

July 2025



Report to the Executive Director of Children's Services for decision on a statutory change for a change in number of pupils in a special school, at Chapel Green School, Old Buckenham, Norfolk

What is the proposal?

The proposal by the Governors of Chapel Green School, Old Buckenham is to increase the number of pupil places to 180 by adding 20 places for children and young people with complex needs, at Chapel Green School, Attleborough Road, Old Buckenham, NR17 1RF.

If agreed, this would be implemented from 1 September 2025.

Full details of the proposal published for the Informal Consultation stage, is outlined in Appendix A.

Public notice and representation period

A statutory public notice was issued by the Chair of Governors, Chapel Green School and published in the Eastern Daily Press on 24 June 2025. Copies were also displayed on the school barrier, reception and entrances to the school.

The four-week representation period came to an end on 22 July 2025.

See Appendix A for Public Notice and Prescribed Information, which includes the responses to the informal consultation stage.

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

The responses to the public notice

Two representations were received during the statutory Public Notice period.

The first email was in support of the change, written by the CEO of a Trust who oversees two schools in the area.

The second email was from a parent expressing concern, highlighting that the school is already stretched to its limits and has had to convert essential support rooms into classrooms, which the respondent views as detrimental to the quality of provision.

The message goes on to emphasise the importance of regulation spaces and that increasing student numbers must be matched with adequate staffing and physical space to maintain effective teaching and care. The letter concludes with a call for more SEN hubs in mainstream schools and stronger support.

The governing body and Local Authority acknowledge the pressures that rising capacity places on space and resources and appreciate the concern this will raise around quality of provision.

It's important to note that the additional places being offered for September 2025 are not part of a broader expansion plan, but rather a response to individual tribunal decisions. While capacity details are shared during each tribunal hearing, the cumulative effect of tribunal direction placements over time can lead to changes in overall numbers. The adjustment in pupil numbers is therefore a reflection of the current placement landscape, rather than an initiative to accommodate more pupils. The governing body and Local Authority remain committed to maintaining a high standard of education and care and will continue to monitor the impact of these changes.

The decision

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

- Education standards and diversity of provision
- Equal opportunities issues
- Community cohesion
- Travel and accessibility
- Funding.

Education standards and diversity of provision

Chapel Green School was judged by Ofsted in December 2024 to be:

Quality of education: Good

Behaviour and attitudes: Outstanding

Personal development: Outstanding

Leadership and management: Outstanding

Sixth form provision: Good

Equal opportunities issues

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

Community cohesion

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

Travel and accessibility

As the change in pupil numbers will reflect the school's current position, it is not anticipated that there will be a significant increased impact on peak time traffic at the school.

Funding

The additional 20 places will be accommodated within the existing building. The Local Authority are not proposing any increase to the school's physical accommodation as part of this change. The school will continue to receive funding linked to pupil numbers.

Conclusions 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.

Two responses to the proposal were received during the statutory Public Notice period. One in support, one against.

During the informal consultation, of the 37 people that commented on Chapel Green's proposal;

19 respondents, 51%, strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal.

3 respondents, 38%, strongly disagreed with the proposal.

14 respondents, 8%, neither agreed or disagreed with the proposal

1 respondent, 3%, responded that they do not know.

The demand for school places for students with complex needs in Norfolk continues to rise, therefore the governors of Chapel Green alongside the Local Authority are proposing to make the necessary adjustments to the published pupil number following advice from the Department for Education.

Despite increasing the numbers in 2022, the ongoing demand has highlighted the need for further change. The proposed adjustment to the number of placements at the school will reflect the current position, which has already been reached by placements directed through Tribunal processes.

Although Tribunal decisions are made based on individual cases, the decisions do not take into account local authority schools' capacity, the cumulative effect of these can present

There is strong and widespread concern about the shortage of specialist SEND placements, with responding stakeholders highlighting the emotional and developmental impact on children placed in unsuitable mainstream settings. There is clear support for adjusting the pupil numbers, the governing body and Local Authority remain committed to delivering high-quality education and care and will actively monitor the effects of these changes to ensure standards are upheld.

It is therefore **recommended** that the Director of Children's Services, in her role as Decision Maker as delegated by the Children's Services Committee, should decide in favour of the proposal to increase the number of pupil places to 180 by adding 20 places, from 1 September 2025, for children and young people with complex needs at Chapel Green School, Attleborough Road, Old Buckenham, Norfolk NR17 1RF.

Proposed change to Chapel Green School

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that, the Governing Body of Chapel Green School intends to make a prescribed alteration to the following school, in accordance with section 19 (3) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, by changing the number of pupils in a special school, by increasing the number of places by 20 pupils, served by the school as indicated from 1 September 2025:-

School	January 2025 Number on roll	Present age range of pupils	Proposed age range of pupils	Annual intake		Capacity	
				Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed
Chapel Green (Foundation Special) School Attleborough Road, Old Buckenham, Attleborough NR17 1RF	179	3 - 19	3 - 19	N/A	N/A	160	180

This Notice is an extract from the complete proposal. Copies of the complete proposal can be obtained by emailing office@chapelgreen.norfolk.sch.uk or by writing to the School Office, Chapel Green School, Attleborough Road, Old Buckenham, Attleborough NR17 1RF

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 Norfolk County Council, c/o School Organisation Team, Children's Services, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2DL or by email to: schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk

Signed: Mr Jack Eves, Chair of Governors

Publication Date: 24 June 2025

Explanatory Note

Chapel Green School is a special school which currently offers up to 160 places to pupils with complex needs, all of whom have an Education, Health and Care Plan. The school was judged by Ofsted in December 2024 to be Quality of education: Good, Behaviour and attitudes: Outstanding, Personal development: Outstanding, Leadership and management: Outstanding, Sixth form provision: Good.

Prescribed Information;



Statutory Proposal to change the number of pupils in a special school, by adding 20 places (from 160 to 180) at Chapel Green School, Attleborough Road, Old Buckenham, Attleborough from 1 September 2025

1. Local Authority details

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

2. School details

Name	Chapel Green School
Type	Foundation Special School
Address	Attleborough Road, Old Buckenham, Attleborough, NR17 1RF
Age Range	3-19 years
Net Capacity	DfE Survey May 2024- 168 pupils Numbers on roll 1 January 2025 = 179
Ofsted	The school was judged by Ofsted in December 2024 to be: Quality of education: Good Behaviour and attitudes: Outstanding Personal development: Outstanding Leadership and management: Outstanding Sixth form provision: Good

3. What changes are proposed?

It is proposed to change the number of pupils attending a special school, by adding 20 places at Chapel Green School, from 1 September 2025, moving the number from 160 to 180.

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

The demand for school places for students with complex needs in Norfolk continues to rise, therefore the governors of Chapel Green alongside the Local Authority are proposing to make the necessary adjustments to the published pupil number following advice from the Department for Education. Despite increasing the numbers in 2022, the ongoing demand has highlighted the need for further change.

The proposed adjustment to the number of placements at the school will reflect the current position, which has already been reached by placements directed through Tribunal processes. Although Tribunal decisions are made based on individual cases,

the decisions do not take into account local authority schools' capacity, the cumulative effect of these can present.

We acknowledge that this change does not align with the Department for Education's assessment of the school's Net Capacity (maximum 168, May 2024) and the Local Authority are not proposing any increase to the school's physical accommodation as part of this change.

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

The proposed change recognises the school's existing context and brings the published pupil number in line with the current situation. We are confident that this will not affect the quality of education or the provision that pupils currently receive. This proposal enhances local access to specialist places for children and young people with complex needs in Norfolk, helping to reduce travel time for those living in the surrounding area.

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 the additional places are already filled by pupils attending the school.

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

There is no project investment proposed to expand the school. Long term value for money will be achieved as there is overall greater capacity to meet the needs of children with SEND locally.

8. Will this definitely happen?

No. There is a statutory process we must follow to make this type of change to schools.

9. 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 2025.

10. Related proposals

There is no other proposal linked to this proposal.

11. 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, Floor 8, Bay 34, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2BR. You don't need a stamp.

12. 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	24 June 2025
Statutory consultation (representation stage)	24 June 2025- 22 July 2025
Decision required, no later than	31 August 2025
If approved, change in number of pupils starts	1 September 2025



Consultation Report on a Proposal to Increase the Number of Pupils with Complex Needs at Chapel Green School, Old Buckenham to 180 from 1 September 2025

Introduction

The Governors of Chapel Green School conducted a six-week informal consultation on a proposal to increase the number of pupils with complex needs to 180 by adding 20 places, effective from 1st September 2025. This consultation adhered to the Department for Education (DfE) guidance as outlined in 'Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools, March 2025.

Consultation Distribution

The consultation took place for six weeks during term time, from 24 March to the 25 May 2025. A total of 405 consultation documents (see Appendix 1) were distributed to pupils, staff, governors, and stakeholders.

Consultation Analysis

The detailed analysis is presented in Appendix 2. There were 37 responses, including key stakeholders such as Norfolk County Council. The response rate was 9%.

Strongly agree	16	41.67%
Agree	3	8.33%
Neither agree or disagree	3	8.33%
Disagree	4	11.11%
Strongly disagree	10	27.78%
Don't know	1	2.78%

Feedback from Respondents

Those who agreed with the proposal mentioned:

- Places for SEND children are needed in Norfolk

- High demand for places
- Children struggling in mainstream education whose needs are not being met
- Distance to travel to a placement

Those who did not agree with the proposal had concerns about:

- increasing class sizes and lack of space both indoor and outdoor
- School is too small for expansion leading to a possible decrease in quality of care
- Concerns about staffing levels
- Pressure on school resources

Key Stakeholders' Responses

Norfolk County Council supported the proposal saying that Increasing the number of places supports the placement of children in an appropriate setting, responding to increased demand and tribunal decisions.

A local headteacher who strongly agreed said they are very aware of the pressure on school places for children with complex SEND. Local families are keen to have local provision for their children, as are those of us working in schools.

A local community group who strongly agreed said there are so many children struggling in mainstream education that would benefit greatly from accessing high quality specialist provision.

A local SENCO who strongly agreed said we have a few pupils waiting for spaces at Chapel Green.

Conclusion

The consultation was conducted in accordance with DfE guidance. The outcome indicates that there is overall strong support for the proposal set out in the consultation document.

The Governors are requested to review the responses to the consultation and decide whether to proceed to the statutory public notice stage to increase the number of places at Chapel Green School.

Appendix 1



Consultation on the proposal to increase the number of pupil places to 180 for children and young people with complex needs at Chapel Green School, Attleborough Road, Old Buckenham, NR17 1RF

We the Governors would like to hear your thoughts on our new plans at Chapel Green School, Attleborough Road, Old Buckenham, NR17 1RF.

We are proposing;

- To increase the number of pupils with complex needs, to 180 from 1 September 2025.
- As the demand for school places for students with complex needs in Norfolk continues to rise, we are currently consulting on the necessary adjustments to our school. Despite increasing our numbers to 160 in 2022, the ongoing demand has highlighted the need for further change, we currently support 179 pupils. To better reflect our growth and meet the needs of our community, we are considering changing the number of pupils we can accommodate.

We are running a consultation on our proposals from Monday 24th March to Friday 23rd May 2025.

Why we want to add more pupil places

By expanding the number of places available at Chapel Green School, we can formally provide more children and young people with the opportunity to learn in an environment tailored to their needs. This will benefit those who currently face long travel times to access appropriate educational resources.

How do I have my say in this consultation?

We value the input of our community and stakeholders in this process, your feedback is crucial.

This consultation is an opportunity to express your views and ask questions on our proposal to

increase the pupil numbers. You can do this by;
completing the online questionnaire via this link:

<https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/chapelgreenincrease>

or

completing the attached questionnaire and returning it to Chapel Green School, for the attention of the Headteacher's Personal Assistant, either by post or email to jcox@chapelgreenschool.org.uk

What happens after this consultation?

The Governors will consider all the responses to this proposal and decide whether to continue to the statutory stage, where we issue a public notice. The final decision is made by the Local Authority Decision-Maker, Sara Tough, Director of Children Services, Norfolk County Council.

The closing date for all responses is 12 noon on Friday 23rd May 2025

Appendix 2

Summary analysis of responses									
Total number of responses = 37									
Method of response									
Online			Letter				Email		
36			1				0		
Respondent									
Pupil	Parent/ Guardian	Member PTA	Staff	Governor	Local resident	Local business	Local sports group	Local community group	Not answered
	25	1	4		4	2		1	3
Response Analysis – How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to increase the number of pupil places by adding 20 places for learners with complex needs increasing from 160 to 180 places, at Chapel Green School *please note respondents could tick all categories that apply									
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know		
Total		16	3	3	4	10	1		
Pupil									
Parent/Guardian		7	3	1	3	10			
Member of the PTA						1			
Member of Staff		4			1	1			
Governor									
Local resident				2					
Local business		1							
Local sports group									
Local community group		1							
Not answered		3							
Summary of views supporting the proposals – 19 respondents									
<p>High Demand for SEND Placements: Many parents, teachers, and SEND professionals express frustration over the difficulty in securing spaces at specialist schools, with some children forced into mainstream settings that cannot fully support their needs.</p> <p>Impact on Families: Parents share deeply personal experiences of struggling to find suitable placements, emphasising the emotional toll and challenges their children face when mainstream schools cannot meet their complex needs.</p> <p>Importance of Local Provision: Many responses stress the need for more local SEND school spaces, highlighting how long travel distances can further complicate education accessibility.</p> <p>Staffing and Resources: While there is strong advocacy for expanding places, there is also concern that any increase must be matched with appropriate funding, staffing, and support to ensure the quality of education and care remains high.</p> <p>Nursery and Early Years Support: Early years professionals note that young children who would benefit from specialist provision are being placed in mainstream settings instead, which may not be suitable for their development.</p> <p>Hope for Expansion: Many believe that Chapel Green is an excellent school that could accommodate more pupils if resources allow, offering life-changing opportunities for children who desperately need tailored support.</p>									
Additional Comments									

Classroom Overcrowding & Expansion: There is concern about rising pupil numbers leading to overcrowding. To maintain educational quality, expansion is essential rather than repurposing existing spaces.

Staffing Challenges: High staff turnover is a major worry. Increasing pupil numbers necessitates recruiting and retaining staff, as frequent staff changes negatively affect students.

Infrastructure & Logistics: The building must accommodate the students, and proper staff levels must be ensured. Transport impacts, such as additional children using taxis, need consideration.

Chapel Green School Growth: Some believe the school should offer more than 180 places, praising its efforts but noting concerns like parking issues.

Increase in Diagnosed Needs: There appears to be a rise in children requiring specialist provision, yet many are unable to access such placements due to lack of space.

Importance of Special Education: Children thrive in specialist schools where their achievements are recognised rather than misinterpreted as behavioural problems. Expansion would help meet the needs of those who cannot be accommodated in mainstream schools.

Location Considerations: Families with special needs children require schools close to home to avoid disruptions for other family members.

SEND Provision in Norfolk: A known shortage of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) spaces exists. Concerns arise about class sizes becoming too large, which could stretch staff and reduce student support.

Summary of views against the proposals – 14 respondents

Overcrowding & Loss of Facilities: The school was designed for fewer pupils, leading to essential spaces like music, drama, and sensory rooms being repurposed as classrooms. This impacts therapy, creative opportunities, and social development.

Staffing Challenges: High staff turnover and difficulty retaining experienced staff create instability, affecting students' learning and emotional regulation. Expanding pupil numbers without addressing staffing issues could be detrimental.

Quality of Education & Resources: Larger class sizes reduce personalised support, stretching resources and limiting access to specialised facilities like the sensory room and physio areas. Outdoor and lunch spaces are also strained.

Catchment & Alternative Solutions: Given the rising demand for special education, families suggest considering a new SEN school rather than continuously expanding existing ones beyond their intended capacity.

Impact on Pupils: The rapid intake has negatively affected current students, with some struggling due to increased class sizes, limited access to educational resources, and difficulties in daily routines.

Funding & Government Support: Many believe government intervention and additional funding are necessary to ensure sustainable growth without compromising educational standards or student welfare.

Additional comments - none

Other comments or suggestions made to help with this decision or planning for future provision of the children

Staffing & Retention: Recruiting and retaining experienced staff is a major challenge, with high turnover affecting student well-being and progress.

Overcrowding & Facilities: The school is exceeding its intended capacity, leading to essential spaces being repurposed for classrooms. This impacts specialised education and therapy access.

Quality of Education: Larger class sizes reduce individual attention, and some students struggle with anxiety due to increased numbers.

Demand for SEND Schools: Norfolk has rising numbers of children needing special education, prompting calls for a new SEND school rather than continuous expansion of existing ones.

Funding & Resources: Additional government funding is essential to build new classrooms, maintain staff ratios, and improve facilities.

Transport & Infrastructure: Increased pupil numbers contribute to traffic congestion, and better traffic management is needed.

Alternative Solutions: Some suggest training mainstream school staff to better support SEND students rather than expanding specialist schools.