



Consultation on a proposal to close North Walney Primary and Nursery School





Introduction

This consultation is about the potential closure of North Walney Primary and Nursery School, Duddon Drive, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA14 3TN from 31 August 2024.

Westmorland and Furness Council is concerned about the increasing pressure upon both the school's leadership and staff to continue to provide a quality educational offer given the ongoing decline in the number of pupils at the school and the resulting impact on the school's financial position.

Given this, the Council considers that it has a responsibility to all members of the North Walney school community to formally consult on the school's future sustainability.

This document sets out the background to the consultation, the timescale for the consultation process and how interested parties can participate in the consultation process.

Background

As set out in Table A below, as of September 2023, the confirmed number of pupils on roll at North Walney Primary school was 27. The total capacity of the school based upon the current published admission number is 161.

Table A - Number of Pupils on Roll at North Walney Primary -September 2023

Year Group	PAN	Current Class Size
Reception	23	3
Year 1	23	3
Year 2	23	8
Year 3	23	1
Year 4	23	4
Year 5	23	2
Year 6	23	6
Total	161	27

Table B - North Walney Primary School Numbers on Roll - Historic and Projected.

	Historic				Current	Forecast			
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Reception	12	10	9	2	3	3	5	5	4
Year 1	11	9	8	5	3	3	3	5	5
Year 2	9	11	5	1	8	3	3	3	5
Year 3	13	10	17	3	1	8	3	3	3
Year 4	11	13	10	1	4	1	8	3	3
Year 5	12	11	13	6	2	4	1	8	3
Year 6	16	12	10	4	6	2	4	1	8
Total	84	76	67	22	27	24	27	28	31

Table B shows that there has been a continuous drop in numbers across all year groups over recent years. In 2019/20 the number on roll was 84, by 2021/22 this number had fallen to 67 with a further reduction to 22 by 2022/23. The number of pupils on roll is predicted to remain very low.

In line with national trends, the number of births in the North Walney catchment area has reduced in recent years, as it has across Walney Island. For the foreseeable future there is little prospect of significant growth in pupil numbers for North Walney School. The forecast data above is based upon live birth data from two separate sources ONS Birth Data and General Practitioner Registrations.

Table C also illustrates that there is little opportunity for pupil growth as a result of inward migration to the area from new housing developments.

Table C - Housing Developments relating to North Walney Primary School

	Forecast			
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Projection	27	24	27	28
Housing 5 year plan	0	0	0	0
Projections plus 5 year plan	27	24	27	28
Housing S106	0	0	0	0
Projections plus S106	27	24	27	28

There are five schools within a two-mile radius of North Walney Primary School, with four of them located on Walney Island.

Charts A and Chart B, illustrate that Walney Island area has a significant number of surplus places overall. There is a marked projected increase in surplus places for Key Stage 1 by September 2026 with 37% of the overall number of places unallocated.

Chart A - Projected Percentage of Surplus Primary School Places in Walney Island Area

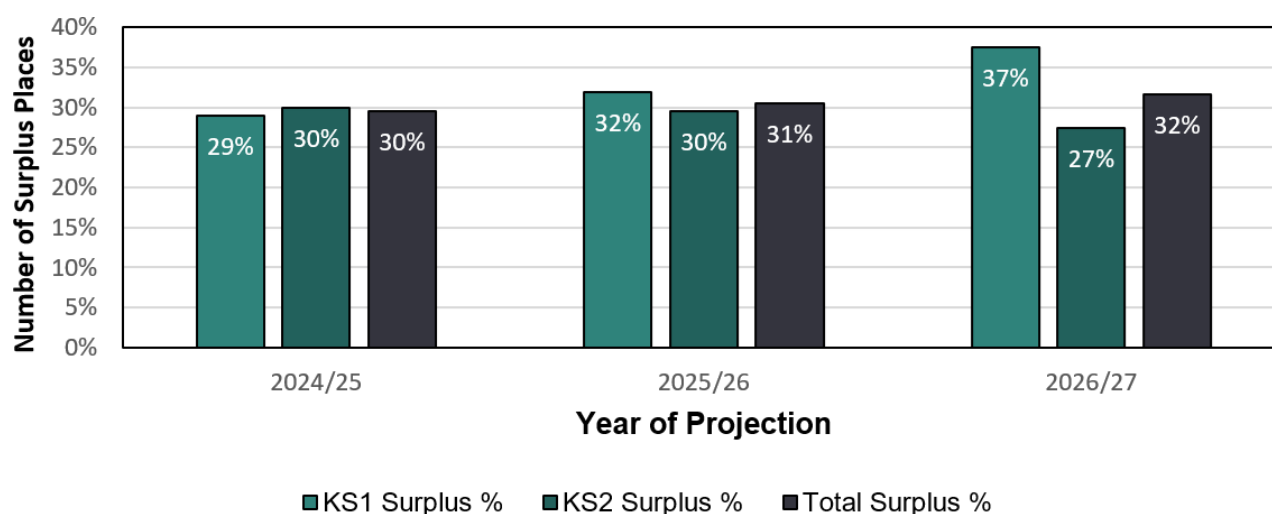
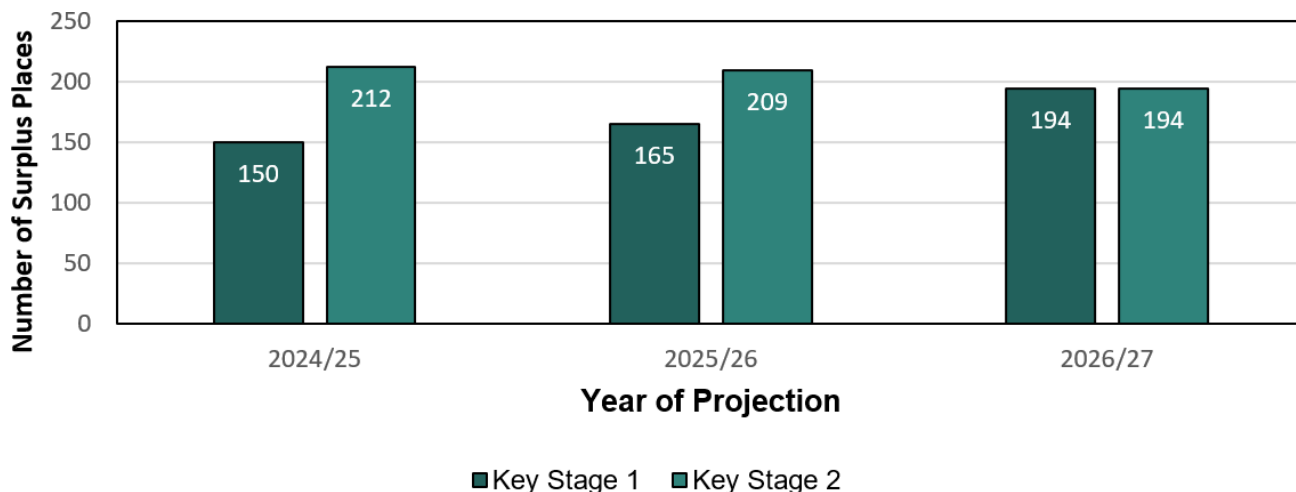




Chart B - Projected Number of Surplus Primary School Places in the Walney Island Area



Financial Viability

School budgets are directly linked to the number of children on roll at that school. Many costs are fixed regardless of pupil numbers, and it follows that, where the numbers on roll at a school are decreasing, there is less money available to the school to support teaching and learning. This makes it increasingly challenging for a school to provide a broad and balanced quality educational offer.

Whilst the school has taken a number of measures to reduce costs over the years, the impact of the falling pupil roll has made balancing the budget very challenging with no potential to address projected deficits.

Quality of Education

The Local Authority recognises that it is to the credit of the school's leadership, staff, parents and pupils that the school has continued to provide a quality educational offer during what has proven to have been a challenging period for the school.

However, the Local Authority is concerned that the school's current financial position is increasing the workload on school staff to levels that the Council believes is reaching an unsustainable level. This will inevitably impact on teaching standards and would likely give a reduced rating under the current Ofsted inspection framework.

The current framework requires all schools to evidence a 'good' quality of education over time, demonstrating a broad, rich curriculum sequenced in a logical progression to enable all children to acquire the intended knowledge and skills from Reception to Year Six.

The Local Authority is concerned that staffing instability and funding have also hampered development of leadership at subject level and impacted on professional development, workload and well-being of staff.

We are consulting on the following proposal:

Proposal to close North Walney Primary and Nursery School on 31 August 2024.

Who is this consultation for?

This document is for parents, staff and governors of North Walney Primary School and everybody with an interest in education in the area.

Where can I find out more information about this proposal?

You can find out more information by:

- Following the attached link to the Frequently Asked Questions document that is available on the Council's website.
<https://legacy.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/childrensservices/schoolsandlearning/lss/school-organisation/Consultations.asp>
- Attending one of the consultation meetings that will be held at the school on Wednesday 8th November 2023. Times are set out below.

How can I make my views known?

In addition to completing the online questionnaire using the link below you can attend a consultation meeting. This will be held on Wednesday 8th November 2023 at North Walney Primary School. There will be separate meetings for the staff, governors, parents and other stakeholders at the times below. Representatives from the Local Authority will be available to answer any questions that you might have

- School Staff only - 4pm to 5pm
- Governors only - 5.15pm to 6.15pm
- Parents & other stakeholders - 6.30pm to 7.30pm

What happens next?

Once the consultation period has closed, the Council's Cabinet will receive a report summarising all the responses that have been received. Cabinet will then decide whether to proceed to with the proposal or not to progress. Following the Cabinet decision, any decision affecting the school will be published with a further four-week representation period.

At the end of that representation period, the Cabinet will again consider all responses that have been submitted and will then make a final decision.

It is important that the Council's Cabinet gets to hear your views.

This consultation runs for six weeks from 1 November 2023 until 12th December 2023.

To respond to the consultation you can complete the online questionnaire here:

<https://consult.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/education/consultation-on-a-proposal-to-close-north-walney-p/>, or, send your comments either by via email

school.organisation@cumbria.gov.uk, or post to: **School Organisation, Westmorland and Furness Council, Post Box 305, LA9 9GZ**. Please explain your reason for interest in the proposal.

Please note:

It is not possible to respond to individual correspondence, but Westmorland and Furness Council will ensure that all points raised during the consultation process are addressed in the post-consultation report.

All comments received as part of the consultation process will be re-produced in the post consultation report. All comments will be redacted so that individuals cannot be identified, unless the individual or individuals hold a formal position that needs to be clearly identified.