

School organisation proposals to remove residential (boarding) provision at Welburn Hall School from 1 September 2023 for a period of up to two years

School and Local Authority details

Proposals published by North Yorkshire County Council, County Hall, Northallerton, DL7 8AD, to make significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to Welburn Hall (Community Special) School, Kirkbymoorside, York, North Yorkshire, YO62 7HQ.

Description of alterations and evidence of demand

Proposals by North Yorkshire County Council to remove residential (boarding) provision at Welburn Hall School from 1 September 2023 for a period of up to two years.

Recent technical assessments have identified significant structural challenges in the main House building, which provides the residential accommodation, catering facilities and some teaching and learning space. These challenges relate to the heating and drainage systems at the school. The local authority is planning on the basis that a programme of urgent works to address buildings failure will need to be put in place from Summer 2023, with the unfortunate consequence that the main house building will be out of operation for an expected period of two academic years. We would want to emphasise that our assessment is that the school buildings remain a safe environment for young people to both be educated and reside in the interim.

Objectives (including how the proposal would increase educational standards and parental choice)

This proposal is being brought forward directly as a result of the local authority technical assessments regarding the condition of the building and the necessary maintenance works identified, and it has been assessed that the local authority is unable to support residential provision at Welburn Hall through the academic years 2023-24 and 2024-25.

However, the local authority considers that the proposals being brought forward at this point in time, and the timing of this consultation exercise offer the most constructive response to the challenges faced, and are compatible with supporting Welburn Hall to remain a highly effective Special school, and to enable the local authority to assess how residential provision at the school can potentially be maintained into the future.

The effect on other educational institutions within the area

There is not expected to be any effect on other schools, academies and educational institutions.

Project costs and indication of how these will be met, including how long-term value for money will be achieved

The capital implications of the temporary accommodation proposed would be £300k. This outlay would need to be resourced from the SEN Capital Programme.

It is acknowledged that the longer term options for securing the future of Welburn Hall could require much more significant capital investment (dependent on the option selected) - but those implications will be picked up in further reports, when there has been time to progress detailed evaluations.

Further details on the financial implications are set out in the report to Executive, 13 December 2022.

Implementation plan

Whilst the vast majority of young people currently accessing residential provision at Welburn Hall will naturally leave in July 2023 due to their age, we recognise that a small number of pupils will have been expecting to access residential provision until July 2024. The council's SEN Case Work Team have made contact with those families affected and will be providing support to assess all available provision options to continue to meet their assessed needs. We will need to work closely with the very small number of families with young people whose placements would have continued into the 23/24 academic year, to identify appropriate high quality alternative placements.

Consultation

The County Council consulted on the school organisation proposals from 3 January to 31 January 2023. A copy of the consultation paper, a list of the consultees, notes of two online public consultation meetings and the consultation responses received are available at <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/current-consultations>

Related proposals

This proposal is not related to any other proposals

Procedure for making responses (support, objections and comments)

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal, any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to Corporate Director-Children and Young People's Service, North Yorkshire County Council, County Hall, Northallerton, DL7 8AE, or emailing schoolorganisation@northyorks.gov.uk by 5pm on 22 March 2023.