

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

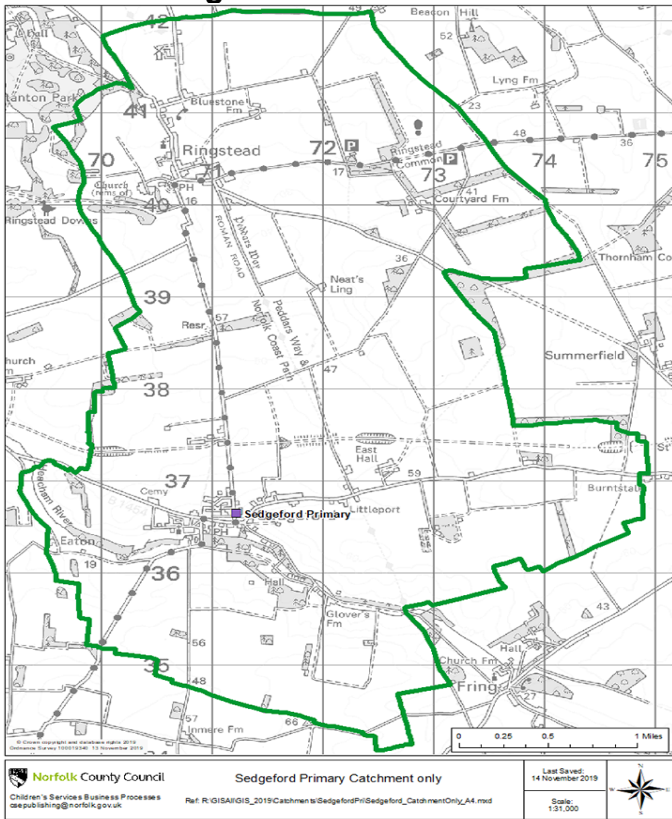
The school has the capacity for 63 pupils, from Reception to Year 6. For the last 10 years, the school has been operating under its full capacity.

Why are we consulting on a change of catchment area?

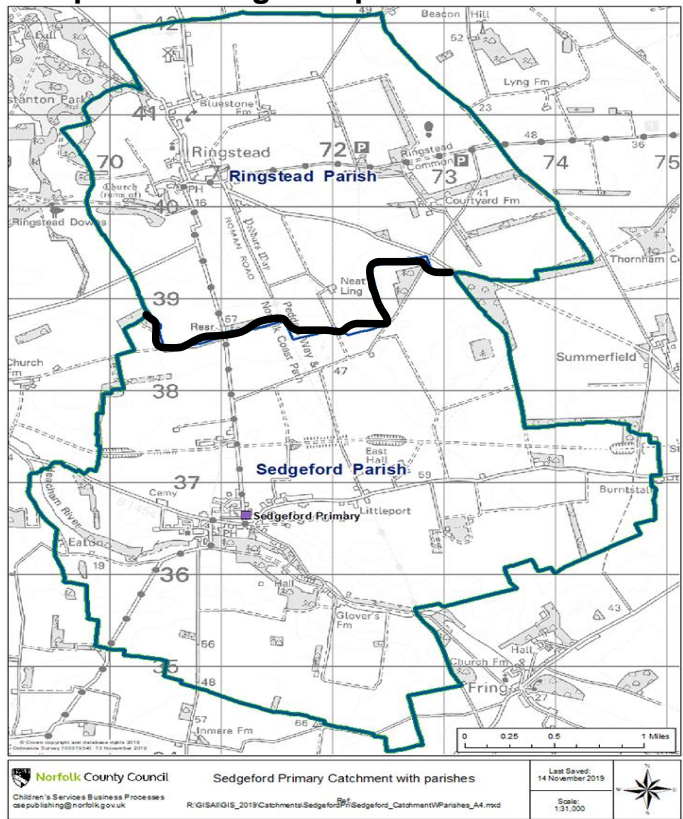
A catchment area is a defined geographical area that serves a particular school. In most cases, the area is used to provide priority for admission to a particular school. In planning the layout of a catchment area, the Admissions Authority, in this case, Norfolk County Council, should try to ensure that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

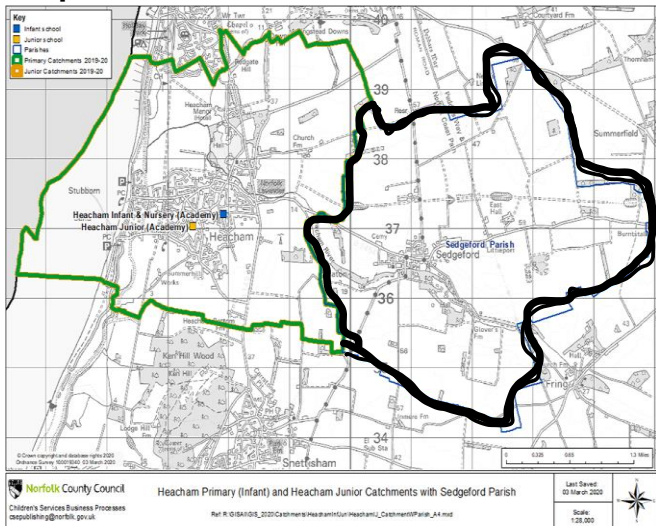
Current Sedgeford catchment area



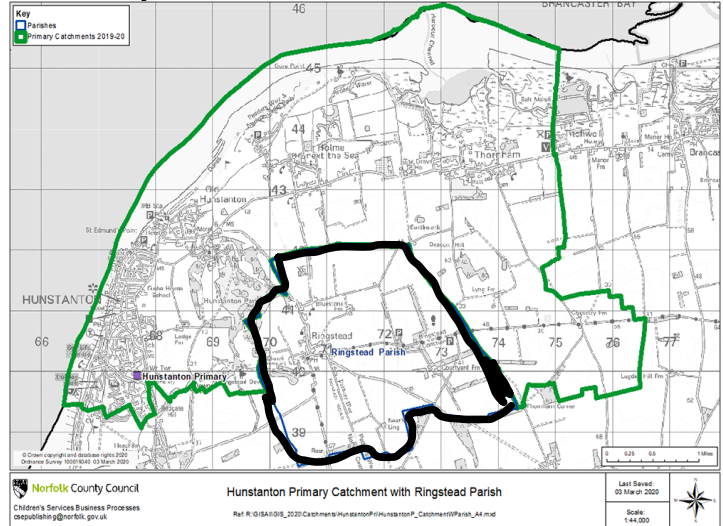
Proposed change to split into North and South



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

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Let us know what you think of our proposal.

How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to close Sedgeford Primary School, from 31st August 2020? 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.

How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to change the catchment area of Sedgeford from 31st August 2020? 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.

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): _____

At which school? _____

What is your name? _____

What is your postcode? _____

The earliest this change could take place would be 31st August 2020.

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

- By completing the online survey on <https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/sedgeford>
- By post to School Organisation Team, FREEPOST IH 2076, Floor 8 Bay 34, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DL
- By completing the attached form and handing it into the school office
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This consultation ends on 13th May 2020