

William Marshall Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Welney Statutory Proposal to cease to maintain the above school

1. LA details

Norfolk County Council
County Hall
Martineau Lane
Norwich
NR1 2DL

2. School details

William Marshall VC Primary School
Main Street
Welney
Wisbech
Norfolk
PE14 9RB

3. Implementation

The proposal is to close William Marshall VC Primary School with effect from 31st December 2015.

4. Objectives and reasons

Norfolk has set out clearly in its strategy “A Good School for Every Norfolk Learner”, its plan for ensuring rapid school improvement across the county of Norfolk. In June 2014, our support for school improvement was judged effective by Ofsted, but we know that we still have some way to go to ensure that all learners in Norfolk go to a good or outstanding school. Ofsted told us that we should:

“Work to increase the proportion of good or better schools still further, with a sharper focus on secondary schools and the smallest primary schools.”

William Marshall VC is a primary school taking pupils from the age of 4 through to 11. It was designated by the Department for Education in October 2013 as a rural primary school serving a village. The school has 6 places available in each year group, but is regularly undersubscribed. For the last 10 years, the number of pupils on roll has remained below 40, and has further declined in recent years:

| | |
|----------------|----|
| September 2011 | 32 |
| September 2012 | 29 |
| September 2013 | 19 |
| September 2014 | 24 |

Since January 2004, leadership of the school has been provided through a partnership with Upwell Community Primary School, whose headteacher spends one day a week at William Marshall. Such leadership arrangements are no longer

sustainable, and governors at Upwell do not feel that they have the capacity to pursue a more permanent federation at this time.

The governing body has vacancies including for parent governors. This lack of governors is a concern for the governing body which has advertised the vacancies without success.

Because of the declining roll and the lack of sustainable leadership, William Marshall Primary is a school of concern for the Local Authority. It was deemed Satisfactory by Ofsted in 2006 and in 2010, and the most recent inspection in 2013 judged the school to Require Improvement. A Local Authority audit of Teaching and Learning revealed significant need for improvement but high levels of staff absence have hindered the implementation of plans for improvement. Standards remain low, and governors have reluctantly acknowledged that they do not have the capacity to bring about the very significant improvement needed in the school to guarantee a good enough education for the children of Welney. The school therefore remains vulnerable to an adverse inspection.

The Local Authority is concerned about the performance of very small schools which perform well below larger schools

Performance data related to size of school – Key Stage 2% level 4 reading, writing and maths combined:

| | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Schools < 50 pupils | 60.4% | 61.8% | 67.6% |
| Norfolk average | 69% | 71% | 74% |
| National average | 75% | 75% | 79% |

The consultation document states that the earliest closure could take place would be the end of August 2015. The Public Notice will propose a formal closure date of 31 December 2015.

For the above objectives and reasons, the Local Authority took the decision to consult with parents and other stakeholders on a proposal to cease to maintain the school.

5. Pupil numbers and admissions

In September 2014, there were 24 pupils on roll, of whom 21 live within the designated catchment area of the school. A further 7 children eligible to attend the school are choosing to go to schools elsewhere. 4 children have applied to join the school in September 2015 which represents a further dip in numbers as 6 children will leave the school to transfer to High School.

6. Displaced pupils

Parents will be able to express preferences for alternative schools for their children and the Local Authority will work with parents to ensure that all children transfer in

January 2016 to local schools with available places. The designated catchment school for the majority of children living in the William Marshall catchment area will be Upwell Primary School, whose headteacher is already providing a day a week leadership support to William Marshall Primary. However, bearing in mind the difficulties children living to the east of the Hundred Foot Washes have in reaching the school when the road floods, the small area to the south east of the Old Bedford River will transfer to the catchment area for Ten Mile Bank Community Primary School.

7. Impact on the community

Two petitions signed by **a total of 400 people** from the Welney community were received, demonstrating the strength of feeling within the community. 66.2% of the responses to the consultation were from local residents, the majority of whom were against the proposal. Reasons cited were:

- The school has always been at the heart of the community
- The local authority/economic development should be actively encouraging young families to the area
- New housing developments are planned for the village
- The school is the last bastion of the community
- More parents and villagers are now prepared to get involved to enhance educational standards

In response to the consultation, a Case Against Closure document was submitted to Norfolk County Council on behalf of the William Marshall Parents Committee. This document set out to “indicate how the parents, villagers and well-wishers can help to improve the governance and leadership, increase the roll, bring the standard of education up and work towards making the school sustainable in the future”.

Officers from the Local Authority met with representatives of the Parents’ Committee, and provided them with a list of questions designed to elicit further detail about their plan to improve the school. A further submission, “The Way Forward” formed part of the papers considered by the Director of Children’s Services before the decision was made to proceed with this formal proposal.

8. Balance of denominational provision

William Marshall is a Church of England Voluntary Controlled School in the Diocese of Ely. The proposed new catchment school is a Community School, but alternative Diocesan provision is available within the cluster, at Denver VC Primary or Hilgay VC Primary Schools.

9. Rural primary schools

The school is a rural primary school designated by the Department for Education as a school serving a village. The Local Authority is aware that, before final determination of the proposal, it needs to give consideration to

- The likely effect of closure of the school on the local community

- The availability and likely cost to the Local Authority of transport to other schools
- Any increase in the use of motor vehicles and the likely effects of any such increase
- Any alternatives to the closure of the school

10. Special educational needs provision

Norfolk County Council is committed to ensuring that the needs of all children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) 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 and, following consultation with individual parents, an alternative school where provision would be made available for their child will be named.

11. Travel

As stated above, Upwell and Ten Mile Bank Primary will be the designated schools for pupils living in the William Marshall catchment area. Transport from Welney will be provided free of charge.

12. Consultation

A seven week statutory consultation took place which ended on Friday 29th May. All statutory requirements in relation to the statutory consultation, publication and decision-making were complied with. A list of those to whom the consultation document was sent can be found on the website.

<https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/william-marshall-school-welney>

Minutes of the public meeting held at the school and a copy of a report which was discussed at the Children's Services Committee meeting on 12 May, can also be viewed on the website.

13. Procedure for making representations

Any person may object to, express support for, or make comments on the proposals by emailing us at schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk or by writing to us at:

William Marshall Primary Proposal, **FREEPOST 1H2076**, Bay 10, Floor 8, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2BR. You don't need a stamp.

Please ensure that your comments / proposals are received within the four week representation period. That is, no later than Friday 16th October 2015

Please make sure your correspondence is clearly marked – **WILLIAM MARSHALL PRIMARY PROPOSAL**