

Statutory Consultation on a proposal to close William Marshall Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Welney

What is the proposal?

The proposal is that William Marshall Voluntary Controlled Primary School should close with effect from the end of August 2015.

Norfolk County Council is undertaking this consultation with the agreement of both the Governors of William Marshall VC Primary School and the Diocese of Ely.

Why is Norfolk County Council making this proposal?

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

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.

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.

Because of the declining roll and the lack of sustainable leadership, William Marshall Primary is a school of concern for the Local Authority. Standards are unacceptably low, and governors have reluctantly acknowledged that they do not have the capacity to bring about the significant improvement needed in the school to guarantee a good enough education for the children of Welney.

As a school that is very small and likely to remain so, it is very difficult to plan a viable future for the school. The new national funding policy for schools is moving

towards a national per pupil rate. This limits the way in which funding is allocated to schools through the locally agreed formula. In the past financial year, William Marshall School received just over £8,839 per pupil, compared with the Norfolk primary school average of £4,500, but this level of support may not be possible in the future. The continuing decline in pupil numbers and these changes to the way that schools are funded, are making it increasingly difficult to manage the budget, and it is likely that the school will be in deficit by the end of next year.

Where will the children go to school?

The designated school for children who currently live in the William Marshall catchment area is likely to be Upwell Community Primary School. The headteacher of Upwell has been the partnership headteacher of William Marshall and therefore knows the children.

Transport would be provided free of charge for all those pupils who live in the William Marshall catchment area.

What alternative provision will be available?

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.

What would it mean for staff?

We have an agreed way of working with staff when planning changes to school organisation, which has worked successfully in the past. Our human resources staff and local trade union officers would work with governors to make sure that staff were fully involved and consulted about proposed changes.

Who will be consulted?

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

- Parents of pupils at the 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:

- The governing body of the school
- Pupils at the school
- All staff at the school
- The governing bodies, teachers and other staff of any other school that might be affected

- Diocesan Boards of Education
- Parents of any pupils at other schools who may be affected by the proposal
- Trade unions who represent staff at the school
- Local County Councillors and MPs

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

This consultation will end on Monday 25 May 2015. County Councillors will have an opportunity to comment on the proposal at the Children's Services Committee meeting on 12 May 2015. The Director of Children's Services will then decide whether or not to go ahead, with the publication of a statutory notice to close William Marshall VC Primary School.

Should the Director decide to proceed, people would then have four weeks to write to us either supporting or opposing the proposal. The final decision would then be made by the Director of Children's Services on behalf of Norfolk County Council.

The earliest this change could take place would be 31 August 2015

How can I learn more about the 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:

6.00pm on Tuesday 19 May 2015 at William Marshall VC Primary School, Welney

You can tell us your views at <https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/william-marshall-school-welney> or by using the attached form, or email schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk

We need all responses by Monday 25 May 2015

If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact 01603 223480.

Proposal to close William Marshall VC Primary School

Do you agree or disagree with our proposal?

Agree

Disagree

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.

We want to hear from a wide range of people. We will use your answers to help us understand which sections of the community have responded to our consultation. You do not have to answer these questions if you do not want to.

We will process your personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act, 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:

- Pupil
- Parent / Guardian
- Member of the Parent Teacher Association
- Member of staff
- Governor
- Local resident
- Local business
- Local sports group
- Local community group

Other (please specify):

At which school? _____

What is your name? _____ What is your postcode? _____

Your views will help us to decide whether or not we make these changes. This consultation ends on **Monday 25 May**

The Director of Children's Services at Norfolk County Council will make a decision about whether or not to proceed to the next stage. If we decide to go ahead, we would then have to publish a formal public notice. A final decision would then be made in July 2015.

You can tell us your views at <https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/william-marshall-school-welney> by using the attached form which can be returned via your local school or email schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk or post to: William Marshall Primary School Consultation, Children's Services, FREEPOST IH2076, County Hall (Floor 8), Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2BR. You don't need a stamp.

We need all responses by Monday 25 May 2015