Cumbria County Council

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Consultation

Potential closure of nursery provision at Bram Longstaffe

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What is this consultation about?

This consultation is about the services provided from the Bram Longstaffe building on Farm Street, Barrow-in-Furness LA14 2RX, and the county council's proposal to stop operating a nursery on the site.

The proposal is in response to the fact that the most recent Ofsted inspection, in December 2019, concluded that the school requires 'Special Measures'; this is the worst rating that Ofsted can deliver, and means that the school is not delivering the standard of education expected. In September 2019 there were only 29 children on roll at the school and there is little prospect that numbers will recover in the foreseeable future; in 2015 the number on roll was over 60. Small roll numbers affect the viability of a school and its future sustainability in delivering the best possible opportunities to its pupils. The school's budget has been in deficit for a number of years, and there is little or no prospect that it can be brought back into a healthy position.

We know that there are many other services operating from Bram Longstaffe, and are committed to retaining these. We are not proposing to close the building or call it something else, and would like to see it continue to develop over the coming years as a valuable community resource. This consultation is only about the nursery school provision on the site.

The county council wants to hear your views on this proposal before deciding to make any changes. Please take the time to let us know what you think.

We are consulting on the following proposal

That the nursery provision currently operating for children aged 2-4 from the Bram Longstaffe building would close permanently on Monday 31 August 2020.

As part of the work of the Barrow Island Partnership Group, and the county council's Community Development Team, a need has been identified for a family and wellbeing hub on Barrow Island. It is proposed, therefore, that if the school is to close, the building should be retained as the location for the hub. The Community Development Team have been working with residents, businesses and partners to develop a programme of activity for the coming year and, although the exact nature of the services to be delivered would continue to develop over time, some of the following activities and services may benefit from being delivered from Bram:

- some maternity services;
- a private/voluntary/independent nursery/childcare;
- Children's Centre activity;
- drop in/surgeries for partners including, health, police, borough council and county council;
- third sector delivered activities and programmes;
- availability of rooms to let for ad hoc activities both for the community, third sector and business;
- heart start courses from the fire services;
- potential to run community skills and learning courses.

Whilst we can't be certain at this stage of exactly which services might operate from the building, the county council is fully committed to retaining it for community use.

Who is this consultation for?

This document is aimed at parents, staff, governors and everyone else with an interest or stake in nursery education in the area.

How can you respond to this consultation?

You can use the form at the end of this document or you can complete the questionnaire on-line at:
cumbria.citizenspace.com/cumbria-county-council/bram-longstaffe-nursery/

There is more information on our website at:
cumbria.gov.uk/childrensservices/school-organisation

A public meeting will be held at Bram Longstaffe Nursery School, Farm Street LA14 2RX on **Thursday 27 February 2020** at **18:15 to 19:45.**

The closing date for questionnaire returns is **Friday 3 April 2020** and those not completed on-line should be returned to:

School Organisation Team
Cumbria County Council
Parkhouse Building
Baron Way
Kingmoor Business Park
Carlisle
CA6 4SJ

Background

Bram Longstaffe Nursery School was inspected by Ofsted in December 2019, and received a 'Special Measures' rating. This means that Ofsted judged the school to be "failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school".

The previous Ofsted inspection, in October 2017, had concluded that the school 'Requires Improvement'; it is clear from the December 2019 inspection that, rather than improving, the quality of provision has reduced over the last 2 years, and is not up to the standard required to provide local children with the best start in life.

The school has struggled to balance its budget for a number of years. Schools are not usually allowed to operate with a deficit, but the county council, recognising the service that Bram Longstaffe has provided to the local community over many years, has continued to support the school in seeking to return to a balanced budget. Whilst best efforts have been made, and costs have been reduced, the school's deficit currently stands at £486,271.

A school's budget is based, broadly, on the number of children attending. Pupil numbers have fallen at Bram Longstaffe over recent years, and there seems to be little prospect that they will recover in the near future, particularly given the current Ofsted rating. There is no realistic prospect of the school's budget being balanced in the foreseeable future, which makes recovering from a 'Special Measures' verdict all the more difficult.

The county council has supported the school over recent years, with additional funding delivered via the School Improvement service, and intensive support provided in an attempt to raise standards. This cannot carry on indefinitely however. Despite the best efforts of the county council and, in particular, the staff and governors, it has simply not been possible to return it to the thriving, successful school it once was. With no prospect of recovery either financially or in terms of educational standards, the county council feels that the only realistic option now remaining is closure.

More information

Other nursery facilities in the area

Government guidelines on school closures include a presumption against the closure of nursery schools. That is not to say that closures should never happen but rather that the case for closure should be strong and that there should be alternative provision in the area.

There are 33 other nursery providers within a 2 mile radius of Bram Longstaffe Nursery School (they are shown in the table below); some cater for 3 year olds and above and others take in 2 year olds and above. These include childminders, voluntary groups, private nurseries and primary schools with nurseries.

Name of provider	Distance from LA14 2RX (miles)	Sector	Provision	Ofsted rating - Jan 2020
Barrow Island Community Primary School	0.13	School	2, 3 & 4 year olds, term time only	Good
St George's C of E School	0.46	School	2, 3 & 4 year olds, term time only	Good
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School	0.67	School	2, 3 & 4 year olds, term time only	Good
Ramsden Infant School	0.79	School	3 & 4 year olds, term time only	Requires Improvement
Ramsden Robins Pre Nursery	0.79	Voluntary	2, 3 & 4 year olds, term time only	Good
Furness Childcare	0.85	Private	Full Day Care - 0-5 years	Good
College House Day Nursery	0.87	Voluntary	Full Day Care - 0-5 years	Good
St Columba's Catholic Primary School	0.93	School	3 & 4 year olds, term time only	Good
South Walney Infant and Nursery School	0.95	School	3 & 4 year olds, term time only	Good
Parkside GGI Academy	0.96	School	2, 3 & 4 year olds, term time only	Good
Old Vicarage Day Nursery	1.06	Private	Full Day Care - 0-5 years	Good
Cambridge Primary School	1.10	School	2, 3 & 4 year olds, term time only	Good
Anonymised	1.12	Childminder	No funded children	Good
Cheeky Monkeys Childcare	1.12	Private	Full Day Care - 0-7 years	Good
Anonymised	1.15	Childminder	After school care 3+	Compliant
Walney Central Pre-School	1.16	Voluntary	Full day care - 0-5 years	Good
Vickerstown School	1.18	School	3 & 4 year olds term time only	Good
Hindpool Nursery School	1.20	Maintained Nursery School	2- 4 year olds, all year	Outstanding
Anonymised	1.22	Childminder	2, 3 and 4 year olds all year	No report yet
George Hastwell School Special Academy	1.31	School	2-19 years - Term time only	Requires Improvement
Anonymised	1.33	Childminder	Full Day Care - 0-5 years	No report yet
Hollingarth Day Nursery	1.50	Private	Full Day Care - 0-5 years	Good
Anonymised	1.52	Childminder	Full Day Care - 0-5 years	Good
Newbarns Primary & Nursery School	1.53	School	3 & 4 year olds term time only	Outstanding
Furness Childcare @ Newbarns	1.53	Out of school childcare	Out of school childcare 4-10 years	Good
North Walney Primary, Nursery & Pre- School	1.54	School	2, 3 & 4 year olds term time only	Good
Victoria Infant and Nursery School	1.58	School	3 & 4 year olds term time only	Good
Lynwood Ashtree Day Nursery	1.60	Private	Full Day Care - 0-5 years	Good
Holy Family Catholic Primary School	1.63	School	3 & 4 year olds term time only	Good
Roose Nursery	1.69	Voluntary	Full Day Care - 0-5 years	Outstanding
Happy Tots Day Nursery Ltd	1.92	Private	Full Day Care - 0-5 years	Outstanding
St Pius X Catholic Primary School	1.98	School	2, 3 & 4 year olds term time only	Requires Improvement
Yarlside Academy	1.98	School	3 & 4 year olds term time only	No report yet

What happens next?

Regulations set out what has to happen when the county council proposes significant changes to a school.

Consultation

The consultation starts on Monday 24 February 2020, and is for a period of six weeks during which the views of any interested parties are sought. These views will be considered before any further stages in the process are undertaken. The consultation ends on Friday 3 April 2020.

Publication

Following consideration of the results of the consultation, a decision must be made by Cumbria County Council's Cabinet on whether to publish statutory notices about the proposed change. All consultation responses are taken into account before a decision is made, so it is important that you make your views known by the closing date. We expect the Cabinet to consider the response to consultation and make a decision on whether to publish statutory notices on Thursday 23 April 2020.

Representation

A 4-week period of 'representation' following the publication of statutory notices allows interested parties a further opportunity to submit their views before a final decision is made.

Decision

Within two months of the end of the representation period Cumbria County Council's Cabinet must make a decision on the proposal. We currently expect that, assuming a notice has been published, a final decision will be made on Thursday 23 July 2020.

Implementation

If the proposal is approved then the changes would come into effect on Monday 31 August 2020.

The county council appreciates that a school closure is difficult for staff, governors, parents and children; it is always a last resort. We will, of course, provide support and advice to all those affected throughout the process, whether that be through highlighting staff vacancies elsewhere, or supporting parents to find alternative Early Years provision in preparation for Bram's closure.

It is important that the Cabinet understands local views before making any decisions. Please complete the questionnaire below (or, preferably, complete it online) by Friday 3 April 2020.

Please note, however, that it is not possible to enter into individual correspondence.

Have your say

1 Please indicate your relationship to the school (tick all boxes that apply)
I am:

- ☐ Parent/carer of a child attending Bram Longstaffe Nursery School
- ☐ Member of staff at Bram Longstaffe Nursery School
- ☐ Governor at Bram Longstaffe Nursery School
- ☐ Other

If other has been selected please specify:

2 Given the information contained in this consultation document do you agree that Bram Longstaffe Nursery School should close?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Name (please print):

Address:

Postcode: Date

Please provide any additional comments

If you require this document in another format (eg CD, audio cassette, Braille or large type) or in another language, please telephone 01228 226013

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如果您希望通过母语了解此信息，
请致电 01228 226013

Jeigu norėtumėte gauti šią informaciją savo kalba, skambinkite telefonu 01228 226013

W celu uzyskania informacji w Państwa języku proszę zatelefonować pod numer 01228 226013

Se quiser aceder a esta informação na sua língua, telefone para o 01228 226013

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