



North

Yorkshire County Council

Children and Young People's Service

**Review of provision for Children aged 0-11 in Upper Wharfedale
(Arncliffe, Grassington, Kettlewell, Threshfield)**

**Public Consultation
18 October – 3 December 2010**

We care about what opportunities are available for children, young people and their families everywhere in North Yorkshire. There can be particular challenges in providing these opportunities in very rural areas like Upper Wharfedale. It can be difficult for some families to access services, and for some children and young people to experience the range of opportunities which are available elsewhere. Pupil numbers have fallen across Upper Wharfedale, and schools are facing financial challenges. It is hard to see how, with low and declining numbers, and so declining levels of funding, schools in this area can continue to give children the best possible education and range of experiences

There is a long history of education in small schools in the area, and they have done well to maintain provision up to now. It is recognised that these schools are highly valued by their communities.

However, we are concerned that due to a mixture of low numbers of pupils, financial difficulties and difficulties in recruitment of Headteachers, we need to look carefully at the position in four schools. These are Arncliffe C of E Primary, Grassington C of E (VC) Primary, Kettlewell Primary and Threshfield Primary Schools. The issues they face raise serious questions about whether it is possible to retain the current pattern of schools.

We have looked at different options for school provision in the future. All the options which have been considered can be seen in the report written for the Corporate Director Meeting with Executive Members on 8 October 2010, which is available on the North Yorkshire County Council website at <http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2964>.

Having considered all the possibilities, it would appear that either of the two options laid out below would provide benefits to children and families in the area. Either option would ensure that a high quality of provision is maintained, with strong leadership and governance. Looking ahead, they would create a more sustainable and stable pattern of provision in the area than retaining the existing one. We think this is important for everyone concerned in the schools and their communities.

Under Option 1, a single primary school would serve the area currently served by Arncliffe C of E Primary School, Kettlewell Primary School and Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School. Threshfield Primary School would remain as it is.

Under Option 2, a single primary school would 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. This school would operate from the buildings of the existing Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School and Threshfield Primary School.

Our view, at the moment, is that Option 2 would produce greater benefit for children in the area. This is because it would produce a larger, more resilient, school whilst maintaining a high quality, nurturing environment focused on the needs of young children at the Grassington site. It would also be on two sites so would continue to be a real presence in more than one part of the area. That said, we also see Option 1 has real merits, and that is why it is included in the consultation. We understand that each of these options would result in significant change and we are interested in hearing your views.

Please take time to look at the options we are putting forward, and then send us your views. We look forward to hearing from you.

County Councillor John Watson, Executive Member for Schools
Cynthia Welbourn, Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service

Why are we proposing change now?

There are a number of reasons why now is the right time to consider change to the pattern of schools in the area.

Once the number of children on the roll of a school becomes very small, it becomes increasingly difficult for children to have the best educational experience. There are a number of schools operating in the area and there are very few children in total. Since pupil numbers largely determine school budgets, there is not enough funding to allow four separate schools to remain sustainable, despite the fact that the North Yorkshire funding formula is generous for small schools. Whilst schools in this area have a history of working together and Arncliffe C of E Primary School and Kettlewell Primary School work together in a confederation, this does not reduce costs sufficiently to address the budget issues.

Pupil numbers

Across the four primary schools there are fewer than 180 children. Some year groups in some schools contain only one, or in some cases, no children.

Forecast numbers on roll are shown in the table below;

School	Forecast Number on Roll		
	2010/11 (Current)	2011/12	2014/15
Arncliffe C of E Primary School	7	7	6
Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School	52	50	60
Kettlewell Primary School	28	25	15
Threshfield Primary School	92	83	81
Total	179	165	162

Arncliffe C of E Primary School and Kettlewell Primary School are very small schools and both have forecast numbers on roll below the point where the County Council would review them in line with the Small Schools Policy. Between them they are likely to have fewer than 25 pupils by 2014.

Finance

Funding for schools comes into North Yorkshire from central government and can only be used for schools. School funding is allocated to schools using a formula, where pupil numbers largely determine school budgets. Funding per pupil in the Upper Wharfedale schools is generally significantly higher than the county average, and the County's formula for funding small schools is more favourable than many others. Yet in spite of this, the four schools are forecasting in-year deficits by 2011/12.

Budget forecasts for each school are shown in the table below. These are based on information provided by the schools themselves in summer 2010.

Negative numbers indicate a budget deficit.

In Year Revenue Balance Position

School	2010/11 £000	2011/12 £000	2012/13 £000
Arncliffe C of E Primary School	-8.0	-17.9	-26.5
Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School	-12.4	-2.9	-15.4
Kettlewell Primary School	8.0	-4.6	-20.6
Threshfield Primary School	0.4	-20.0	-43.1
Total Cumulative In Year Revenue Position	-12.0	-45.4	-105.6

Cumulative Revenue Balance Position

School	2010/11 £000	2011/12 £000	2012/13 £000
Arncliffe C of E Primary School	32.9	15.0	-11.5
Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School	2.9	0.0	-15.4
Kettlewell Primary School	16.0	11.4	-9.2
Threshfield Primary School	26.9	6.9	-36.2
Total Cumulative Revenue Position	78.7	33.3	-72.3

What this shows is that by 2011/12 each of the four schools will be bringing in insufficient money to meet existing costs. Whilst each one currently has a carry forward balance which enables it to cover costs, in only two years' time they will all have used their balances and gone into deficit, in some cases quite significantly, unless action is taken now to reduce costs.

Small schools have relatively high costs, particularly around staffing and premises, and children can be educated to a high standard, more economically, in a larger school. The options that we are proposing would represent a better use of scarce resources than the current position. This change has the potential to improve the viability of a single school in comparison to the current position across the separate schools.

Educational 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 year on year.

In situations where there are very few children in a school overall, or in a specific year group or Key Stage, there are concerns about the social and emotional development of children.

It is very 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.

The future

We have had discussions with representatives of primary schools in the area and we are looking for a model which will enable there to be high quality, sustainable provision in the area for the long term. Under either option, the Local Authority will need to look at how it will support schools.

There are two options that we would like your views on.

We regret that both these options involve closure of Arncliffe C of E Primary School and Kettlewell Primary School. With very low forecast numbers on roll, it is difficult to see how appropriate educational provision can continue at these schools, but we are interested in hearing your views.

We have considered whether some educational provision could be retained in Kettlewell, particularly for very young children. However, it is difficult to see how this would be appropriate and sustainable in the long term. If Foundation Stage, or Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, was retained at Kettlewell for children resident in the Arncliffe C of E Primary School and Kettlewell Primary School areas, there would still only be 3 or 12 children respectively. Most of the premises at Kettlewell Primary School would not, therefore, be used. We would be interested in your views as to whether some provision for part of the week, for the very youngest children, could be made using other community facilities in Kettlewell.

We would welcome your views on whether the retention of educational provision in Kettlewell is desirable, and on how this could be achieved.

Option 1

Single primary school serving the area currently served by Arncliffe C of E Primary School, Kettlewell Primary School and Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School

Under Option 1, Arncliffe C of E Primary School and Kettlewell Primary School would close from September 2011 and Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School would make provision for all children resident within the current normal areas for Arncliffe C of E Primary School and Kettlewell Primary School.

Threshfield Primary School would be unaffected.

Children on roll at Arncliffe C of E Primary School and Kettlewell Primary School would transfer to Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School. In September 2011, there are likely to be 35 Early Years Foundation and Key Stage 1 Children and 47 Key Stage 2 children. Additional facilities at the Upper Wharfedale Children's Centre would be available for the Foundation Stage children. Parents could express a preference for any other school if they wish. Eligible children would receive free home to school transport where appropriate in line with the County Council's policy.

Under Option 1, the forecast in-year deficit could be reduced by £51,000 compared to the existing position. Taking into account the cost of additional home to school transport, the proposed change could produce an overall reduction in required funding by the Local Authority by £190,000 compared to the current cost of maintaining all four schools. This money would not be a saving to the Local Authority because it would be part of the Dedicated Schools Grant and therefore only available to schools.

Threshfield Primary School would remain as now, but would need to manage its forecast budget deficit. The newly enlarged Grassington CE would need to determine a staffing structure and deployment of resources which is financially sustainable and enable it to operate within its formula funding allocation. The enlarged school would have between 75 and 85 pupils. There are a number of primary schools of this size operating successfully across the County, both financially and academically.

Option 2

Single primary school on two sites, serving 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, all four schools would come together as one school operating from the two sites of Grassington C of E (VC) School and Threshfield Primary Schools.

There are different ways of approaching this, but the most straightforward way would be to cease to maintain Arncliffe C of E Primary School, Kettlewell Primary School and Threshfield Primary School and make a technical expansion of Grassington C of E (VC) School to operate from the two sites.

The intention would be that the Grassington site would have the Children's Centre (as now), some additional childcare provision, and Key Stage 1 children aged 4 – 7.

The Threshfield site would accommodate children aged 7-11 (Key Stage 2).

Children on roll at Arncliffe C of E Primary School, Kettlewell Primary School and Threshfield Primary School would transfer to Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School. In September 2011, there are likely to be 63 children in EYFS/Key Stage 1 who would be accommodated on the current Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School site, and 108 children in Key Stage 2 on the Threshfield site.

Parents could express a preference for any other school if they wish. Eligible children would receive free home to school transport where appropriate in line with the County Council's policy.

Under Option 2, the forecast in-year deficit could be reduced by £27,000 compared to the existing position. Taking into account the cost of additional home to school transport, the proposed change would produce an overall reduction in required funding by the Local Authority by £255,000 compared to the current cost of maintaining the four schools. This money would not be a saving to the Local Authority because it would be part of the Dedicated Schools Grant and therefore only available to schools.

The single, split site school would need to determine a staffing structure and deployment of resources which is financially sustainable and enable it to operate within its formula funding allocation. In operating over two sites, the school is likely to require more resources than a school of the same size operating on a single site. It is possible that the Schools Forum would consider a new funding element to recognise the split site nature of the school.

We would welcome your views on the options outlined above.

Future use of school sites

If either option outlined above is taken forward, any future use of Arncliffe C of E Primary School building would be the responsibility of the Church of England Diocese of Ripon and Leeds. The Kettlewell Primary School site is owned by the County Council. Whilst there may be potential for alternative use, if no sustainable position could be reached the site would be sold.

We would welcome your views on possible alternative uses for these sites.

Shared services

As we talked with schools, they told us that it is very difficult for teaching Headteachers of small schools to manage the wide range of tasks required to lead and manage a school. There is the potential for sharing services and leadership across a number of schools, both in terms of 'business management' type functions such as administration, premises management and also for joint curriculum planning. It may be possible to consider piloting a shared business manager scheme in the area.

We would welcome your views on how schools might share services.

Extended services, early years and childcare

Children's Centre services for young children and their families are provided across Upper Wharfedale through community bases with a hub at Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School which opened in February 2010. 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.

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 largest full day-care provision at present is Hebden Lodge Nursery which is currently accommodated in Burnsall, but has no permanent base. The Dales pre-school group operates sessions over 5 days for children aged 2 to 5 years from community premises in Grassington and there is a Montessori school which has an Early Years unit "Wharfedale babies". Having regard to the views expressed during the consultation, and subject to the agreement of the Grassington C of E (VC) Primary School Governors, the Local Authority would be happy to look at provision of accommodation on the Grassington site to allow for childcare provision alongside the school and Children's Centre. The Local Authority has had discussions with Hebden Lodge which indicate that they would like a permanent base and see Grassington as an advantageous location in terms of giving good access for families, but there may be other local providers who would also be interested in such an arrangement.

There is currently one registered childminder in Upper Wharfedale. The Local Authority 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 includes transport from the primary schools in the area.

We would welcome your views on how extended services, including Children's Centre services, early years and childcare could be developed in Upper Wharfedale.

Timetable

It is important that any changes to schools are carried out carefully. So changing the pattern of schools is a lengthy process.

Stage		Date
Developing options	Local Authority Officers have looked at different options for school provision in the future, and discussed options with Headteachers and Chairs of Governors, and the Church of England Diocese of Ripon and Leeds	December 2009 – September 2010
First stage of public consultation	All the responses received by the closing date will be included anonymously in a report to the County Council's Executive on 11 January 2011. The Executive will decide whether to take the proposal forward	18 October – 3 December 2010
Statutory proposals	If the Executive decides to proceed with a proposal, then statutory notices would be published in the local newspapers and posted on school gates. These notices would provide a further six weeks for views to be made	19 January – 9 March 2011
Decision making	The County Council's Executive would consider responses to the statutory notices and make the final decision	22 March 2011
Implementation	We are committed to managing any change carefully, to minimise disruption and to ensure high-quality education and support for all children and young people	September 2011

Your views

There will be public consultation meetings about the review on:	
1 November 2010 at 6.30 pm	Kettlewell Village Hall
8 November 2010 at 6.30 pm	Arncliffe C of E Primary School
17 November 2010 at 6.30 pm	Upper Wharfedale School

Who are we consulting?

Copies of this leaflet have been sent to all parents of pupils within the four primary schools, to staff, and to school governing bodies, as well as to Councillors, early years providers, neighbouring schools, parish and district councils, unions and professional associations, the Church of England and Catholic Dioceses, and the local MP.

What happens after the consultation finishes?

All the responses received by the closing date will be included anonymously in a report to the County Council's Executive on 11 January 2011. The Executive will decide whether to take forward a proposal.

Your views are welcomed. You can complete the attached response sheet, respond by letter, or complete the online response sheet at

<https://forms.northyorks.gov.uk/eforms>

Paper responses should be returned to:

North Yorkshire County Council
Strategic Services
Children and Young People's Service
FREEPOST NEA10908
NORTHALLERTON
DL7 8BR

The closing date for responses is 3 December 2010