

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.

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									
<p>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.</p>									

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.