. It would seem sensible therefore to explore wider views on this option through the consultation, although it was agreed that it would not be helpful to

parents to offer numerous alternatives as the local authority and school leaders in the area had a responsibility to guide parents through what was a complex and difficult issue.

12.8. There was a shared view that the consultation must include an option which proposed bringing together all four schools as a single institution with a single headteacher and management structure as this option offered such a significant opportunity to strengthen educational provision in the area.

12.9. As a result of these further discussions it is proposed to consult on the following options:

Option 3c:

Amalgamation of Arncliffe, Kettlewell and Grassington, concentrating provision on the Grassington site. This would be achieved by ceasing to maintain Arncliffe and Kettlewell Schools and enlarging the catchment area for Grassington School. Under this proposal Threshfield School would remain a separate school (although there may be scope for the amalgamated Grassington School and Threshfield School to federate if both Governing Bodies agreed).

Option 4a:

Amalgamation of Arncliffe, Kettlewell, Grassington and Threshfield Schools on the Grassington and Threshfield School sites. This would be achieved by ceasing to maintain Arncliffe, Kettlewell and Threshfield Schools and enlarging the catchment area for Grassington School. The intention would be to have Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 provided on the Grassington site and Key Stage 2 on the Threshfield site. This option would allow the proportion of CE places across the area to be maintained.

It is also proposed that consultees should be asked their views about the sharing of services such as business management between schools and early years provision in the area, particularly to explore if there is any demand for early years provision in the Kettlewell area.

13. PROPOSED TIMETABLE FOR CONSULTATION

Executive Member approval to consult	8 October 2010
Consultation opens	18 October 2010
Public meetings	October/November 2010
Consultation period ends	3 December 2010
Report to Exec Members on consultation responses	17 December 2010
Report to Executive	11 January 2011
Publication of Statutory Notices	19 January – 9 March 2011
Executive members report	March 2011
Executive report on representations	22 March 2011
Implementation	September 2011

14. RECOMMENDATIONS

That approval be given to consult on the above options for reorganising primary school provision in Upper Wharfedale and at the same time to seek consultees' views on the sharing of services between school and early years provision in the area.

CYNTHIA WELBOURN
CORPORATE DIRECTOR – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE.

Report prepared by Suzanne Firth/Fiona Campbell, Strategic Services

Action AgreedExecutive Member
Date: 8 October 2010

Action AgreedExecutive Member
Date: 8 October 2010

Action RequestedCorporate Director
Date: 8 October 2010

Appendix A

Comparison of projected impact on in-year deficits and funding of alternative options for school organisation in Upper Wharfedale

Option	Description	Projected In-Year Deficit (four school total)	Forecast DSG Saving
1	Status Quo	-105.20	0.00
2a	Federation of all four schools	-20.00	0.00
2b	Amalgamation of Arncliffe and Kettlewell then federation of amalgamated school with Grassington.	-58.50	93.60
3ai	Amalgamation of Arncliffe and Kettlewell on Kettlewell site	-64.20	93.60
3aii	Amalgamation of Arncliffe and Grassington on Grassington site.	-106.10	92.20
3bi	Amalgamation of Arncliffe and Kettlewell. Amalgamation of Grassington and Threshfield	-68.50	180.00
3bii	Amalgamation of Arncliffe, Kettlewell and Grassington on Grassington and Kettlewell sites	-133.40	186.20
3c	Amalgamation of Arncliffe, Kettlewell and Grassington on Grassington site	-54.40	201.60
4a	Amalgamation of Arncliffe, Kettlewell, Grassington and Threshfield on Grassington and Threshfield sites	-78.20	277.30
4b	Amalgamation of Arncliffe, Kettlewell, Grassington and Threshfield on Grassington, Threshfield and Kettlewell sites	-144.00	261.90

Key Assumptions:

- Based on 2010/2011 3 year financial forecasts submitted by schools in Summer 2010
No assumptions re lump sum transitional funding where schools amalgamate. The LMS Formula currently only provides for lump sum transitional support where a Junior and an Infant school amalgamate.
- No assumptions have been made with regard to split site funding where a single school is operating on more than one site. The LMS Formula currently does not contain any provision for this.
- The options have been prepared by Q&I and FMS Team Officers, and as far as classroom support staff structures are concerned have been prepared around the following broad assumptions:
 - Foundation / Key Stage 1 Classes - 25 hours/week Advanced Teaching Assistant
 - Key Stage 2 Classes - 15 hours / week Advanced Teaching Assistant
 - 30 hours / week where the presence of a second adult is required on school site.
 (There may be potential to reduce these hours dependent on the circumstances of the individual school establishments)
- Non teaching staff costs for the Federation options based on costs contained within individual school financial forecasts (there may be potential to reduce costs dependent on circumstances of the individual school establishments). Any costs associated with travel for the Federation options are assumed to be cost neutral