

Report to the Executive Director of Children’s Services for decision on a statutory proposal to increase the capacity of Blofield Primary (Community) School from 210 pupils to 420 pupils and relocate to a new school site in Blofield from 1 September 2024.

The proposal

The proposal is to increase the number of pupils from 210 pupils to 420 pupils at Blofield Primary (Community) School and move to a new school site in Blofield. To accommodate the expansion, the school will relocate to a new school site which will be located at North Street, Blofield, Norwich, Norfolk NR13 4RH. These changes would come into effect from 1 September 2024.

Public notice and representation period

A statutory public notice was issued by Norfolk County Council (NCC) and was published in the Eastern Daily Press on 25 April 2023. Copies were displayed at all the main entrances to Blofield Primary (Community) School. The four week representation period came to an end on 23 May 2023. Please refer to Appendix 1 for the Public Notice and Appendix 2 for the Prescribed Information.

All statutory requirements in relation to the statutory consultation were complied with.

One response was received during the representation period from HEART Education Trust, who oppose the proposal to increase the capacity at Blofield Primary School, stating:

‘As the Chief Executive Officer of the HEART Education Trust, I am responsible for ensuring that our academies remain financially viable, allowing our pupils to receive the best possible education.

One of our academies is Lingwood Primary Academy, which is close to Blofield. I believe that this unnecessary development will have an impact on maintaining pupil numbers at Lingwood over the next 6 years and, as a result, adversely impact on educational provision. A reduction in pupil numbers at Lingwood Primary will add significant financial pressure to the school and, consequently, will have a negative financial impact on our three other primary academies – all of which provide education for a high percentage of disadvantaged children.’

Evidence of additional pupil places

NCC has a statutory duty (Section 14, Education Act 1996) to plan and secure sufficient school places for their area to meet the needs of its children and families and therefore it is obliged to plan for the expansion of its school capacity.

In the Blofield/Brundall area, 531 new homes have planning permission, of which 400 are still to be built. This increase in new homes and new families, means we are expecting more primary school aged children. The current schools in Blofield and Brundall cannot accommodate these extra children.

The new school will ensure the school serves its current catchment and supports the growth across Blofield and Brundall. Brundall Primary School does not have any capacity to expand further due to its shape and site size. NCC considered the option of expanding the current Blofield Primary School, but this is not possible due to the shape, site size and layout.

Although the catchment figures have fluctuated in the past, information shows an increase and with a PAN of 30, the number offered lower ranked preferences, or an alternative as no preference met, has also increased for Blofield Primary, especially in the last 2 years.

It is therefore proposed to provide a new primary school building in Blofield which will provide 60 pupil places per year group, with an overall capacity of 420 places on a single site to the eastern side of Plantation Road. The growth in the school will be phased, starting with Reception and growing year on year as outlined below. This approach provides sustainable growth for the school.

Year	Y R	Y 1	Y 2	Y 3	Y 4	Y 5	Y 6	Total
24/25	60	30	28	30	33	31	32	244
25/26	60	60	30	28	30	33	31	272
26/27	60	60	60	30	28	30	33	301
27/28	60	60	60	60	30	28	30	328
28/29	60	60	60	60	60	30	28	358
29/30	60	60	60	60	60	60	30	390
30/31	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	420
31/32	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	420

Impact on Lingwood Primary Academy

Lingwood Primary Academy is approximately 2.5 miles from Blofield Primary School. The nearest school to Blofield Primary School is Brundall Primary School, approximately 1.4 miles.

Catchment figures for Lingwood have remained relatively stable between 2020 and 2021 between the high 30's and 40 pupils across their area.

Preference for Lingwood Primary Academy over time has shown numbers increasing from a low of 142 pupils in 2015-16 increasing to 192 pupils in the 2021-22 admission round. However, forecasts for Sept 23 indicated a preference of 28 pupils for Lingwood Primary School, which has now been revised to 21 pupils. Two pupils from the Blofield catchment refused places at Blofield, have been offered Lingwood in September 2023. This is due to Blofield's lack of capacity to take all the pupils in their catchment.

NCC does recognise the impact of the falling birth rate for schools in some areas of the county, this will be for all schools to manage according to their existing structures and future planning. NCC is looking at options to support schools that may

experience some financial risk, but details of this have yet to be finalised and submitted to Schools Forum for consideration.

By opening the new school as planned NCC's aim is to provide local schools for local children ensuring sustainable routes to schools serving their local community.

There is no proposal for changes in school catchment areas as part of the consultation.

The admissions process seeks to honour preference provided by families. NCC's approach endeavours to plan for catchment and therefore the demand for school places in Blofield is evidenced by the number of refused admissions to this school and the level of housing growth expected and that has occurred over time.

In summary, NCC's modelling of preference and catchment movement over the course of five years does not show any reflection of an impact on Lingwood Primary School.

The decision

In coming to a decision, the Decision Maker is obliged to consider the following factors:

Education standards and diversity of provision

Norfolk County Council's policy is to expand schools that are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. Blofield Primary (Community) School was rated Good by Ofsted in March 2019.

Outcomes for pupils at Blofield Primary School are good. At each primary phase, outcomes are consistently above the national average, including for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. There are no recorded exclusions over the last 6 years and pupil absence is in line with national averages and below (better than) the Norfolk average. The school has a lower proportion of free school meals pupils at 7%, compared to 23% in Norfolk and 24% nationally,

There is no evidence to suggest the school would not achieve at least a Good judgement on its next inspection and is categorised A by NCC.

NCC's policy for the development of a self-improving school system, agreed January 2020, is to ensure that wherever possible, new schools are commissioned as all through primary schools with a minimum of two forms of entry and secondary schools as 11-16 schools with six forms of entry. The policy also specifies these school sizes - 420 place primary (5-11) and 900+ place secondary (11-16) schools) - to be the most desirable model, where NCC invests considerable capital to support other school organisation changes.

This proposal is in line with NCC policy and would benefit children and young people because;

- The Schools' Local Growth Investment Plan identifies the need in the area, for additional school places.
- It provides additional places for children and young people in a good school
- It provides additional places at a local school, for local children and young people.

Equal opportunities issues

The Council has considered that there are no specific discrimination issues that arise from the change being proposed.

Community cohesion

The Council has considered that there are no specific community cohesion issues that arise from the change being proposed.

Travel and accessibility

There is likely to be an impact on peak time traffic at the new school site as there is an increase in the number of pupils. However NCC has ensured that the design of the new school site will minimise this impact and meet the NCC's policy to encourage sustainable travel. This includes;

- installing cycle shelters for up to 66 bicycles and 40 scooters
- creating drop off spaces by the school entrance, at the turning circle layby for those that decide to drive to school
- vehicular and pedestrian access will be by a new access road created off Plantation Road
- off-site highways improvements to improve the walking route to the new school
- installing a staff car park with 59 spaces (including 9 EV spaces) and 3 disabled spaces, all with EV compatibility.

In addition, Norfolk County Council has been working with the Blofield Parish Council, who will be providing open space with play equipment and parking on the current school playing field, and this will encourage parents to use this parking facility in particular at the end of the school day.

In time, more pupils will live in the closer to the school and therefore be within walking distance, than is currently the case.

Funding

The total project cost is estimated at £12m. NCC is funding this project from the School's Capital Programmes Budget, with a contribution from the CiL (Community Infrastructure Levy). Long term value for money will be achieved as there is greater capacity to offer primary school places to children locally.

School Premises and Playing Fields

Suitable outdoor space will be available at the new school site.

Conclusion and recommendation

In considering the proposals, the Decision Maker can decide to:

- Reject the proposal
- Approval the proposal
- Approve the proposal with a modification
- Approve the proposal subject to it meeting a specific condition.

One representation was made during the statutory notice period. The consultation response rate during the informal consultation stage was low at 5%. Of those who did complete the consultation survey, 52% strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal.

This proposal supports Norfolk County Council's statutory duty to ensure a sufficient supply of school places in its area for children of school age.

It is therefore recommended that the Director of Children's Services, in her role as Decision Maker as delegated by Norfolk County Council, should decide **in favour** of the proposal to change the age range of the school with effect from 1 September 2024, with one condition; planning permission approval by 31 December 2023.

Appendix 1 – Public Notice



Proposed significant change to Blofield Primary (Community) School, Norfolk

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that, Norfolk County Council intends to make a prescribed alteration to the following school, in accordance with section 19 (1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, by increasing the capacity of the school from 210 pupils to 420 pupils and relocate to a new school site in Blofield; Plantation Road, Blofield NR13 4PL, from 1 September 2024 (subject to planning permission).

This Notice is an extract from the complete proposal. Copies of the proposal can be obtained by emailing schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk or by writing to the School Organisation Team, Children's Services, Lower Ground Floor, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2DL.

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 the School Organisation Team, Children's Services, Lower Ground Floor, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2DL or by email to: schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk

Signed: Sara Tough
Executive Director of Children's Services

Publication Date: 25 April 2023

Statutory Proposal to increase the capacity of Blofield Primary (Community) School from 210 pupils to 420 pupils and relocate to a new school site in Blofield from 1 September 2024.

1. Local Authority details

Norfolk County Council, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH

2. School details

Name	Blofield Primary School
Type	Community School
Address	North Street, Blofield, Norwich, Norfolk NR13 4RH
Age Range	4 – 11 years
Capacity	210 pupils; Numbers on roll 1 March 2022 = 214
Ofsted	Last Ofsted; March 2019 Rating; Good

3. What changes are proposed?

It is proposed to increase the number of pupils at Blofield Primary School, from 210 pupils to 420 pupils. To accommodate the expansion, the school will relocate to a new school building which will be located on Plantation Road, Blofield, NR13 4PL. These changes would come into effect from 1 September 2024 (subject to planning permission).

4. Why do we want to do this? (evidence of demand)

Norfolk County Council has a statutory duty to;

- Ensure a sufficient supply of school places in its area for children of school age
- Promote high educational standards, diversity and parental choice
- Ensure fair access to educational opportunity
- Help fulfil every child's educational potential.

Norfolk County Council and the Governors at Blofield Primary School feel these changes would benefit children and young people because;

- The Local Growth Investment Plan identifies the need in the area, for additional school places.
- It provides additional places for children and young people in a good school
- It provides additional places at a local school, for local children and young people.

The consultation document is attached at Appendix A. A consultation was held from 9 January to 24 February 2023. A total of 352 consultation documents were sent to governors, staff and parents at Blofield Primary School and key stakeholders. A consultation event was held on 17 January 2023, 11 people attended; 9 residents and 2 parents.

19 responses were received, 52% agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal. The analysis of the responses received during the consultation is available at Appendix B.

5. Objectives, including how the proposal would increase educational standards and parental choice.

Norfolk County Council wants to:

- Increase the number of places by a further 210 places, to create a 420 place (2 Form Entry) Primary School
- Ensure there are enough primary school places for local children in the area they live.
- Provide a new school building, with improved standards of accessibility and learning spaces.

Norfolk County Council's policy is to expand schools that are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. Blofield Primary School was inspected in June 2019 and was rated Good.

6. Will there be any effect on other schools, academies and educational institutions within the area?

We cannot foresee any impact on any other schools, as this proposal provides additional places at Blofield Primary School which removes the pressure of placing local children in other schools, as their local school is over subscribed.

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

The total project cost is estimated at £12m. Norfolk County Council is funding this project from the Capital Programmes Budget, with a small contribution from the CiL (Community Infrastructure Levy). Long term value for money will be achieved as there is greater capacity to offer primary school places to children locally.

8. Implementation date and proposed stages

If the proposal is agreed by the local decision maker; the Executive Director of Children's Services, Norfolk County Council, it is intended that the significant change will be implemented from 1 September 2024.

9. Related proposals

There is no other proposal linked to this proposal.

10. How can I make my views known?

Any person may object to, express support for, or make comments on the proposals, within 4 weeks of the publication of the statutory public notice by:

- Sending an email to; schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk
- Writing to: School Organisation Team, FREEPOST, 1H 2076, Children's Services, Lower Ground Floor, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2BR. You don't need a stamp.

11. What happens next?

The following table sets out the key dates for the consultation and decision making. At any point the proposal may be withdrawn. The dates set out below meet the Department for Education requirements for consultation on school organisation proposals.

School organisation process	Date
Public Notice published	25 April 2023
Statutory consultation (representation stage)	25 April – 23 May 2023
Decision required, no later than	21 July 2023
If approved, change starts	1 September 2024

Consultation on expanding Blofield Primary School

Our proposal

It is proposed to increase the number of pupils at Blofield Primary School, from 210 pupils to 420 pupils and move into a new school building (see image below), Plantation Road, Blofield, NR13 4PL. These changes would come into effect from 1 September 2024.



Why do we need to expand Blofield Primary School

Our proposal is in response to the new homes being built in the area. The County Council has a statutory duty (Section 14, Education Act 1996) to plan and secure sufficient school places for their area to meet the needs of its children and families and therefore it is obliged to plan for the expansion of its school capacity.

In the Blofield/Brundall area, it is expected there will be 531 new homes, of which 400 are still to be built. This increase in new homes and new families, means we are expecting more primary school aged children. The current schools in Blofield and Brundall cannot accommodate these extra children.

The new school will ensure the school serves its current catchment and supports with the growth across Blofield and Brundall. Brundall school does not have any capacity to expand further due to its shape and site size. It is proposed to build a new primary school in Blofield which will provide 60 pupil places per year group, with an overall capacity of 420 places on a single site to the eastern side of Plantation Road.

Norfolk County Council considered the option of expanding the current Blofield Primary School, but this is not possible due to the shape, site size and layout.

Why we feel these changes are important

The County Council and Governors believe that these changes would benefit all children and young people in Blofield because:

They will provide sufficient places for the emerging pressure on primary places in the.

- It will enable the school to plan more effectively to meet future demand and will help parents to get a place at their preferred school.
- There will be improved learning facilities for pupils now and in the future.

Capital Programme

The new primary school will be funded by Norfolk County Council and will include;

- A new 2-storey building, with 14 classrooms.
- Reception classrooms have their own en-suite toilet provision along with dedicated secure outside areas.
- KS1 classrooms are located on the ground floor, all with direct outside access.
- KS2 classrooms are located on the first floor.
- A food tech/science/DT classroom will be located on the first floor and fitted out to meet the school's curriculum need.
- A main hall with adjoining studio space including store will be provided.
- Administration offices are provided along with a secure entrance lobby.
- The library/heart space is provided on the ground floor.
- A new kitchen will also be provided
- New access road (off Plantation Road) with no secondary pedestrian or vehicular access from Wyngates.

How can you have your say?

Norfolk County Council will be holding a drop-in event on Tuesday 17 January, 2.15 – 3.15pm, at Blofield Primary School, where you can come and find out more about this proposal.

If you unable to attend this event but would like to comment on our proposal, you can have your say by:

- Accessing our online survey; <https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/blofieldexpansion>
- Completing the attached questionnaire and returning it to the School Office, Blofield Primary School

We need all responses by 12 noon, Friday 24 February 2023.

What happens next?

As the local decision maker for school organisation, the Director for Children's Services will review all the comments made during this consultation and decide whether to proceed to the statutory public notice stage for this proposal.

Date: 9/1/2023

Report to the Executive Director of Children’s Services for permission to publish a statutory public notice

The proposal;

To increase the number of pupils at Blofield Primary School, from 210 pupils to 420 pupils and move to a new school building, Plantation Road, Blofield NR13 4PL, from 1 September 2024.

Reason for the proposed change	This proposal is in response to the new homes being built in the area. It is expected that there will be 531 new homes, of which 400 are still to be built in the Brundell/Blofield area. The current schools in Brundall/Blofield cannot accommodate the extra children expected from these new homes. The consultation document is available at Appendix A.
Consultation details	<p>The consultation was delivered, as set out by the DfE statutory guidance ‘Making significant changes (prescribed alterations) to maintained schools’, October 2018. A consultation was held from 9 January to 24 February 2023. A total of 352 consultation documents were sent to governors, staff and parents at Blofield Primary School and key stakeholders. A consultation event was held on 17 January 2023, in person, supported by the Chair of Governors and School Organisation Manager, Norfolk County Council. 11 people attended; 9 residents and 2 parents. Themes discussed included;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic concerns • Flooding concerns on local roads • School being built on ‘open space’, now have concerns about light, noise and pollution • Location of new school; its in the wrong place, all the traffic has to go down North Street • Unhappy with concept of school and the land its going on • Decreasing pupil numbers; do we need a school • School design; uninspiring, should be a better a better design • Mobiles; suggestion that more mobiles should be placed at the school instead of new building • Growing the school; parents were concerned how the school would grow, so that their children weren’t split up from their friends.
Number of responses	19 responses

Summary of views expressed in favour of the proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion in the area so more places needed, the school is not big enough (10) • Need drop off point for parents to use and better, safer routes to the schools (1)
Summary of views expressed against the proposal/no opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better site for new school is needed (4) • Parking improvements needed (3) • Loss of current facilities e.g. forest school, swimming pool (2) • Village school is being replaced with 'rectangle box' (1) • Impact of the new school on my house and garden (1)
Commentary	The consultation has been run in accordance with the DfE guidance. Although the response rate is low at 5%, of those who did complete the consultation survey, 52% strongly agree or agree with the proposal.
Resource implications	Norfolk County Council's Capital programme will be funding this new school, as part of the growth agenda.
Recommendation	<p>The local authority has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places for all pupils in its area. The proposal to expand the school and relocate to a new site, will meet the demand for additional pupil places from the growth in the Blofield/Brundall area.</p> <p>It is therefore recommended to proceed to the statutory public notice stage of the school organisation process.</p>

I give permission for a public notice to be issued on the proposal to increase the number of pupils at Blofield Primary School, Blofield Norfolk and relocate to a new school site on Plantation Road, Blofield, Norfolk from 1 September 2024.

Signed: _____
(Executive Director of Children's Services)

Date: _____