

## Report to the Director of Children's Services for permission to publish a public notice

**The Proposal:** To close William Marshall Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Welney

<p>Reason for the proposed change</p>	<p>The proposal is to close William Marshall Voluntary Controlled Primary School on 31 December 2015.</p> <p>There are three main reasons for proposing closure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Concern about standards.</b> For the last 9 years, since Ofsted judged the school as Satisfactory in 2006, the school has shown no real improvement and was judged RI in 2013. An audit of Teaching and Learning revealed significant need for improvement and high levels of staff absence have hindered the implementation of plans for improvement</li><li><b>2. Declining roll.</b> The total number on roll has been below 40 for the last ten years, and is currently 24, of whom 21 live in the catchment area. A further 7 children attend schools elsewhere. Forecasts show a continuing decline in numbers. There will be 17 on roll on 1 September 2015.</li><li><b>3. Lack of robust leadership.</b> The school has had no substantive headteacher since 2004. Upwell Primary School agreed to second their headteacher for one day a week to provide leadership, but this is no longer a sustainable arrangement. Governors continued to function in difficult circumstances and have maintained a balanced budget, but have been unable to recruit governors from the community.</li></ol> <p>For the above reasons, the Local Authority took the decision with the support of the Ely Diocese to consult with parents and other stakeholders on a proposal to cease to maintain the school.</p> <p>(See Appendix A – consultation document)</p>
<p>Consultation details</p>	<p>Consultation documents were distributed to all parents, staff and governors at William Marshall and at Upwell School. In addition a copy of the document was sent to 320 addresses in Welney parish.</p> <p>All statutory requirements in relation to the statutory consultation, publication and decision-making were complied with. The deadline for responses was extended by one week to Friday 29 May 2015.</p> <p>The proposal was discussed at the Children's Services Committee on 12 May 2015. The Committee resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Note the contents of the report</li><li>• Ask that the interim Executive Director of Children's Services, after listening to the debate, using delegated powers, considers publishing a formal notice to propose the closure of William Marshall Voluntary Controlled Primary School.</li></ul> <p>See Appendix B – list of consultees</p> <p>Appendix C – the notes of the public meeting held at the school on 19 May</p>

	<p>2015</p> <p>Appendix D – the extract from the minutes of the 12 May Children’s Services Committee meeting.</p>
<p>Number of responses received</p>	<p>Over <b>600</b> documents were issued and a survey was placed on the NCC Consultation Hub (Citizen Space).</p> <p><b>83</b> responses were registered on the online survey. Of those:  4 (4.8%) were from pupils  15 (18.7%) were from parents  1 (1.2%) from the PTA  7 (8.4%) were from staff  3 (3.6%) from governors  55 (66.2%) from local residents  6 (7.2%) from local business  2 (2.4%) from local sports group  4 (4.8%) from local community groups</p> <p><b>10</b> other responses received (email/post):  1 was from the Welney Parish Council  1 was from a resident  8 from parents</p> <p>Two petitions signed by a <b>total of 400 people</b> from the Welney community were received</p> <p>A detailed document was submitted by the Parents’ Committee during the consultation phase (Appendix E). This put forward a “Case against Closure”, and proposed that the group work with the Local Authority, the Diocese and the school over the coming academic year to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve governance</li> <li>Increase the roll</li> <li>Enhance the educational standards</li> <li>Find ways of providing value for money</li> </ul> <p>Advisors and officers met with representatives of the Parents’ Committee and asked them to address questions challenging <b>how</b> they would bring about the improvement needed. A second document entitled “The Way Forward” was submitted (Appendix F).</p> <p>A detailed report on this, written by the Head of the Intervention Service is attached as Appendix G.</p> <p>The response to this report from the Parents’ Committee is attached as Appendix H.</p>
<p>Number of responses in favour of the proposal and views expressed</p>	<p><b>11</b> respondents stated that they were in favour of the proposal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A cluster chair of governors agreed for the reasons as stated in the proposal.</li> <li>• A previous governor of the school supported the Governing Body and agreed that the school was not providing a good enough education</li> <li>• A local headteacher questioned whether such a small school could provide a good educational experience</li> </ul>
<p>Number of responses against the proposal and</p>	<p><b>71</b> respondents stated that they disagreed with the proposal.</p>

views expressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has always been at the heart of the community</li> <li>• The local authority/economic development should be actively encouraging young families to the area</li> <li>• New housing developments are planned for the village</li> <li>• The school is the last bastion of the community</li> <li>• Parents and children happy with the teaching and teachers</li> <li>• More parents and villagers prepared to get involved to enhance educational standards</li> <li>• Ofsted inspection should be undertaken</li> <li>• Concern about large classes and adequate accommodation at Upwell</li> <li>• Concern about children having to travel on bus</li> </ul> <p>See Appendix I for the responses made online</p>
Number expressing no preference	1
Consideration of proposed closure date	Extension of period to December.
Resource implications	<p>Costs per pupil are very high at the school (£8839 per pupil) compared to an average county cost per pupil of £4160. Any savings generated by the closure would be allocated to other schools through the formulation of the DSG. There are no savings to Norfolk County Council.</p> <p>Closure will result in some additional transport costs for displaced pupils. The anticipated costs are £25,000 per year, assuming all catchment children transfer to Upwell.</p> <p>Additional accommodation will be required on the Upwell School site. The proposal to relocate Welney pupils comes at a time when numbers locally are increasing towards the PAN of 30, whereas in recent years they have been at 23/25. Admission numbers for 2015 currently stand at 28 for Upwell and 4 for Welney. This places pressure on a number of small classrooms. Initially the Welney children can be accommodated but it will require use of a small classroom currently used and adapted for after school and breakfast activities. As the Upwell area will require consideration over time as part of strategic area review, the accommodation proposal to accompany the closure proposal is that a double modular classbase be sited at Upwell, from Basic Need funding. There are likely to be planning issues around car parking which will increase the cost and possible add delay. It is proposed that the modular proposal be in place by Easter 2016, with preparatory work commencing in September. Because of the overall pupil number growth, this work will be necessary irrespective of the Welney case.</p> <p>The site belongs to the William Marshall Trust.</p>
Recommendation	That the Director of Children's Services agrees that the proposal be moved to the next stage which is to publish a public notice.

In pursuant of the delegated powers granted to me by the Children's Services Committee (10<sup>th</sup> July 2014) and in accordance within the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to

Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2014, I hereby give permission for a public notice to be issued on the proposal to close William Marshall Voluntary Controlled Primary School. This will appear in the Lynn News on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

Signed :         *G M Lock*          
(Interim Executive Director of Children's Services)

Date :         *3 September*         2015