



Statutory Proposal to change of category from Voluntary Controlled (VC) to Voluntary Aided (VA) from 1 September 2026

1. School details

Name	Great Massingham CofE Primary School and Harpley CofE Primary School
Type	Voluntary controlled
Address	Great Massingham CofE Primary School Weasenham Road, Great Massingham, King's Lynn, PE32 2EY Harpley CofE Primary School, School Lane, PE31 6DY
Age Range	4-11 Years
Capacity	Great Massingham 65 NOR 54 Harpley 89 NOR 49
Ofsted	Great Massingham: Good September 2024 Harpley: Expected/needs attention January 2026

2. Local Authority details

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

3. What changes are proposed?

It is proposed to change the category of the schools, from Voluntary Controlled to Voluntary Aided.

4. Why do we want to do this?

The change of category to Voluntary Aided will enable us to build on some of the best aspects of our schools and help us secure a strong and positive future for our schools, within the ever changing national and local contexts. In particular it will;

- Give us greater control and flexibility over our finances
- Strengthen our Christian school ethos as we will have more control over recruitment
- Enable us to focus our resources on the specific needs and aspirations of our community
- Be able to access funding only available to Voluntary Aided schools to support building and maintenance
- Remain as state schools, funded by the Local Authority, but the governing body will own the land and buildings
- Enable us to have the flexibility to control the admissions policy to meet local needs, when needed.

An initial consultation was held between 23rd February 2026 and 17th April 2026. During that period, two public meetings were held at the school on 6th March 2026 and 20th March 2026. 0 parents/carers attended, 2 community stakeholders and one staff member attended. The consultation document is attached at Appendix A.

Approximately 100 consultation documents were distributed (to all pupils' families and all other stakeholders prescribed by the Diocese and LA) 12 responses were received. Of these 7

strongly agreed, 3 agreed, 1 neither agreed or disagreed, 1 strongly disagreed The analysis of the responses received during the consultation is available at Appendix B.

5. When will the changes happen?

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 change in category will be implemented on 1st September 2026.

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 new places are not being created.

7. Will the proposed change result in additional traffic near the schools

There will not be any additional impact on traffic at the school, as this proposal does not increase new places.

8. Will there be any project costs and how will long term value for money be achieved?

There are no project costs associated with this proposal.

If the proposal is agreed, we anticipate making savings as we would no longer need to pay the Government Apprenticeship Levy, saving the schools an estimated £1500 per year to re-direct towards the education of our children. Governors understand that if the proposal is agreed, they are responsible for funding 10% of any new build or major refurbishment works. The remaining 90% would be grant aided by the Diocese Board of Education with funds from the Department for Education.

9. Will this definitely happen?

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

10. Related proposals

There are no related proposals.

11. Implementation plan

If the proposal is agreed, the schools governing body will start to prepare for the changes to the Schools and governing body from 1st September 2026. The new governing body will provide the majority of places to church (foundation) governors who would become the employer of all the staff. These do not necessarily have to be Christian ministers nor Church of England Christians.

12. How can I make my views known?

Any person may object to, express support for, or make comments on the proposals by:

- Sending an email to; office@greatmassingham.norfolk.sch.uk
- Write to: The Chair of Governors, Great Massingham CE Primary School, Weasenham Road, Great Massingham, PE32 2EY
- Hand it in to the School Office

13. 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	1.6.26
Statutory consultation (representation stage)	1.6.26 to 26.6.26
Decision required, no later than	26.8.26
If approved, change commences from	1.9.26

Appendix A – consultation proposal to change category



Great Massingham & Harpley
CE Primary Schools Federation
Living, Learning & Flourishing



Great Massingham CE VC Primary School and Harpley CE VC Primary School (forming the Great Massingham & Harpley CE Schools Federation)

Proposal to change of category from Voluntary Controlled (VC) to Voluntary Aided (VA) from September 2026

Introduction

During the past months, Governors at Great Massingham & Harpley CE Schools Federation have been looking at how best to secure a strong and positive future for our schools, within the ever changing national and local contexts.

We are proposing to change the category of Great Massingham CE VC Primary School & Harpley CE VC Primary School from what is known as 'Voluntary Controlled' to 'Voluntary Aided'. This will have a number of impacts which we explain in this proposal.

Our schools already have strong links with the local church. A change to the Voluntary Aided category is a natural way of strengthening those links within the local church community.

What changes when a school moves to the Voluntary Aided category?

Staffing

The governing board would become the employer of all the staff in both schools. The terms, conditions and continuity of the current staff of the schools would be unaffected. In the future the governing board will be able to use provisions of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to ensure that new teaching staff will be as committed to the support of the ethos of a Church school as those currently employed at the schools.

If the governing board became the employer (rather than Norfolk County Council) we would not need to pay the Government Apprenticeship Levy. This would save the schools an estimated £1500 per year per school that we can redirect towards the education of our children.

Governing boards

Subject to consultation and agreement we would need to have a new governing board from September 2026 which will provide the majority of places to church (foundation) governors. We would expect the board to include similar people to now; a range of local people with an interest in the school; some with direct connections to the Church of England or other Christian denominations, some parents or carers, some local community members or experts in useful areas.

Admissions

At present Norfolk Children's Services is responsible for admissions at the schools. If the change of status proposal was agreed the governing board will be responsible for admissions and these would still be co-ordinated by the local authority. The admissions policy would be approved by the

Diocese of Norwich and the local authority. It is likely that we would adopt the NCC admissions policy, but it will allow us to adapt it, if it is felt to be beneficial to the schools.

The National Curriculum

All the requirements of the National Curriculum still apply in a Voluntary Aided School. There will be no changes in the general curriculum of the schools and we shall continue to work to the same high standards that we have now.

Collective worship

The collective worship of the schools already reflects the wide range of Anglican resources available for school worship; there will be no changes in content.

Inclusion

Great Massingham CE VC & Harpley CE VC Primary Schools serve all children in the local community, irrespective of faith or background. The strong Christian ethos of the schools will continue as will the core value of inclusivity.

Religious Education

Currently the schools use the Local Authority agreed Religious Education syllabus. Following the change to the voluntary aided category the schools are responsible for setting their own syllabus. However, there would be no change as the schools would continue to follow the Local Authority agreed syllabus.

Ethos

A change to the Voluntary Aided category will help to further secure the Christian ethos of the schools in the future.

Capital Expenditure - New Build and Refurbishments

Any new build or major refurbishment works for a Voluntary Aided School are 90% grant aided by the Diocesan Board of Education with funds from the Department for Education and is the responsibility of the governing body. The 10% must be found by other means by the governing body.

What this could mean in practice, is that if we had a capital project that was acceptable to the Diocese that was going to cost the schools say £20,000, we could apply for funding from the Diocese for £18,000, leaving the schools to find the other £2,000 through fund raising or something similar. This compares to the current position where the school is allocated a capital spend budget of about £5,000 per year.

How can you have your say?

This consultation will run from Monday 23rd February 2026 to Friday 17th April 2026. We will be holding 2 consultation events, where our proposal will be explained in more detail and you will have the opportunity to ask questions.

Dates: Friday 6th March 2026 3.30-4.30pm at Great Massingham CE Primary School and Friday 20th March 2026 6-6.30pm at Harpley CE Primary School.

You can tell us your views by completing the questionnaire:

1. Complete the online survey - <https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/greatmassingham-harpley>
2. Hand it into your school office

3. Posting it to: The Chair of Governors, Great Massingham CE Primary School, Weasenham Road, Great Massingham, PE32 2EY

What happens next?

After the closing date, the governors will look at all the responses gathered during the consultation period and decide whether to proceed to the next stage in the process – statutory public notice. The statutory period runs for 4 weeks. This is expected to occur between Monday 27 April 2026 and run until Friday 22 May 2026.

The decision-maker for this proposal from the governors, is the Executive Director of Children's Services, Norfolk County Council.



Appendix B - analysis of responses received during the consultation.

Of the written responses to the consultation, an overwhelming majority (83.33%) were in favour of the change, either saying they strongly agreed, or agreed to the change. In most cases they elaborated by saying they felt that the access to enhanced funding, increased autonomy and closer church links were important for the future of the school. A small number of these respondents mentioned that they also supported a closer link to the Church of England. 8.3% of the written responses (1 person) could neither agree nor disagree as they felt the issue to be in balance (local authority). 8.3% of the written responses (1 person) strongly disagreed due to concerns regarding what this means for admissions and the future stability of the school and concerns regarding how this changes to the religious character and if this meant the schools would become academies.

These themes were reflected in the public consultations held where questions were raised about similar areas:

- Governors might seek to alter the make-up of the staff to exclude non-Christians?
- Practical considerations such as possible changes to uniform, logo, school name, curriculum, policies, holiday dates etc.
- A general misapprehension that VA schools are closer or even the same as academies/free schools rather than LA community or VC schools.
- A concern around potential school vulnerabilities regarding future sustainability. A concern around staff contracts, would staff have the sem employment rights?

Although these concerns are understandable and were addressed at the time, they will need clarification for all stakeholders at the next stage. One response (which was 'strongly disagree') raised issues about the school becoming an academy, this was a frequently asked unofficial question amongst the staff. This was addressed at the time but will need to be revisited. Responses compiled and analysed by Hilary Myhill, Executive Headteacher, 21st April 2026. Originals of all responses, including one received hardcopy and 11 online passed on by the LA, are kept on file and available for inspection if necessary