

Determination Report from the Executive Director of Children's Services, as the Local Authority Decision-Maker.

I have considered the Proposal:

- **To close Sedgeford Primary (Community) School, on 31 August 2020**
- **To change the catchment of Sedgeford from 31 August 2020**

Background on School organisation process for a school closure

The DfE guidance on 'Opening and Closing maintained schools', November 2019 sets out the school organisation process.

- Pre-publication consultation; statutory consultation, recommended to last a minimum of 6 weeks.
- Publication; of the statutory Public Notice and proposal,
- Representation period; it must be a 4 week formal statutory consultation.
- Decision; made by the Local Authority Decision-Maker and should be made within 2 months of the closing date of the Public Notice.
- Implementation stage; there is no prescribed timescale, but the implementation date must be specified in the published notice.

The requirements of the decision maker

In coming to a decision on school organisation proposals, I am required to address the following factors where the closure proposal affects a rural school, as there is a presumption against closure. Sedgeford Primary school is designated as a rural school (rural village) by the Department for Education, 2019.

1. Likely effect of the closure of the school on the local community
2. Proportion of pupils attending the school from within the local community i.e. is the school being used by the local community
3. Educational standards at the school and the likely effect on standards at neighbouring schools
4. The availability and likely cost to the Local Authority of transport to other schools
5. Whether the school is now surplus to requirements
6. Any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the closure of the school and the likely effects of any increase
7. Any alternatives to the closure of the school.

Background to this proposal

Sedgeford Primary (Community) School is a small rural school, with a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 9. It had 13 pupils on roll (May 2020) with a capacity of 63 pupils. In May 2015, the school federated with Brancaster CofE VA Primary School and Docking CofE Primary School and the three schools share a headteacher. Sedgeford Primary School was judged Requires Improvement by Ofsted in June 2019. Brancaster Primary School was judged Good in March 2018 and Docking Primary School was judged Good by Ofsted in October 2016.

The decision to consult on the closure of Sedgeford Primary School was taken by the officers of Norfolk Council County on 5 March 2020, following a request from the Chair of the Interim Executive Board on 18 February 2020, to consult on the closure of the school due to the low numbers of pupils at the school. These low numbers make it difficult to deliver and sustain quality education for children now and in the future.

The proposal is to close Sedgeford Primary School on 31 August 2020. This is a Community school. It does not have any provision reserved for children with special education needs. It is also proposed to extend the catchment area of Sedgeford, to accommodate the change. A consultation proposal was published on 16 March 2020, for eight weeks (including the Easter holidays) and sent to parents of pupils at Sedgeford Primary School, parents of pupils at schools within St Mary's Federation, parents of pupils at Heacham and Hunstanton schools, staff and governors at these schools as well as key stakeholders. The prescribed information (Appendix A) includes a copy of the consultation proposal and the consultation report.

Following the pre-publication consultation and reviewing the responses received, I agreed, as Executive Director of Children's Services, to proceed to the statutory Public Notice to close Sedgeford Primary School and extend the catchment area of Sedgeford. The Public Notice was published on 3 June 2020 and copies of the notice were displayed at the school gates, on the Norfolk County Council website and published in the Eastern Daily Press, in line with regulations. The four week representation period ended on Wednesday 1 July 2020. I can confirm that all statutory requirements in relation to the statutory consultation, publication and decision-making have been complied with.

Representations:

Two responses were received during the public notice period. One was concerned about the impact of a decision to close the school resulting in a school site staying empty for many years. The example given was Dersingham School, where despite a planning application for 9 dwellings nothing has happened. The request is to keep schools open until another use can be found for them. The respondent could see the 'good reason' for Sedgeford to be closed. Sedgeford Parish Council sent a representation asking for the county council to reconsider or postpone its decision to close the school. Due to Covid19, they felt school could be seen to be a useful resource to assist with education either during term time or over the summer for 'catch up sessions'. Also due to additional housing in the area, there could be further need for the school in the future.

I have considered these representations, received during the statutory Public Notice period. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to keep schools open until another use can be found, often due to the financial implications and low numbers of pupils involved.

No new evidence has been received to discontinue with this proposal.

This Determination Report, is to be read in conjunction with the prescribed information and the report prepared for me, as Executive Director of Children's Services, requesting permission to proceed to Public Notice. (Appendix A and Appendix 1)

1. Likely effect of the closure of the school on the local community

It is clear from the consultation that Sedgeford Primary school is a much-loved school in the local community. We know that there will also be sadness when we propose the closure of a school, but our priority is to make a decision that is best for the children's education now and in the future.

There are currently 13 pupils registered at the school and pupil forecasts show that there are insufficient children in the catchment area, now or likely to be in the future, which leaves the future of this school unsustainable.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is available on this [link](#).

The school has a late Victorian main school building which is attached to a private residential dwelling. It has 2 classrooms, a hall, small practical area, couple of offices, storage space and a post war timber dining hall and kitchen. There is a mobile unit for the pre-school.

The school is not used by any community groups. The potential impact of the loss of the school as a community venue is judged to be minimal. However, the Sedgeford Neighbourhood Development Plan, February 2019 identified the school as part of the vital and well used facilities for the community and recognises the impact of its loss on the village. It states 'without some new development to accommodate younger families, the increasingly elderly age structure of the village may threaten the viability of some of these facilities, particularly the school'.

2. Proportion of pupils attending the school from within the local community i.e. is the school being used by the local community

There are currently 13 pupils registered at Sedgeford Primary School, of which only 5 pupils live in the Sedgeford catchment area. The remaining 8 pupils come from outside of the catchment area.

The school is currently only attracting 11% of pupils from the catchment area. The level of local demand satisfied by this school is extremely low. The remaining 89% of pupils are attending schools out of catchment, of which 36% of pupils are registered at Heacham and Hunstanton schools.

The school has the capacity for 63 pupils. In the last 10 years, the highest number of pupils on roll was in September 2010, with 49 pupils. The school has been operating under its full capacity for several years.

The King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council Local Plan, 2016 has allocated just 10 new homes in Sedgeford. There have been some new homes built in surrounding villages e.g. Docking, Snettisham, but these are low numbers. There is also housing allocated for Heacham and Hunstanton. However, the Local Growth and Investment Plan 2020, does not indicate an impact of new homes on school places for Sedgeford and there are currently sufficient good quality places in the local area.

3. Educational standards at the school and the likely effect on standards at neighbouring schools

Sedgeford Primary School was judged Requires Improvement by Ofsted in June 2019 in the following areas;

- Effectiveness of leadership and management
- Quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- Outcomes for pupils
- Early years provision.

Due to the low numbers of pupils at the school, the curriculum has been delivered via mixed age groups. There have been some opportunities to share activities with children at the federated schools in Brancaster and Docking. The steady low numbers over the past years make it challenging to ensure that pupils receive teaching which is well matched to their age and abilities, have the necessary breadth of social experiences, sufficient peer interaction and the opportunity for children to work in groups.

However, I do not believe that the proposed closure of Sedgeford Primary School would have any detrimental effect on standards at neighbouring schools. All are judged 'Good' by Ofsted. They would therefore be able to adjust to additional pupils and provide them with a good education.

4. The availability and likely cost to the Local Authority of transport to other schools

Norfolk County Council's policy is to provide school transport free of charge for those pupils who attend their catchment school or nearest available school, where this is beyond the qualifying distance (over 2 miles for under 8s and over 3 miles for older children), as set out in our School Transport Policy.

The proposed change to the catchment area takes into the account spaces available, travel route and distance to the proposed schools. The schools identified in the proposed catchment areas; Heacham Infants, Heacham Juniors, Hunstanton Primary are the closest schools that have space for children now and in the future, from Sedgeford. A catchment area, although does not guarantee a place, provides priority for admission to a particular school. In this particular situation, the other schools within the Federation either do not have space to accommodate the pupils currently at Sedgeford or the travel distance is much further. However, Norfolk County Council's admission arrangements invite parents to state up to 3 preferences of schools and parents are encouraged to include their catchment school as one of these preferences.

If the school closed, it is difficult to know the transport cost implications as they are based on where families live and parent preference of schools. Distances from Sedgeford Primary to nearby schools;

- Docking 3.5 miles
- Heacham Infants 2.5 miles
- Heacham Juniors 3.2 miles
- Hunstanton 4.4 miles

Snettisham 2.6 miles

However, as a guide, to transport pupils from Sedgeford/Ringstead to the nearest or catchment school would cost per annum approximately £20k per school transported to.

5. Whether the school is now surplus to requirements

The evidence set out in earlier sections demonstrates that this school is sadly now surplus to requirements given that;

- There are low numbers of pupils registered at the school
- There are insufficient children in the Sedgeford catchment area, now or likely to be in the future, which leaves the future of this school unsustainable

If it is decided to close the school, Norfolk County Council has set out its policy for the re-use of its school estate. In the first instance, the council would establish whether there is any educational need which can be met through use or adaptation of the premises. If this is not possible, the next stage is to consider non-education use initially at Departmental level and following that across the County Council before approaching the wider public sector e.g. NHS, Police, for potential use.

6. Any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the closure of the school and the likely effects of any increase

This will be minimal, as there are very few children at Sedgeford Primary School and several travel from out of the catchment area. Therefore it is unlikely that there will be a significant increase in use of motor vehicles to take children to a school. There are several primary phase schools within 5 miles of Sedgeford.

7. Any alternatives to the closure of the school.

The Federated Governing Board and more recently the Interim Executive Board, have considered alternative options including academisation. However as a very small school, they are unlikely to meet the due diligence requirements of any Multi-Academy Trust, as the finances are unsustainable in the short, medium and long term.

My conclusion and recommendation

I have considered the demand and need for this school. It is clear that although this was once a much-loved and well attended school, it has had low numbers of pupils registered at the school for many years. 89% of the pupils living in the school catchment area, are attending other schools in the local area. The impact of the low numbers of pupils make it challenging for the school staff to ensure that pupils achieve their potential.

I am satisfied that the admission arrangements in place are sufficient and follow Norfolk County Council and DfE policy. These arrangements will support parents to find an alternative place in a local school.

I am satisfied that our analysis of the growth, through our Local Growth and Investment Plan shows there are currently sufficient places in the local area for the children of Sedgeford Parish. The quality of these places has been judged Good by Ofsted in the past four years.

There will be an impact on travel and transport for the 13 pupils currently at Sedgeford. However I judge this to be minimal, due to the low numbers involved and Norfolk County Council's school transport policy will ensure sustainable travel and transport to school, in line with this policy.

The impact of a decision to close Sedgeford Primary School on the local community cannot be underestimated and such decisions are only made if they are in the best interests of the children, now and in the future. It is a much-loved school in the local community and many community members will be affected by this proposed change, particularly the children currently in the school.

Taking the above factors into consideration, my recommendation is;

- **That the proposal to close Sedgeford Primary School and to extend the catchment of Sedgeford from 31 August 2020, should proceed.**

Once the decision is made, Norfolk County Council will put in place support for the implementation of the proposal, from September 2020, to manage the closure of the school building.

Norfolk County Council will work pro-actively with all stakeholders to mitigate the impact and support staff, pupils and parents as best we can. Our priority is to make a decision that is best for the children's education both now and in the future.

Sedgeford Primary School (Community)

Statutory Proposal to close the school

1. Local Authority details

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

2. School contact details

Sedgeford Primary School
Ringstead Road
Sedgeford
Norfolk
PE36 5NQ

3. Implementation

The proposal is to close Sedgeford Primary School on 31 August 2020. This is a Community school. It does not have any provision reserved for children with special education needs. It is also proposed to change the catchment area of Sedgeford to accommodate the change.

The decision to consult on school closure was taken by the officers of the Council County on 5 March 2020, following a request from the Chair of the Interim Executive Board on 18 February 2020. A consultation proposal was published on 16 March 2020, for eight weeks (including the Easter holidays) and sent to parents of pupils at Sedgeford, Brancaster and Docking schools, staff and governors at the schools as well as key stakeholders. A copy of the consultation report is attached at Appendix 1 and includes the consultation proposal in Appendix 2.

4. Reason for closure

The proposal to close Sedgeford Primary School is based on;

- There are low numbers of pupils at the school.

Therefore it is difficult to deliver and sustain quality education for children now and in the future.

5. Pupil numbers and admissions

The school's age range is 4 – 11 years and provision is available for boys and girls. Total pupil numbers have been significantly lower than the capacity of the school, which is designed to accommodate up to 63 pupils. In the past 10 years, the highest number of pupils on roll was 49 pupils (Sept 2010) and during this period the school has been operating under its full capacity. There are currently 13 children in the school, as at 1 May 2020. See table overleaf for breakdown of pupil per year group. None of the children are known to have an Education, Health and Social Care Plan. There are no pupils with recognised Special Educational Needs. 12 children are compulsory school age.

Year	No of children
Reception	1
Year 1	3
Year 2	1
Year 3	3
Year 4	3
Year 5	1
Year 6	1
Total	13

The pupil census from January 2020, shows that of the 44 children living in the Sedgeford catchment area, only 5 go to Sedgeford Primary.

School Attending	Sedgeford catchment
Docking CE Primary School & Nursery	5
Brancaster CE VA Primary School	2
Heacham Junior School	7
Hunstanton Primary School	9
Ingoldisthorpe CE VA Primary School	6
Heacham Infant & Nursery School	3
Sedgeford Primary School	5
Dersingham VA Primary & Nursery School	3
Churchill Park Academy	2
Other school e.g. private, special	2
Catchment Total	44

Forecasts for future children, show a continued trend of low numbers within the Sedgeford catchment area, of 3 – 5 children per year. There are no children going into Reception for September 2020.

If it is agreed to close Sedgeford Primary School then Norfolk County Council would work with individual families of children attending Sedgeford Primary School to look to accommodate their preferences for alternative schools where possible.

6. Displaced pupils

There will be 13 displaced pupils. Sedgeford Primary School is in St Mary's Federation with Brancaster CofE VA Primary School and Docking CofE Primary School. Docking Primary School does not have the capacity to accommodate all the children from Sedgeford. Brancaster Primary School is 8.4 miles from Sedgeford Primary School.

The nearest schools to Sedgeford with capacity for all the children from Sedgeford are Heacham Infant & Nursery School, Heacham Junior School and Hunstanton Primary School. Distances from Sedgeford Primary to nearby schools;

Heacham Infants 2.5 miles
Heacham Juniors 3.2 miles
Hunstanton 4.4 miles

As part of this school closure proposal it is proposed that the catchment area for Sedgeford will be changed with effect from 31 August 2020, by dividing Sedgeford catchment area into the 2 parishes of Ringstead and Sedgeford. Hunstanton catchment area would be extended to include pupils living in the Ringstead parish. Heacham catchment area would be extended to include pupils living in the Sedgeford Parish. Maps are available in the consultation document in Appendix A.

Please refer to Section 10; Special Education Needs provision

7. Impact on the community

It is clear from the informal consultation that Sedgeford Primary School is a much-loved school in the local community. We know that there will always be sadness when we propose the closure of a school. Our priority is to make a decision that is best for the children's education both now and in the future. However it is recognised that there are not the children in the catchment area now or likely to be in the future.

The closure of Sedgeford Primary School would remove primary education provision from the village. There are several other primary schools within a reasonable travelling distance of Sedgeford.

The school has a late Victorian main school building which is attached to a private residential dwelling. The school has;

- Total of 2 classrooms, hall, small practical area, couple of offices, storage.
- A post war timber dining hall and kitchen
- Mobile unit for the pre-school.

The school is not used by any community groups, therefore the potential impact of the loss of the school as a community venue should be minimal. However the Sedgeford Neighbourhood Development Plan, February 2019 identifies the school as part of the vital and well used facilities for the community and recognises the impact of its loss on the village. It states that 'without some new development to accommodate younger families, the increasingly elderly age structure of the village may threaten the viability of some of these facilities, particularly the school'.

8. Rural Primary Schools

As Sedgeford Primary School is designated as a rural school by the Department for Education, there are some particular considerations for the proposers of any closure. There is a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This does not mean rural schools should not close. It means that the 'case for closure should be strong and the proposal must be clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area'.

Norfolk County Council in formulating this proposal has given consideration to the matters under Section 15 (4) of the Education and Inspections Act 2016, being;

- a) The likely effect of closure of the school on the local community
- b) The educational standards at the school and the likely effect on standards at neighbouring schools
- c) The availability and likely cost to the Local Authority of transport to other schools
- d) Any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the closure of the school and the likely effects of any such increase
- e) Any alternatives to the closure of the school.

a) The likely effect of closure of the school on the community

Please see the section 7: Impact on the Community

b) Educational standards at the school and the likely effect on standards at neighbouring schools

The school was inspected by Ofsted in June 2019 and rated as 'Requires Improvement' in the following areas;

- Effectiveness of leadership and management
- Quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- Outcomes for pupils
- Early years provision.

The curriculum has been delivered via mixed age groups, although there have been opportunities to share some activities with children at their federated schools in Brancaster and Docking.

The school has the capacity for 63 pupils. In the last 10 years, the highest number of pupils on roll was in September 2010, with 49 pupils. The impact of low pupil numbers over the past years make it challenging to ensure that pupils receive teaching which is well matched to their age and abilities, have the necessary breadth of social experiences, sufficient peer interaction and the opportunity to work in groups.

It is not considered that the proposed closure of Sedgeford Primary School would have any detrimental effect on standards at neighbouring schools. All are judged 'Good' by Ofsted. They would therefore be able to adjust to additional pupils and provide them with a good education.

Heacham Infant School – Good, October 2019

Heacham Junior School – Good, May 2019

Hunstanton Primary School – Good, June 2018

c) The availability and likely cost to the Local Authority of transport to other schools

If the school closed, it is difficult to know the transport cost implications as they are based on where families live and parent preference of schools.

Distances from Sedgeford Primary to nearby schools;

Docking 3.5 miles

Heacham Infants 2.5 miles

Heacham Juniors 3.2 miles

Hunstanton 4.4 miles

Snettisham 2.6 miles

However, as a guide, to transport pupils from Sedgeford/Ringstead to the nearest or catchment school would cost per annum approximately £20k per school transported to.

d) Any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from closure of the school and the likely effects of any increase

There may be an increase in the use of motor vehicles if the parents of the 13 children currently at Sedgeford, choose to attend a school out of catchment, or do not qualify for School Transport. However this is judged to be minimal, due to the low numbers involved with this school closure.

e) Any alternatives to the closure of the school

The governing body and more recently the Interim Executive Board which was appointed by Norfolk County Council in January 2020, considered a number of alternative options including amalgamation and academisation. However, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board reluctantly requested Norfolk County Council, on 18 February 2020, to consult on the closure of the school due to the low numbers of pupils at the school.

9. Balance of denominational provision

Sedgeford Primary School is not a school with a religious character and therefore this proposal has no effect on the balance of denominational provision in the local area.

10. Special Education Needs provision

Sedgeford Primary School does not include provision reserved for pupils with Special Education Needs (SEN). Norfolk County Council is committed to ensuring that the needs of all children and young people with special education needs will be met. If the closure of this school is approved, it will be essential to review the provision required for those pupils with a statement of SEN or Education, Health and Care Plan and following consultation with individual parents, an alternative school where provision would be made available for their child will be named. There are currently no such pupils at the school.

11. Travel

Norfolk County Council's policy is to provide school transport free of charge for those pupils who attend their catchment school or nearest available school, where this is beyond the qualifying distance (over 2 miles for under 8s and over 3 miles for older children), as set out in our School Transport Policy.

12. Procedure for making representation

Within 4 weeks from the date of publication, any person may object to, express support for, or make comments on the proposals by;

- by emailing Norfolk County Council at schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk,
- by writing to Norfolk County Council at: Sedgeford Consultation, Norfolk County Council, FREEPOST, 1H 2076, Floor 8, Bay 34, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2BR. You do not need a stamp.

The closing date for all comments is 1 July 2020

SCHOOL ORGANISATION REPORT FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1. **Consultation report on Norfolk County Council's proposal to;**
 - **Close Sedgeford (Community) Primary School on 31 August 2020**
 - **Change the catchment area of Sedgeford from 31 August 2020**
2. **Permission to publish a Public Notice to close Sedgeford Primary School on 31 August 2020.**

SUMMARY OF SCHOOL ORGANISATION PROPOSAL

Norfolk County Council's proposal is to close Sedgeford (Community) Primary School with effect from 31 August 2020 and to change the catchment area of Sedgeford to accommodate the change. The full proposal is attached in Appendix 2.

Sedgeford (Community) 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, 2019. Sedgeford Primary School is in St Mary's Federation with Brancaster CofE VA Primary School and Docking CofE Primary School and Nursery.

The proposal to close Sedgeford Primary School has an impact on the catchment area for children from the area. Norfolk County Council is proposing to change the Sedgeford catchment area, by dividing the area into the 2 parishes of Ringstead and Sedgeford. It is proposed that Hunstanton catchment area would be extended to include pupils living in the Ringstead Parish. It is proposed that Heacham catchment area would be extended to include pupils living in the Sedgeford Parish.

ANALYSIS OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Norfolk County Council undertook a consultation between 16 March and 13 May 2020 on a proposal to close Sedgeford Primary School and change the catchment area of Sedgeford Primary School. If this proceeds, the change would be made from 31 August 2020. The consultation document is available on; <https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/sedgeford/>

Purpose of report:

This report is in four parts:

Part 1: the consultation process

Part 2: analysis of consultation responses

Part 3: resource implications

Part 4: conclusion and recommendation

PART 1: The consultation process:

Over 820 consultation documents were distributed in accordance with the Department for Education guidance on statutory school organisation changes. Consultees included pupils, parents and carers, staff, governors, other schools in the local area, the local MP, the local District and County Councillors, Diocesan Bodies, early years providers and residents.

Unfortunately, the two planned consultation events were unable to take place due to Covid19 restrictions. A notice was placed on the school gate on the day of the cancelled consultation event and any potential attendees were encouraged to contact the school organisation team via the schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk mailbox. Before the Covid19 restrictions were in place the Headteacher and the Vice Chair of the Interim Executive Board met with parents to discuss the proposal.

The local county councillors were briefed on the proposal and the Lead Member for Children's Services briefed Norfolk County Council's Cabinet on 24 March 2020.

Part 2; analysis of consultation responses

A total of 17 people responded using the consultation feedback form. Please see summary analysis of consultation responses in Appendix B.

In response to the question how much do you agree or disagree with the proposal to close Sedgeford Primary School;

- 41% (7 people) agreed or strongly agreed
- 6% (1 person) neither agreed or disagreed
- 53% (9 people) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The main points raised in support of the proposal to close the school were:

- The low numbers of children make the situation untenable
- It is not financially viable

The concerns about the proposal were:

- The impact of the school closure on the local community, as the village has few community facilities and will be detrimental to encouraging a thriving living/working community.
- The governors and staff have worked tirelessly to bring about the best outcomes for children. There are concerns that the local authority did not provide positive support to the school.

In response to the question how much to do you agree or disagree to change the catchment area for Sedgeford;

- 24% (4 people) agreed or strongly agreed
- 29% (5 people) neither agreed or disagreed
- 47% (8 people) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

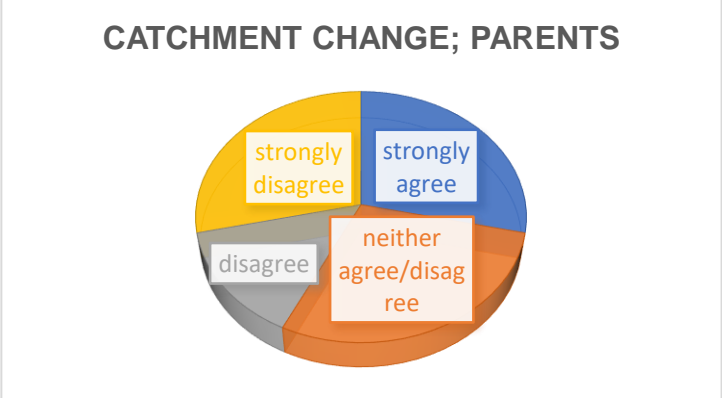
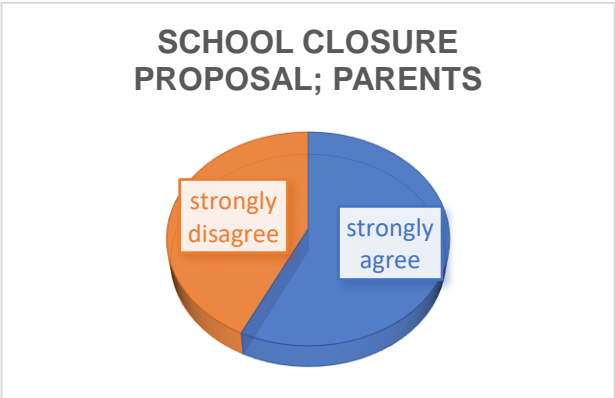
The main points raised in support of the proposal to change the catchment area were:

- The geographical split is fair and equitable and transport would be provided.

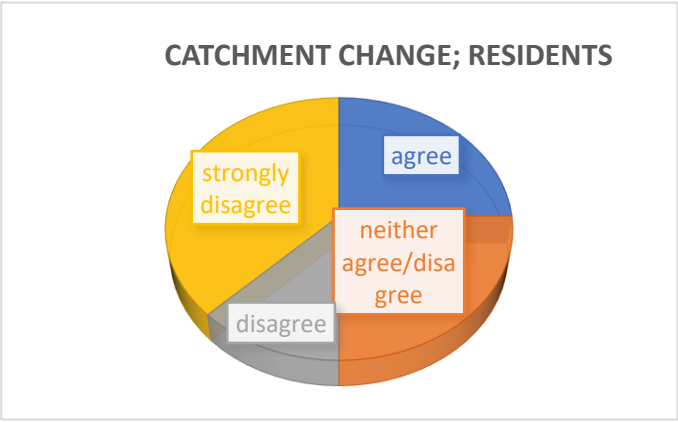
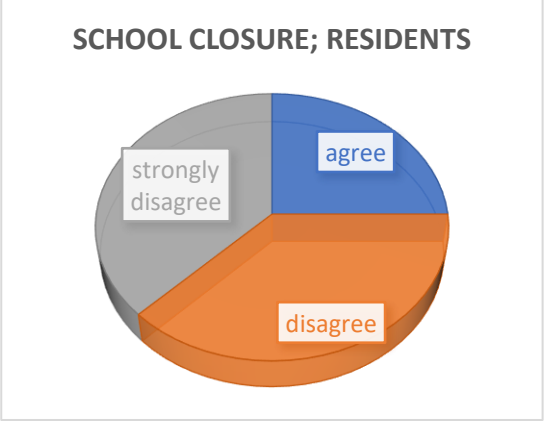
The concerns about the proposal to change the catchment area were:

- The children should stay within the Federation. Catchment should be Docking not Heacham
- No change needed, as school stays open.

The views of 7 parents on the closure and catchment change are as follows;



The view of 8 residents on the closure and catchment change are as follows;



Part 3: Resource implications

There are no capital project costs associated with this school.

Sedgeford Primary School is federated with Brancaster CofE VA Primary School and Docking CofE Primary School, within the St. Mary’s Federation and therefore has one budget for the three schools. If Sedgeford Primary School were to close on 31 August 2020, it is predicted there will be a sufficient budget in 2020/2021 which will remain with the Federation.

The school has a late Victorian main school building which is attached to a private residential dwelling. The school has;

- Total of 2 classrooms, hall, small practical area, couple of offices, storage.
- A post war timber dining hall and kitchen
- Mobile unit for the pre-school.

Heacham Infant and Junior School and Hunstanton Primary School have space and capacity for additional children, although we appreciate that Norfolk County Council’s admission arrangements allow parents to state up to 3 preferences.

Part 4: Conclusion and Recommendation

Sadly there has been no change in the sustainability of Sedgeford Primary School, in that;

- There are low numbers of pupils at the school.

Therefore it is difficult to deliver and sustain quality education for children now and in the future.

The governance of the school transferred to an Interim Executive Board on 24 January 2020, following a Warning Notice issued by Norfolk County Council on 21 November 2019. This was due to concerns with the governance of the school. The recent Ofsted inspection in June 2019, rated the school 'Requires Improvement' in the following areas;

3. Effectiveness of leadership and management
4. Quality of teaching, learning and assessment
5. Outcomes for pupils
6. Early years provision.

The local authority has provided additional leadership support to the school, following this Ofsted inspection. During this time, the Governing Board and the Interim Executive Board looked at alternative options such as amalgamation and academisation, but reluctantly requested the Council to consult on closure.

Norfolk County Council, in line with the Department for Education guidance, has a presumption against closure of rural schools. However this does not mean that a rural school will never close, but that the case for closure should be strong and clearly in the best interests of education provision in the area.

The continued low numbers over the past years have made it challenging to ensure that pupils receive teaching which is well matched to their age and abilities, have the necessary breadth of social experiences, sufficient peer interaction and the opportunity to work in groups.

The Sedgeford Neighbourhood Development Plan, February 2019 identifies the school as part of the vital and well used facilities for the community. Policy C1: Community Facilities says that development proposals for the area that would result in a change of use of the School, the Village Hall, the Recreation Ground or the King William IV public house will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

- There is insufficient demand to justify the retention of the facility or
- Equivalent or better provision has been made in a location where it can be easily accessed by the village.

There is no significant growth planned for Sedgeford; 10 houses (Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk Local Plan 2016), although it is noted there is planned housing growth in other areas of King's Lynn and West Norfolk. Any need for new school places will be linked to this growth only.

The proposed change to the catchment area takes into the account spaces available, travel route and distance to the proposed schools. The schools identified in the proposed catchment areas; Heacham Infants, Heacham Juniors, Hunstanton Primary are the closest schools that have space for children now and in the future, from Sedgeford. A catchment area, although does not guarantee a place, provides priority

for admission to a particular school. In this particular situation, the other schools within the Federation either do not have space to accommodate the pupils currently at Sedgeford or the travel distance is much further. However, Norfolk County Council's admission arrangements invite parents to state up to 3 preferences of schools and parents are encouraged to include their catchment school as one of these preferences.

Taking into account all statutory requirements in relation to the initial consultation have been complied with and the views of those who have expressed an interest in this proposal have been taken fully into account, it is recommended that this proposal proceeds to the next stage of formal Public Notice.

In pursuant of the delegated powers granted to me by Part 6.2 of the Council's constitution and in accordance with the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013, I hereby determine a Public Notice should be issued on the proposal;

- To close Sedgeford Primary School on 31 August 2020
- To change the catchment area of Sedgeford from 31 August 2020.

The Public Notice will appear in the Eastern Daily Press, on 3 June 2020.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara Tough', enclosed within a hand-drawn oval.

Sara Tough
(Executive Director of Children's Services)

Date: 27 May 2020

Consultation on a proposal to close Sedgeford (Community) Primary School and change the catchment area of Sedgeford

What is the proposal?

The proposal is to close Sedgeford (Community) Primary School with effect from 31st August 2020 and to change the catchment area of Sedgeford to accommodate the change.

Sedgeford (Community) 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, 2019. Sedgeford Primary School is in St Mary's Federation with Brancaster CofE VA Primary School and Docking CofE Primary School and Nursery.

Why is Norfolk County Council proposing closure?

The consultation on the proposed closure of Sedgeford Primary School was brought forward as a request from the Interim Executive Board (IEB) of the school on 18 February 2020. The Chair of the IEB reluctantly requested the Council to consult on closure of the school as;

- There are 14 children at the school from Reception - Year 5. Four of the children are dual registered with Docking CofE Primary School and Nursery.
- The 10 children are in Year 2 to Year 5 and are educated in one class with one qualified teacher and two support staff
- There are no admissions anticipated for September 2020.

There are a number of aspects that the Norfolk County Council as the Decision-Maker must take into account when considering the organisation of schools to ensure it is in the best interest of children's education and achievement. These include school leadership, performance, impact on the community, diversity of provision, need for places, travel, early years provision and special education provision.

The proposal to close Sedgeford Primary School is based on;

- There are low numbers of pupils at the school

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. Recently pupil numbers have declined, see table below. Four pupils attend the school and live in the Sedgeford catchment area, the rest live out of the school catchment area. Forecasts for future children, show a continued trend of low numbers, within the Sedgeford catchment area, of 3 – 5 children per year.

September	Number of pupils
2010	49
2011	48
2012	41
2013	31
2014	32
2015	32
2016	34
2017	35
2018	30
2019	19

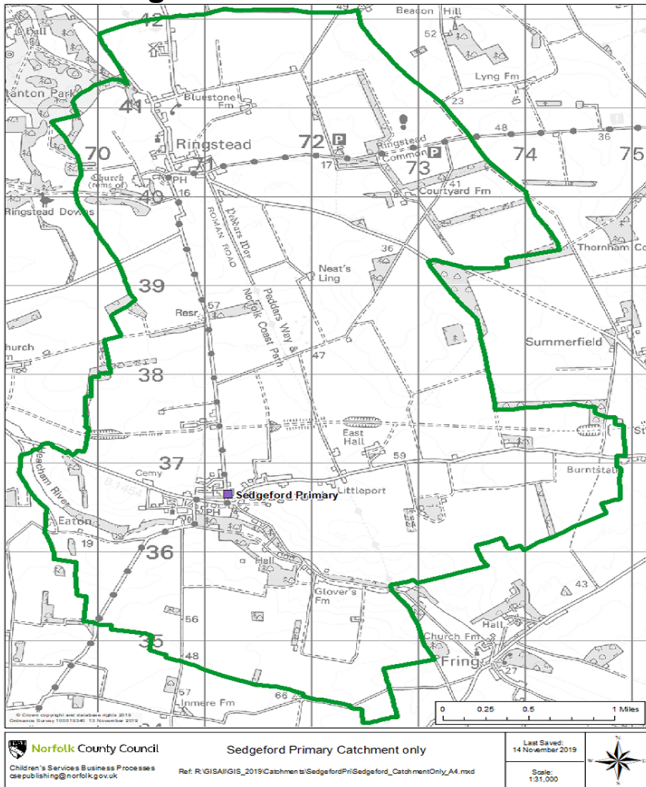
The school has the capacity for 63 pupils, from Reception to Year 6. For the last 10 years, the school has been operating under its full capacity.

Why are we consulting on a change of catchment area?

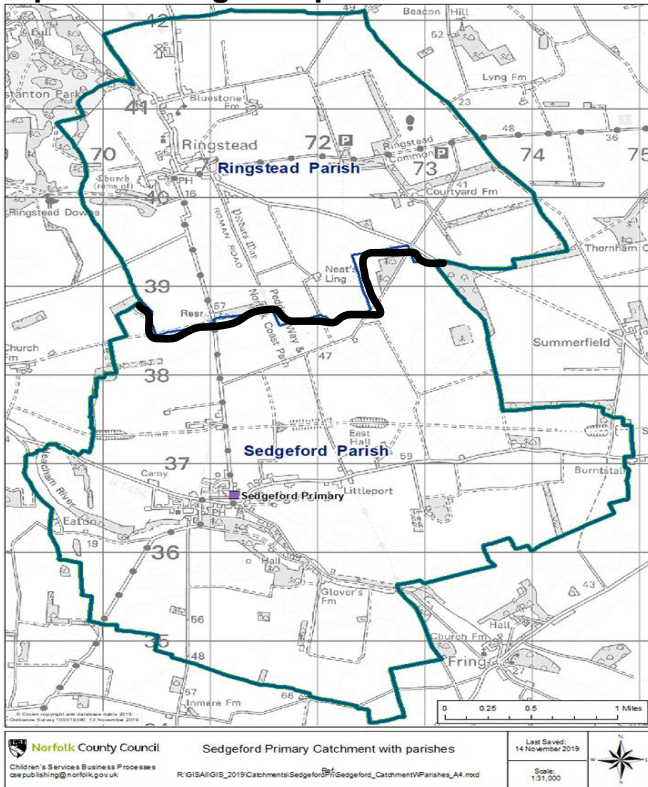
A catchment area is a defined geographical area that serves a particular school. In most cases, the area is used to provide priority for admission to a particular school. In planning the layout of a catchment area, the Admissions Authority, in this case, Norfolk County Council, should try to ensure that the parent would have reasonable expectation for priority to that school.

The proposal to close Sedgeford Primary School has an impact on the catchment area for children from the area. Norfolk County Council is proposing to change the Sedgeford catchment area, by dividing the area into the 2 parishes of Ringstead and Sedgeford. Hunstanton catchment area would be extended to include pupils living in the Ringstead Parish. Heacham catchment area would be extended to include pupils living in the Sedgeford Parish.

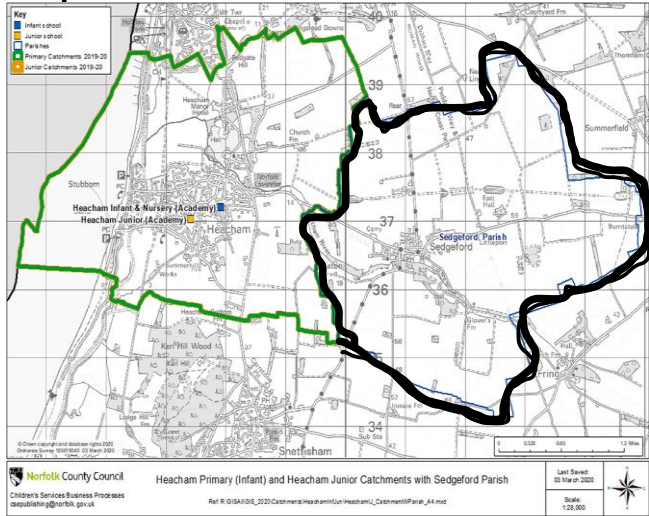
Current Sedgeford catchment area



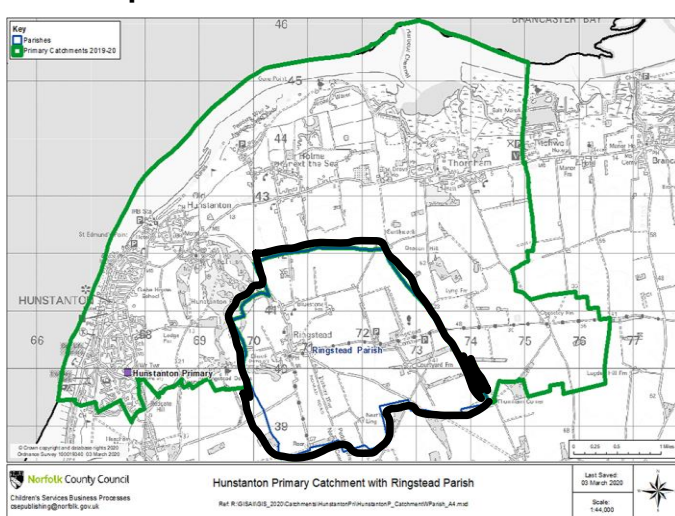
Proposed change to split into North and South



Proposed Heacham catchment area



Proposed Hunstanton catchment area



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

Norfolk County Council has reviewed the places available in nearby schools and there are sufficient places for pupils currently at Sedgeford Primary School.

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 Sedgeford, 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 catchment school, where this is beyond the qualifying distance (over 2 miles for under 8's and over 3 miles for 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 Sedgeford Primary School. These included;

- **Federation.** Sedgeford Primary School is already in St. Mary's Federation with Brancaster CofE VA Primary School and Docking CofE Primary School and Nursery. 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 Sedgeford Primary School.
- **Amalgamation.** Consideration was given to amalgamating Sedgeford Primary School with Docking CofE Primary School and Nursery, within the Federation. This option was discounted because there is insufficient capacity at either site to accommodate all the pupils on roll across the schools now and in the future and there is a significant financial implication; when schools amalgamate, one school must close and it's budget stops.
- **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, Sedgeford Primary School has had low pupil numbers for seven years and pupil numbers fall significantly short of the published admission number of 9 pupils each year. There is very little in-area demand for places at the school.

Why is Norfolk County Council consulting on this proposal and not the Interim Executive Board?

The Chair of the Interim Executive Board for the Sedgeford Primary School contacted Norfolk County Council with the request to consult on closing Sedgeford Primary School. The Department for Education guidance on opening and closing maintained schools, states that it is the responsibility of the local authority, (Norfolk County Council) under Section 15, Education & Inspection Act 2006, to propose the closure a community school.

Who will be consulted?

Under section 16 (1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the Local Authority as the proposer of the closure of a rural primary school must consult;

- Parents of pupils at Sedgeford Primary School
- The local district or 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;

- Interim Governing Body of St. Mary's Federation and Trustees of Docking CofE Primary School
- All staff at Sedgeford Primary School
- Pupils at Sedgeford Primary School
- Parents and Staff at Brancaster CofE VA Primary School and Docking CofE Primary School and Nursery
- Parents, Staff and Governors at Hunstanton Primary School
- Parents, Staff and Governors at Heacham Infant and Junior Schools
- The governing bodies and staff of any other school in the Smithdon Cluster
- Parents of any pupils at other schools who may be affected by the proposal
- Trade unions who represent staff at Sedgeford Primary School
- The Diocesan Boards of Education
- Local County Councillors and MP
- Early Years providers.

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

After this consultation ends on 13 May 2020, Norfolk County Council will review the results of the consultation and present the findings to the Executive Director of Children's Services who will decide whether to proceed with the proposal.

If they decide to go ahead, by law we have to publish a statutory notice to close Sedgeford Primary School and change the catchment area for Sedgeford. People would then have 4 weeks to write to us either supporting or opposing the proposal. The final decision is made by the Executive Director of Children's Services, Norfolk County Council as the 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:

- Thursday 19 March, 2.15 – 3.15pm at Sedgeford Primary School
- Thursday 26 March, 5 – 6pm at Sedgeford Primary School

Tell us your views by;

- completing the online survey on <https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/sedgeford>
- completing the attached form and handing it into the school office
- Emailing us at schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk
- Write to School Organisation Team, FREEPOST IH 2076, Floor 8 Bay 29, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DL

We need all responses by 13th May 2020