

The future of Monkseaton High School:

Consultation period: 17 September 2024 – 30 October 2024



North
Tyneside
Council

1. Introduction

Monkseaton High School has a significant financial deficit, currently over £5m, which is not sustainable and is impacting on how the school operates. Financial rules state that schools cannot operate with sustained deficits, and forecasts show this deficit is set to increase.

As a result, North Tyneside Council is consulting on a proposal to close Monkseaton High School on 31 August 2026.

The responsibility for setting a balanced budget lies with the school leaders and governors, but the Council recognises it has an important role to play in balancing educational and financial factors across all of its maintained schools.

The Council has worked tirelessly in recent years, alongside Monkseaton High School leaders and governors, to explore a range of options to secure the future of the school and maintain the borough's education system.

The Council believes that without long term changes to pupil numbers and Government funding beyond its control, it is not possible to secure the future of the school.

The consultation will commence on 18 September 2024 and will end on 30 October 2024. If no viable alternatives are put forward, we will move into the statutory consultation period with the outcome expected to be announced in January 2025.

You may have some questions to ask, and this document will provide you with the background. Please read this in full before submitting your consultation response.

2. Background

Monkseaton High School has a large financial deficit which is projected to increase to over £7 million by 2026. This is impacting the stability of the school, and despite the best efforts of school leadership and staff it poses a risk to the quality of education that can be delivered to pupils.

In recent years the Council has worked closely with school leaders to address the financial deficit and stabilise the education offer available to pupils. There are

various factors outside of the control of the Council and school leaders which have contributed to this decision.

Declining pupil numbers and lower birth rates mean that the school is 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 September 2024 it was 511. Whilst pupil numbers have recovered from a low of 431 in 2016, it's clear the school still has significant surplus spaces. Housebuilding in the area is not likely to improve this.

While parental choice plays a significant role in this decline, with only one in five current pupils coming from the local community, there has also been changes to the local demographics and an overall decrease in pupils in the catchment area.

The financial position is made more challenging by higher than average building running costs, maintenance and changes to government funding.

Despite the best efforts of staff and school leaders, there is a risk that it will become difficult to provide the broad and balanced curriculum that pupils deserve.

After exploring several options including moving the three-tier system to a two-tier system of education, academisation, bringing the school together with another local school under one governing body, changing the school to a secondary school and closing the sixth form, the Council believes there is no practical option available to secure the future of the school.

The Council recognises that a consultation of this nature will be a concern for local communities however the current educational and financial position is not sustainable. The Council aims to have a system of education that brings about the highest possible standards of education for all children and doing nothing will not achieve this in the rapidly changing educational landscape.

3. Which options have been considered?

The Council has worked closely with schools in the North East Planning Area (consisting of 14 schools in the Monkseaton and Whitley Bay area) and specifically with the Headteacher and the Governing Body of Monkseaton High School, on a range of options to secure the future of the school.

Some of these options relied on other schools making changes, that can only be made by individual school governing bodies. The Council cannot mandate

schools to make changes. It is important to recognise that all of the options discussed would have an impact on other schools in the North East Planning Area.

The options that have been considered have been dismissed either because they are not financially viable, or because agreement could not be reached. These options are:

- To close the sixth form.
- Monkseaton High School to retain Years 9,10,11 and become the sixth form venue for the Whitley Bay, Monkseaton and North Shields area.
- To co-locate with Monkseaton Middle School.
- To explore moving the three-tier system to a two-tier system of education.
- Changing part of the Monkseaton catchment area into a two-tier system.
- To bring Monkseaton High School and Whitley Bay High School together under one governing body.
- Monkseaton High School to become a secondary school, i.e. admit pupils in Year 7.
- Exploring opportunities for the school to join an existing multi-academy trust.

4. Why is the Council proposing to close Monkseaton High School?

The Council is now clear that without long term changes beyond its control, it is not possible to make the school viable.

The operational and financial challenges faced by the school mean there is a risk it will not be able to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum.

Whilst the Council recognises that the Governors and staff of Monkseaton High School have been doing the best possible job in difficult circumstances, the school continues to be in an increasingly vulnerable financial position, but the pressures are increasing. This is leading to operational instability within the school. Several factors mean that there is no prospect of the structural deficit being removed or reduced to a manageable level.

A major priority for the Council is to ensure that any decision taken needs to be in the best interests of the young people and their families both in Monkseaton and across the whole school community in North Tyneside.

The Council believes it has explored every option available. This has been reinforced through discussions with the Department for Education which have not identified any further options.

The Council believes that at this stage there are only two options that could now be considered.

Option 1: Explore viable options submitted by the public

The public are invited to submit viable options to secure the future of the school beyond the options already explored.

Option 2: Close Monkseaton High School

This option means children will be educated in another school and Monkseaton High School would close from 31 August 2026.

From these two options, the preferred option that North Tyneside Council is consulting on is Option 2, and the potential closure of Monkseaton High School. If the closure was to be ultimately approved, it would take effect on 31 August 2026.

5. What happens next?

Any proposal for school reorganisation must be carried out in accordance with Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance.

The Council cannot take a decision to close Monkseaton High School without having held a consultation on the proposal, which will include seeking the views of members of the public. The first stage of consultation will be informal and opens on 17 September 2024.

The detail below sets out the expected timescales for the process:

Consultation – 17 September to 30 October 2024

The initial consultation will take place for six weeks. This will include the publication of consultation material and parental information sessions. Once the consultation closes, the Council will analyse the responses to see if any viable options are put forward.

Statutory Public Notice and Representation Period – November to December 2024

If no viable options are put forward the Council will decide to proceed with the proposal for closure. At this stage, statutory notices would be published which commences a Statutory Representation Period. This is where any person or organisation can submit comments to the Council within a four-week period.

Decision Making – Expected to be January 2025

Once the representation period closes, the Council's cabinet would consider responses to the statutory notice and make the final decision on whether to agree the proposal or not.

6. Taking part in the consultation

We are clear that no decision has been made. The public consultation runs until noon on 30 October 2024. We encourage you to submit alternative proposals to closing the school.

You can access the online consultation on our [Have Your Say engagement website](#). A range of Frequently Asked Questions are available on the site, please read these before completing the survey.

Paper copies of the survey and Frequently Asked Questions will also be available at Monkseaton High School and on our Have Your displays in the 6 main Customer First Centres at Whitley Bay, North Shields, Wallsend, White Swan Centre, Oxford Centre and the John Willie Sams Centre

If you need us to do anything differently to help you take part in this survey, including providing this information in another language or format, please e-mail accessibility@northtyneside.gov.uk.