



Consultation on a proposal to close Marsham (Foundation) Primary School, Marsham, Norfolk

What is the proposal?

The Governors of Hevingham and Marsham Federation are proposing to close Marsham (Foundation) Primary School with effect from 31st August 2024.

Marsham Primary school is a primary school taking pupils from the age of 4 years to 11 years and is designated as a rural school (rural village) by the Department for Education, 2022.

Why are Governors proposing closure?

The governors are reluctantly consulting on closure of this school as;

- The school is no longer considered viable.

Unfortunately the number of pupils has consistently fallen over the past few years and the school currently has 13 pupils. The capacity of the school is 51 pupils. Therefore it is difficult to deliver and sustain quality education for children now and in the future.

Low pupil numbers

The school has been a small rural school for many years. It has the capacity to have 51 pupils in the school. However over the past 12 years, the school has always operated significantly below this capacity. The table below shows the numbers of pupils attending the school during this period.

Numbers on Roll

Year	Yr R	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6	Total
2011/12	2	3	3	3	8	2	6	27
2012/13	5	2	4	5	3	9	2	31
2013/14	2	7	3	5	8	3	8	36
2014/15	2	4	8	3	7	3	5	32
2015/16	3	3	4	6	5	6	3	30
2016/17	4	2	7	3	6	6	7	35
2017/18	5	4	2	5	3	6	7	32
2018/19	3	7	5	6	6	4	8	39
2019/20	2	6	6	6	6	8	4	38
2020/21	5	2	6	5	6	6	7	37
2021/22	6	4	2	5	5	6	6	34
2022/23	1	4	4	3	4	4	7	27

Please note that there has been a period of growth within Aylsham where some children could not be accommodated within the town schools, so were given places in the surrounding schools. These instances would have all helped support Marsham during this time period.

The numbers of children living within the Marsham school catchment area shows a steady decline over time and the expected catchment numbers of 5, 7, 2 over consecutive years which fits within their current PAN (Published Admission Number). Unfortunately parental preference patterns over

the last 3 years are drawing children out of the area into the Aylsham schools, the partner school at Hevingham or to a mix of other local schools. The number of parents from within the Marsham catchment selecting their own school has reduced from 4 down to 1 in the recent two years. It is anticipated that this pattern will continue and very few pupils will remain using the school in this village.

No sustainable budget

Pupil numbers determine the school budget. All schools receive a lump sum as part of their annual funding budget from the Department for Education, which is added to, with funding based on the number of pupils on roll. The predicted pupil numbers for the next few years are very low, making the school financially un-sustainable.

If this proposal goes ahead where will school places be available for children who currently attend Marsham Primary School?

There are sufficient places for pupils currently at Marsham Primary School, to attend primary phase schools in the local area.

Norfolk County Council's admission arrangements allow parents to state up to 3 preferences and parents are encouraged to include their catchment school as one of these preferences as most schools prioritise catchment children. As required by law, there can be no guarantee that a place will be offered at the catchment school. However there are sufficient places in neighbouring schools to accommodate children from Marsham, if the proposal was agreed.

For children with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan or Statement of Special Educational Needs, Norfolk County Council will undertake a review to determine the appropriate new placement in conjunction with the family. Every child with an EHC Plan has an allocated EHC Plan Co-ordinator who is responsible for this.

School transport will be provided free of charge by Norfolk County Council for those pupils who transfer to their nearest or nearest catchment school, where this is beyond the qualifying distance (over 2 miles for under 8s and older children from families on low income, and over 3 miles for other older children), as set out in our School Transport Policy.

What alternative options to closure have been considered?

A number of alternative options were considered before agreeing to consult on the proposed closure of Marsham Primary School. These included;

- **Federation.** Marsham Primary School is already in the Hevingham and Marsham Primary School Partnership (Federation). Although federations are recognised as a way of enabling smaller schools to work more formally in partnership to share costs, expertise and training, this has not addressed the low pupil numbers at Marsham Primary School.
- **Amalgamation.** Consideration was given to amalgamating Marsham Primary School with Hevingham Primary School, within the Federation. This option was discounted because there is a significant financial implication; when schools amalgamate, one school must close and therefore its budget is no longer available.
- **Academisation.** In undertaking their due diligence, academy trusts, both local and national, find some small schools to be financially unviable or too isolated to be included in their trust, unless they convert with other small schools as a local hub.
- **No change.** As outlined in this consultation document, Marsham Primary School has had low pupil numbers for 12 years and pupil numbers fall significantly short of the published admission number of 5 pupils each year. There is very little in-area demand for places at the school.

Proposal to change the catchment area

Our proposal is linked to a proposal by Norfolk County Council, who are consulting on the proposal to change the catchment area of Marsham Primary School from 1 September 2024. If the proposal to close Marsham Primary School proceeds, this means that current catchment area for Marsham will need to change. Details of this consultation can be found on <https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/marshamcatchment>

Who will be consulted?

Under section 16 (3) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the Governors as the proposer of the closure of a rural primary school must consult;

- Parents of pupils at Marsham Primary (Foundation) School
- Norfolk County Council
- The local district and parish council, where the school is situated.

In addition, this document will be provided to people and organisations that may have an interest in this proposal including;

- Governing Body of Hevingham and Marsham Primary School Partnership (Federation)
- All staff at Marsham Primary School & Hevingham Primary School
- Pupils at Marsham Primary School
- Parents of pupils at Hevingham Primary School
- The governing bodies and staff of any other school in the Aylsham Cluster
- Parents of any pupils at other schools who may be affected by the proposal
- Trade unions who represent staff at Marsham Primary School
- MP
- Early Years providers.

Who will make the final decision and when could the change happen?

After this consultation ends on 15th December 2023, the governors will review the results of the consultation and decide whether to proceed with the proposal. Norfolk County Council will also consider the responses to the change of catchment proposal.

If we decide to go ahead, by law we have to publish a statutory notice to close Marsham Primary School. People would then have 4 weeks to write to Norfolk County Council either supporting or opposing the proposal. The final decision is made by the Executive Director of Children's Services, Norfolk County Council as the Local Authority Decision-Maker.

If at the end of the consultation process, the proposal does not go forward, then the school would remain as it is.

How can I learn more about this proposal and have my say?

Come and talk to us - There will be a meeting for parents/carers and other interested members of the community:

- 2.15 – 3.15pm, Thursday 9th 2023 at Marsham Primary School.
(This will also include the consultation event for Norfolk County Council's catchment consultation)

Tell us your views by;

- Completing the online survey on <https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/marsham>
- Completing the attached form and handing it into the Marsham Primary School Office

We need all responses by 12 noon, 15th December 2023.



Consultation on a proposal to close Marsham Primary School

Let us know what you think of our proposal.

How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to close Marsham Primary School, from 31st August 2024? Please tick one box.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither agree or disagree

Disagree Strongly Disagree Don't know

Please give your main reasons for your answer.

Are there any other comments or suggestions you would like to make to help us with this decision and in planning for the future provision of the children? Please write in the box below.

We would like to hear from many different people as your views help us to decide whether or not we make these changes.

We will process your personal data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations, which means that we will not give your personal data to any third parties.

Your comments will be anonymous - your name or anything that could identify you will not be included in any report. However, we cannot guarantee that this information will be withheld if it is requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

Please tell us who you are:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pupil | <input type="checkbox"/> School governor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent / Guardian | <input type="checkbox"/> Local resident |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Member of the Parent Teacher Association | <input type="checkbox"/> Local business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Member of staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Local sports group |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Local community group |

Other (please specify): _____

Which school are you linked to? _____

What is your postcode? _____

The earliest this change could take place would be 31st August 2024.

You can tell us your views by returning your completed form;

- By completing the online survey on <https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/marsham>
- By completing the attached form and handing it into Marsham school office

This consultation ends on 15th December 2023