

North Tyneside Council
Report to Director Children's Services
Date: 26 March 2025

Title: Strategic Education Review Update – Provision of Temporary Modular accommodation at Marden High School

Portfolio(s):	Education, Inclusion, Employment and Skills Finance and Resources	Cabinet Member(s):	Councillor Steven Phillips Councillor Anthony McMullen
Report from Service Area:	Children's Services Resources		
Responsible Officer:	Ian Wilkinson, Strategic Lead Education Review	Tel: 0345 200 0101	
Wards affected:	All		

PART 1

1.1 Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to recommend that the Director of Children's Services approve the provision of temporary modular accommodation on Marden High School under the Officer Delegation Scheme, where Council has delegated authority to the Director Children's Services (HECS226 in the Officer Delegation Scheme) to plan local school provision including decisions about the establishment, alteration and closure.

1.2 Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Director of Resources:

- a) Approve the provision of the temporary modular accommodation as described below in paragraph 1.5.5.

1.3 Forward Plan

This item first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 31 January 2025. Twenty-eight days' notice of a decision being made on this item has been given.

1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

This report relates to the following themes in the Authority's updated Our North Tyneside Plan 2021-2025:

- a family friendly North Tyneside
- a thriving North Tyneside, and
- a caring North Tyneside.

1.5 Information

1.5.1 Background to the consultation process regarding Monkseaton High School

A pre-publication consultation regarding the future of Monkseaton High School took place for six weeks between 17 September and 30 October 2024 in accordance with Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance. All views expressed were listened to and carefully considered. However, during the period of pre-publication consultation, no viable alternatives or options were presented. The decision was taken to publish a statutory notice proposing the closure of Monkseaton High School and to commence a statutory Representation Period. The statutory notice was issued on 15 November and the Representation Period began on the same day and lasted for four weeks, ending at 5pm on 13 December 2024. This period allowed for formal consultation to take place on the proposal to close Monkseaton High School.

North Tyneside Council's Cabinet met on 19 December 2024 and fully considered all responses to the pre-publication consultation and the statutory consultation along with a report provided by officers to make this decision.

Cabinet resolved unanimously to approve the proposal, without modification, that Monkseaton High School shall close on 31 August 2026, as per the implementation timetable referred to in the full statutory proposal attached to the report.

This decision was taken on 19 December 2024 subject to a call-in period which passed without any call-in so the decision now stands and can be implemented.

1.5.2 Minutes of the Cabinet meeting on 19 December

A report was presented which provided Cabinet with the consultation responses that had been received during the statutory representation period on the published proposal to close Monkseaton High School. Cabinet was also provided with details of the responses received during the pre-publication consultation. Cabinet was also advised that the data and analysis received during the consultation period between 15 November and 9 December 2024 were summarised in the report. A supplementary report relating to these matters had been published on 16 December 2024 and was also considered by Cabinet during the meeting.

Cabinet was advised that it was considered appropriate to publish the initial Cabinet report on 11 December 2024 prior to the representation period closing on 13 December 2024 in order that Cabinet members, parents and school colleagues had received all of the relevant information and had sufficient time to consider the information. Cabinet was also advised that it had been recognised that a prolonged period of uncertainty would be unwelcome for those directly impacted by the proposals who understandably might welcome more information about how the proposal, if agreed, would be implemented.

Cabinet was asked to consider the responses, including those contained within the supplementary report, together with the information supplied in the report and appendices to determine whether or not the proposal to close Monkseaton High School should be approved.

During the meeting, the Cabinet Member for Education, Inclusion, Employment and Skills responded to a number of questions from Cabinet members in relation to the proposal to close Monkseaton High School from September 2026.

Cabinet resolved unanimously to approve the proposal, without modification, that Monkseaton High School shall close on 31 August 2026, as per the implementation timetable referred to in the full statutory proposal attached to the report.

1.5.3 Reasons for the Decision

The closure of Monkseaton High School was approved for the following reasons:

- Under section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the Authority believed the closure of Monkseaton High School was considered necessary on the basis that it was no longer viable. In addition, there were surplus places elsewhere in the local area, which can accommodate displaced pupils, and there was no predicted increase in demand for the school in the medium to long term.
- Monkseaton High School had a significant financial deficit, currently over £5m, which was projected to increase to over £7 million by 2027. This was not sustainable and was impacting the stability of the school and, despite the best efforts of school leadership and staff, it posed a risk to the quality of education that can be delivered to pupils. Financial rules state that schools cannot operate with sustained deficits, and forecasts from the school show this deficit was set to increase.
- Declining pupil numbers and lower birth rates mean that the school was operating at just over 50% of its capacity. The school has capacity for 964 pupils. In 2009 the number of pupils on roll was 783 and in 2024 it was 527. Whilst pupil numbers have recovered from a low of 431 in 2016, it was clear the school still has significant surplus spaces. Housebuilding in the area is not likely to improve this at the level required for the school to become sustainable.
- While parental choice played a significant role in this decline, with only one in five current pupils coming from the local community, there had also been changes to the local demographics and an overall decrease in pupils in the catchment area.
- The financial position was made more challenging by higher than average building running costs, maintenance and changes to Government funding.
- The Authority had explored every viable option available. This has been reinforced through discussions with the Department for Education, which had not identified any further options.
- It was clear that without long term changes which were beyond the Authority's control, it was not possible to make the school viable. The operational and financial challenges faced by the school meant there was a risk it would not be able to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum.
- During the periods of pre-publication consultation and of formal representation (to date), no viable alternatives or options were presented, though all were carefully considered. The proposals that came forward had either been previously explored and ruled out or did not provide sufficient evidence which would enable the Authority to make a new proposal that would satisfactorily resolve the pupil number trends and financial implications of keeping the school open.

1.5.4 School Space Sufficiency

The closure of Monkseaton High School is considered necessary on the basis that it is no longer viable. In addition, there are surplus places elsewhere in the local area, which can accommodate displaced pupils, and there is no predicted increase in demand for the school in the medium to long term.

No pupils will be admitted to Year 9 or Year 12 for September 2025, current Year 10 and 12 pupils will remain at Monkseaton High School and move into Year 11 and Year 13, respectively and current Year 9 pupils will be supported to transition to alternative Year 10 provision ahead of September 2025.

The Authority must continue to discharge its statutory duty in terms of ensuring there are sufficient school places to meet demand and that all schools are well placed to deliver high quality education that meets the needs of their local community and makes best use of public funding.

The Authority has a statutory role to ensure there is sufficient school places for pupils who are residents of North Tyneside and this responsibility is a key consideration. There is sufficient capacity for all displaced Year 9 pupils across our North Tyneside secondary schools (maintained and academy settings). While schools have agreed Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for their admissions, the capacity for each school to take further pupils is at the discretion of their Governing Board and is linked to the physical capacity of the school.

The Authority has a commitment for all children and young people to have the right to attend a school which provides continued and improving high quality provision, where the number of pupils on roll enables school leaders to provide a diverse curriculum and which is of an appropriate size for the Authority to fulfil its statutory responsibility regarding pupil places.

Since the launch of the consultation in September 2024, we have worked closely with school leaders to increase the places available and increase parental choice for the current Year 9 pupils who will be displaced and for the current Year 8 pupils who are in Middle Schools. Considering current and projected numbers from September 2025, all current Year 9 pupils in Monkseaton High School and all current Year 8 pupils in middle schools, who are residents of North Tyneside, can be accommodated in other North Tyneside schools. By working with Headteachers and Governing Boards we have ensured that a greater element of choice is available

during this extraordinary admissions process, however, as with any admissions process this will be governed by each school's standard admissions criteria.

Each school has a net Capacity Assessment, from which the Published Admission Number is derived. Physical capacity within each school is generally slightly higher than the PAN capacity, providing flexibility for bulge year groups at times of need, although in some North Tyneside schools it is considerably higher. School leaders and Governing Boards have now formally agreed from September 2025 to admit children up to their existing Published Admission Numbers (PANs) and, in some cases, to make extra places available. Any extra places referred to represent a temporary increase for the particular year group and not a change to school PANs. They represent a number of places that each school may admit up to for the particular year group only and at that point in time. They are a temporary measure to allow for any "bulge years" resulting from the closure of Monkseaton High School. It is also important to note that any resources associated with this temporary increase will not be available until September 2025 and the temporary increase will only be with effect from September 2025.

The Council will make arrangements from September 2025 to ensure that the funding schools are allocated to support the education of a pupil will be provided to the schools that children relocate to. This will support the new school to make the provisions required to welcome more children into the school in September 2025.

A number of North Tyneside schools have agreed to provide an increased number of places without the need for extra accommodation. This is predominantly due to the fact that they are slightly under-capacity in one or more year groups or because their building has the sufficient physical capacity necessary to take a small number of additional students.

1.5.5 The provision of temporary modular accommodation on the site of Marden High School

The school is currently operating at an increased Published Admission Number, following a Governing Body decision and therefore has no flexibility within their current accommodation to provide additional teaching space for either the displaced pupils from Monkseaton High School as Y10 students or the new Y9 intake in September 2025.

It is anticipated that Marden High School will admit an additional 30 students in to both years 9 and 10 in September 2025 (total of 60 pupils), and likely a further additional cohort into year 9 in September 2026. These will be known as 'Bulge' classes, and only exist during the transition period following the decision to close Monkseaton High School.

In order to allow delivery of the curriculum, the school would require the following temporary accommodation:

- 5 general teaching spaces, SEN and office accommodation
- Flexible space to provide Dining and other activities
- Additional yard space,
- Relocated staff and visitor parking
- Secure fence line.

It is likely that this accommodation will be on site for up to three years from September 2025.

It is intended to procure the accommodation via a hire agreement from a modular accommodation provider. The project will require capital investment to provide the infrastructure and installation of the units, at an estimated cost of circa £230k, and annual hire charges in the region of £170k.

1.6 Decision options:

The following decision options are available for consideration by the Director of Children's Services:

Option 1

Accept the recommendations outlined in section 1.2 of this report.

Option 2

Not accept the recommendations outlined in section 1.2 of the report.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

1.7 Reasons for recommended option:

The recommended option will enable the Authority to discharge its statutory duty in terms of ensuring there are sufficient school places to meet demand and that all schools are well placed to deliver high quality education that meets the needs of their local community and makes best use of public funding.

1.8 Appendices:

None

1.9 Contact officers:

Julie Firth, Director of Children Services, Tel: 0191 6431454

Jon Ritchie, Director of Resources, Tel: 0191 6435701

Ian Wilkinson, Strategic Lead Education Review, Tel 0191 6434610

1.10 Background information

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

(1) Review of Secondary School Provision Cabinet Report 14 October 2013

(2) Education Review Cabinet Report 8 September 2014

- (3) Education Review – Feedback from Prepublication Cabinet Report 10 November 2014
- (4) Education Review – Feedback from Publication Consultation 12 January 2015
- (5) Education Review – Feedback from Publication Consultation Supplementary Report 12 January 2015
- (6) Education Review Update Report 13 July 2015
- (7) Education Review Cabinet Report 11 July 2016
- (8) Education for North Tyneside Cabinet Report 10 July 2017
- (9) Education for North Tyneside Cabinet Report 30 July 2018
- (10) LGA Education Funding Report, House of Commons, 4 June 2019
- (11) Education for North Tyneside Cabinet Report 29 July 2019
- (12) Ambition for Education Cabinet Report 25 January 2021
- (13) Ambition for Education Strategy 2020 - 2024
- (14) SEND Inclusion Strategy 2021 - 2024
- (15) Ambition for Education Cabinet Report 20 September 2021
- (16) North Tyneside Council Local Area SEND Ofsted Inspection
- (17) Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan
- (18) Ambition for Education Cabinet Report 21 September 2022
- (19) Ambition for Education Cabinet Report 18 September 2023
- (20) Strategic Education Review Update Cabinet Report 9 September 2024
- (21) Ambition for Education Update Cabinet Report 16 September 2024

- (22) Strategic Education Review: Delegated Decision Report 6 November 2024
- (23) DFE - Opening and closing maintained schools Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers
- (24) Strategic Education Review Update Cabinet Report 19 December 2024

PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

2.1 Finance and other resources

Previous Cabinet papers have set out the financial implications associated with Monkseaton High School, especially its current and growing deficit. Discussions will continue with senior officials from the DfE and MHCLG about further support and/or accounting flexibilities that may be made available to the Authority.

With regards to the costs associated with the decision to implement temporary accommodation at Marden High School, the proposed costs set out above can be accommodated within the existing Schools Reorganisation Reserve held by the Authority. Whilst the expenditure is temporary in nature, it spans several financial years so the majority will be capital in nature. As such, this spend will follow the governance arrangements for the Investment Programme Board, and will be incorporated into future Performance and Finance reports to Cabinet, and Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination and Finance Committee.

2.2 Legal

The Authority has a legal duty (by virtue of s.13A Education Act 1996) to ensure that its education functions are exercised with a view to:

- promoting high standards,
- ensuring fair access to opportunity, and
- promoting the fulfilment of the learning potential of every child.

The Authority has delegated authority to the Director Children's Services (HECS226 in the Officer Delegation Scheme) to plan local school provision including decisions about the establishment, alteration and closure of schools.

2.3 Consultation/community engagement

2.3.1 Internal Consultation

Discussions have been held with the Elected Mayor and Cabinet Members and with the senior team leading services for schools. There has been consultation with the Director of Resources regarding the financial implications.

2.3.2 External Consultation/Engagement

Discussion with Headteachers at meetings, individually and in partnership groups

2.4 Human rights

This report has been prepared having regard to Article 2 of the First Protocol of the Human Rights Act 1998 and a person's right to have an effective education.

2.5 Equalities and diversity

The temporary accommodation will be fully accessible. The installation and use of the temporary accommodation and any other associated changes at the school, such as to parking, will not have any equalities and diversity implications.

2.6 Risk management

Risk will be managed through the Authority's risk management process, with risks entered into the operational and strategic risk registers.

2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from this report.

2.8 Environment and sustainability

There are no environment and sustainability implications arising directly from this report.

PART 3 – SIGN OFF

- Interim Chief Executive X
- Director(s) of Service X
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s) X
- Chief Finance Officer X
- Monitoring Officer X
- Interim Director of
Corporate Strategy
and Customer Service X