Consultation Reference: WINDMILLWW

Norfolk County Council

Consultation on the proposed amalgamation of Walpole Highway Primary School with West Walton Community Primary School, associated catchment change and academisation from September 2027

Consultation period: **Wednesday 18 November 2026 to Monday 21 December 2026 at 12:00**

Published by Norfolk County Council and the Governing Body of the Windmill Federation

Quick Summary

Tell Us What You Think

Norfolk County Council and the Governing Body of the Windmill Federation are asking for your views on a proposal to:

- Amalgamate Walpole Highway Primary School with West Walton Community Primary School
- Make changes to the catchment areas
- For the remaining schools in the Windmill Federation to become academies, joining West Norfolk Academies Trust.

We want to understand your views before any decisions are taken. More information can be found in this document and the Frequently Asked Questions that can be found at the bottom of the consultation webpage.

Please tell us what you think by Monday 21 December 2026 at 12:00.

You can complete the survey, write to us, or come to a consultation event.

Your feedback will help inform the next steps.

If you need this document in large print, in audio, Braille, in an alternative format or in another language, please contact customer services on 0344 800 8020. Or for Text Relay, call 18001 0344 800 8020 (text phone) and we will do our best to help you.

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About this consultation

Norfolk County Council and the Governing Body of the Windmill Federation are asking for views on the future of:

Walpole Highway Primary School
School Road, Walpole Highway, Wisbech, Norfolk, PE14 7QQ

And

West Walton Community Primary School
School Road, West Walton, Wisbech, Norfolk, PE14 7HA

There are three parts to this public consultation:

- **Part A:** the possible amalgamation of Walpole Highway Primary School with West Walton Community Primary School.
- **Part B:** the possible change to the school catchment area of West Walton Community Primary School if Walpole Highway Primary School closes by amalgamation.
- **Part C:** if the amalgamation goes ahead, the Governing Body of the Windmill Federation would like the schools remaining in Windmill Federation to academise and join an academy trust: West Norfolk Academies Trust.

This consultation forms the first stage of a statutory process that must be completed before any decisions are taken**. It is taking place while the proposals remain under consideration and before any final decisions have been made**. We are seeking feedback to help inform the decision-making process. All responses will be carefully reviewed, including any evidence, suggestions, concerns and alternative proposals put forward. Decision-makers will consider the themes emerging from the consultation and whether any changes to the proposals are required before reaching a decision to move to the next stage. We have included all of the proposals in one document to support transparency, so that everyone can see how they fit together and understand the possible impact of the changes before sharing their views with us. This document explains:

- what is being proposed;
- why the proposals are being considered;
- how other linked schools in the Windmill Federation may be affected;
- how you can share your views;
- what happens next;

Frequently Asked Questions that can be found at the bottom of the consultation webpage.



Part A:

Possible amalgamation (closure/discontinuance) of Walpole Highway Primary School with West Walton Community Primary School

What is a school amalgamation?

A school amalgamation is when two schools join together to become one school, on one school site. Children from the closing school move to the continuing school. The aim is to create a stronger single sustainable school for the future.

You may also hear an amalgamation being referred to as a ‘merger’ and a school closure being called a ‘discontinuance’.

The proposal

Norfolk County Council and the Governing Body of the Windmill Federation are proposing to amalgamate Walpole Highway Primary School with West Walton Community Primary School by 31 August 2027.

If this happens:

- Walpole Highway Primary School would close in August 2027; the last day for pupils would be in July 2027, on the last day of the school summer term;
- children at Walpole Highway Primary School would be supported to move to West Walton Community Primary School

As Walpole Highway Primary School is a rural school, the Council and the Governing Body of the Windmill Federation must look carefully at the impact of amalgamation.

The Executive Director of Children's Services at Norfolk County Council is the decision maker on this aspect of the proposal.

Why is the possible amalgamation being considered?

The possible amalgamation of Walpole Highway Primary School with West Walton Community Primary School is being considered because:

- Like many areas across the country, Norfolk has seen a significant decline in birth rates. Current forecasts suggest that pupil numbers are unlikely to increase in the foreseeable future. This means there may be fewer pupils available to attend both schools in the future.

- The number of primary aged children living in this area is expected to remain lower in the coming years. This means there are likely to be more school places than local children needing them if both schools stay open.
- This presents sustainability challenges for schools within the federation, particularly in maintaining stable pupil numbers, funding and resources over the longer term.
- As schools are funded on a per pupil basis, when there are fewer pupils, this means the school gets less funding.
- The Governing Board and Local Authority want to plan ahead rather than wait until issues become more difficult to solve. One school will be better able to maintain stable pupil numbers over time.
- There is enough physical space at West Walton Community Primary School for all children to be offered a space on a single site and two schools are local to each other, 2.5 miles apart, travelling along Lynn Road.
- When planning school places, the Council looks at where children live, how many school places are available and how pupil numbers may change in the future. The aim is to provide enough local places while making the best use of school buildings and public money.
- No new buildings or extensions would be needed to make this change. West Walton Community Primary School already has enough space on site and existing accommodation would be used differently to support the larger number of pupils.
- The two schools are already in a Federation together and have shared governance and leadership.
- West Walton has been on a significant improvement journey since its last Ofsted inspection in April 2025, with considerable work undertaken to strengthen provision and address the areas identified for development. Its progress since then and its capacity to continue improving have been important considerations in developing this proposal.
- We have considered this progress alongside falling pupil numbers, the space available within the schools and the West Norfolk Academies Trust’s commitment to ongoing support. We believe the proposal provides a sustainable way forward that supports pupils and allows the school’s improvement journey to continue. Bringing provision together gives the best opportunity to use resources effectively, continue raising standards and secure education in the area over the longer term.
- In November 2026, there were 198 pupils on roll of West Walton and 49 on roll at Walpole Highway.

The benefits of bringing the schools together

An amalgamation brings two schools together to create one stronger school. While change can feel unsettling at first, it can offer many benefits for children, families and staff.

- **More resources for pupils**: A larger school can often provide better facilities, more learning materials and a wider range of opportunities for children, such as access to a broader range of sports and extracurricular activities, specialist teaching and resources, improved ICT provision, larger libraries, additional enrichment opportunities and opportunities to work and socialise with a wider group of friends.
- **A stronger financial position**: Bringing schools together can reduce duplicated costs. This means more of the school's money can be spent directly on teaching and supporting pupils.
- **Greater stability for the future**: A school with healthy pupil numbers is often more financially secure and better placed to provide a high-quality education for years to come.
- **More opportunities for children**: Larger groups of pupils can create more opportunities for friendships, teamwork, clubs, sports and school events.
- **Sharing expertise**: Staff can work together more closely, sharing skills and experience to support children's learning and wellbeing.
- **Improved support for pupils**: A larger school may be able to offer a wider range of support for children with different needs and interests.
- **Secondary schools**: Pupils from both schools already move on to the same high school, Marshland High School. This means that many children will continue their educational journey alongside friends and classmates they already know.

What challenges could arise as a result of the proposed changes?

We have not brought these proposals forward lightly. We recognise that, while there may be long-term benefits, there may also be difficult consequences for some pupils, families, staff and members of the community.

The issues outlined below are some of the key impacts we have identified. However, consultation is an important part of the process because those affected by the proposal may identify additional impacts, concerns or local factors.

Feedback received through the consultation, together with the Equality Impact Assessment, will help ensure that these views are properly considered before any decision is made.

- **Impact on children and families:** Changes to schools can be unsettling for children and families. Some children may be worried about leaving familiar staff, friends and routines, while parents and carers may have concerns about what the changes could mean for their child.
- **Impact on staff and volunteers:** Proposals of this nature can create uncertainty for staff. School staff invest significant time, care and commitment into their schools and

communities, and we understand that changes may have a personal and professional impact on those involved.

- **Travel and access considerations:** If the proposals proceed, some families may experience changes to travel arrangements, including longer journeys or different routes to school. This could affect travel times, daily routines and access to activities before or after the school day.
- **Loss of a local school and its role in the community:** Schools often play an important role within their communities and may be valued for reasons that extend beyond education. The closure of a school may be felt as a significant loss by pupils, families, former pupils, local residents and community groups, particularly where the school has been part of community life for many years.
- **Equality and inclusion considerations:** We recognise that changes may affect people in different ways. Some groups may experience particular challenges or require additional support during a period of change.

What alternatives have been considered?

Proposing closure by amalgamation is only considered when all relevant information has been reviewed, the impacts have been carefully assessed, and alternative options have been explored. These included changes to staffing, budgets, admission arrangements, partnership working with other schools, and whether future pupil numbers might increase. Having reviewed all of these options, we believe that bringing the schools together offers the strongest foundation for the future and the best long-term outcome for pupils.

How would these changes be managed?

- If the proposals go ahead, support would be provided to help children, families and staff through the transition.
- The aim would be to make any changes as smooth as possible and to minimise disruption to children's education.
- Children would have opportunities to visit, become familiar with staff and surroundings, and build confidence before any changes take place.
- Where possible, transition planning would also recognise the relationships, memories and sense of belonging connected with the school.
- Parents, carers and staff would be kept informed throughout the process and given opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback.

Part B:

Possible change to the catchment area

If Walpole Highway Primary School closes by amalgamation, its catchment area would need to change.

Norfolk County Council is proposing to reallocate the catchment area which belonged to Walpole Highway Primary School in its entirety to West Walton Community Primary School.

The proposed change would give families living in the current Walpole Highway catchment a new local catchment school. It would also keep the whole of the existing area together rather than dividing it between different schools.

The Office of the Schools Adjudicator is the decision maker on this aspect of the proposal.

What is a catchment area?

A catchment area is a defined geographical area used by an admission authority as part of the school admissions process. Catchment areas can be used within a school's admission arrangements to determine how places are allocated when a school receives more applications than available places.

The way a catchment area is used, and the priority given to children living within it, varies between schools and admission authorities. Families can apply for any school regardless of where they live, although catchment areas may also be used when determining eligibility for home to school transport.

You can find out more about home to school transport in the Frequently Asked Questions at the bottom of the consultation webpage.

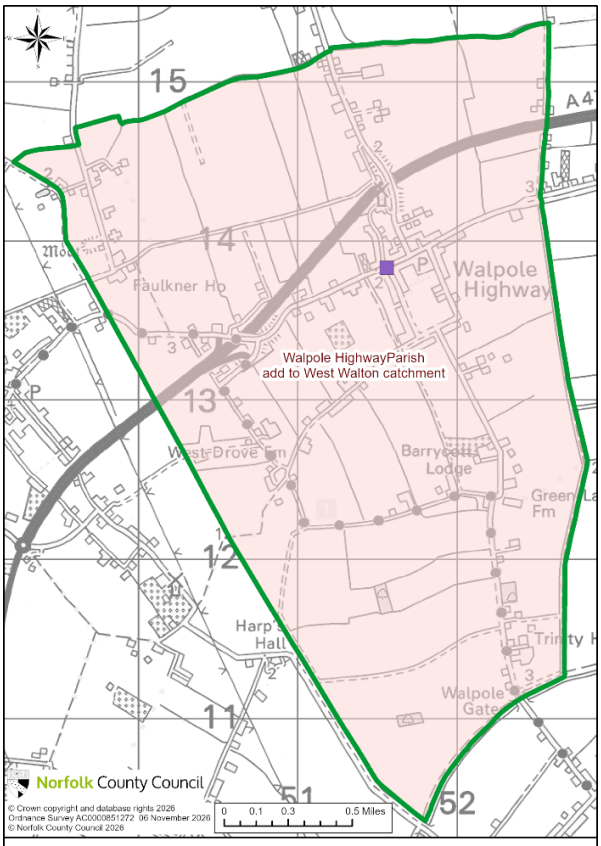
Why is the possible catchment change being considered?

If a school closes by amalgamation, it can no longer serve the children living in its catchment area. A catchment change may therefore be needed to identify which school will become the new catchment school for local families.

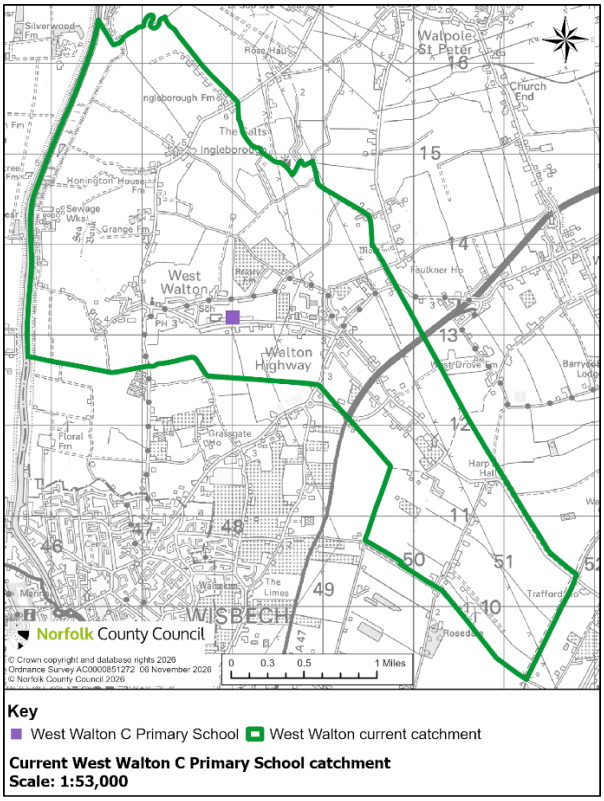
The proposed change would give families living in the current Walpole Highway catchment a new local catchment school. Transferring the existing catchment in its entirety would also keep the community area together rather than dividing it between different schools.

The maps below show the two current school catchments and the proposed new catchment. The proposal would add the whole Walpole Highway catchment to the West Walton catchment.

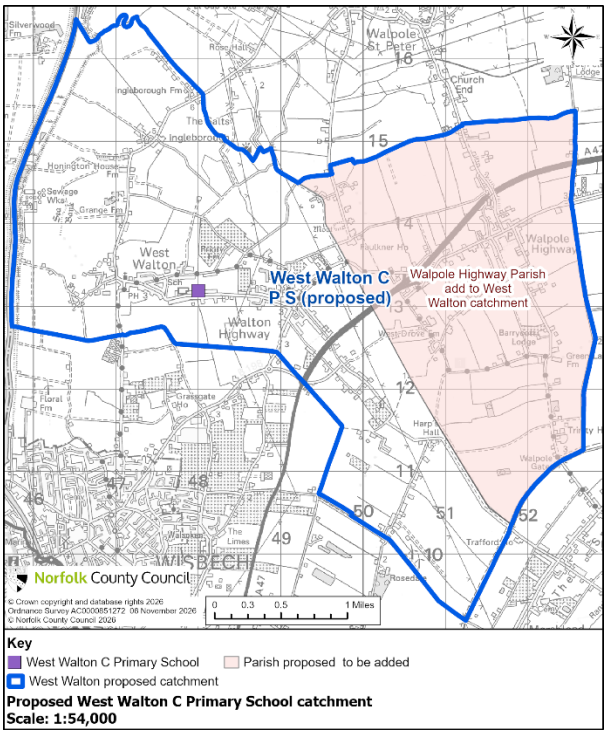
The current catchment map for Walpole Highway Primary School:



The current catchment map for West Walton Community Primary School:



The proposed catchment map for West Walton Community Primary School:



The current catchment area for Walpole Highway Primary School would become part of the catchment area for West Walton Community Primary School. This means that the area for West Walton Community Primary School will be expanded to the north-east.

The proposed change would not alter the secondary school catchment. Children in both school areas would continue to be linked with Marshland High School.

The catchment change would only happen if the schools amalgamated. If the schools do not amalgamate, the catchment change in this consultation would not go ahead.

Please note: A change to the catchment area would not automatically transfer children to that school or guarantee a place there.



Part C:

Proposal by the Governing Body to academise the Federation and join West Norfolk Academies Trust from September 2027

As part of the longer-term plans for Windmill Federation, the Governing Body is proposing that the Federation joins West Norfolk Academies Trust from September 2027.

The proposed amalgamations and the proposed move to academy status are linked. If the school organisation proposals are approved, this would result in the remaining schools within the Federation then starting the process to join West Norfolk Academies Trust.

If the amalgamation does not take place, the Federation will continue to work closely with WNAT with a view to considering academisation at a later date.

The Governing Body is the decision maker for Part C of this consultation and will decide whether to make an application to join West Norfolk Academies Trust as an academy.

What is academisation?

Academisation is when a school joins an academy trust. The trust takes responsibility for running and supporting the school instead of the local authority.

Children still go to school as normal, but the school's governance and management arrangements change. The aim is often to give schools access to additional support, expertise and opportunities through the trust.

Why is academisation being considered?

The Governing Body of Windmill Federation believes that joining West Norfolk Academies Trust could help provide long-term stability and support for the remaining schools in the Federation.

The Windmill Federation has already been working informally with West Norfolk Academies Trust for some time. The proposed academisation would formalise this relationship and allow the school to become a full member of the trust.

Academy trusts often work with more than one school and can provide shared expertise, training, leadership support and opportunities for schools to work together. The Governing Body believes this could help strengthen education for pupils and support the future sustainability of the schools.

- Governors have explored the possibility of joining West Norfolk Academies Trust as this trust offers a combination of ethos, values, capacity, financial strength, and leadership to take the schools forward and maintain the unique qualities for children and staff.
- WNAT has been supporting the schools through a Service Level Agreement over the last 18 months. This has provided leadership support, opportunities for the community through shared events, training and support for the teachers and leaders. By formally becoming part of the WNAT this would continue to build on the work already in place.

To find out more about the proposed academisation and what would change and what would stay the same, please see the FAQ document put together by the governing board.

Linked proposals: Other schools in the Federation

This proposal is part of a wider set of changes being considered across Windmill Federation.

Alongside this proposal, there are similar proposals for Terrington St. John Primary School to amalgamate with Tilney St. Lawrence Community Primary School. This means that all proposals are linked and are being consulted on at the same time so that families and stakeholders can see the full picture.

If all proposals are approved, Walpole Highway Primary School and Terrington St. John Primary School will close, with pupils transferring to West Walton Community Primary School and Tilney St. Lawrence Community Primary School respectively. This will leave two schools operating within the federation instead of four.

Although the proposals are linked, each proposal must follow its own process and will be considered on its own merits before any decisions are made. You can find out more about the proposal at Terrington St. John Primary School and Tilney St. Lawrence Community Primary School here: https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/windmilltt

What we know and what we don't know yet

What we know: Proposals have been made and we are now asking for people's views. No final decision has been made.

What we don't know yet: We cannot answer every question at this stage. Some things, such as individual school places, transport arrangements, staffing and detailed transition plans, will depend on the outcome of the consultation and later decisions.

What happens next: We will share further information when it is available and will be clear about what has been decided and what is still being considered.



Stages and key dates

When schools are closed through an amalgamation, there are a number of stages that must be followed before any final decision can be made.

Part B may not go ahead if Part A is not agreed. Part C may go ahead, but at a later date.

The timeline below provides an estimate of when each stage of the process may take place.

Stage	Date	What this means
Consultation opens	Wednesday 18 November 2026	This is when people can start sharing their views.
Public meeting	**Wednesday 25 November 2026, 2pm to 3pm** **Walpole Highway Primary School** School Road, Walpole Highway, Wisbech, Norfolk, PE14 7QQ And **Monday 30 November 2026, 2pm to 3pm** **West Walton Community Primary School** School Road, West Walton, Wisbech, Norfolk, PE14 7HA	These meetings are an opportunity to ask questions, find out more about the proposal, and share your views with representatives from the Governing Body of the Windmill Federation and Norfolk County Council.
Consultation closes	Monday 21 December 2026 at 12:00	This is the final day for comments and feedback to be received. After this date further responses unfortunately cannot be considered.
Responses reviewed	In late December and early in the new year	All of the feedback received during the consultation is read and carefully considered.

Decision on whether to publish a statutory notice	In late December and early in the new year	The Executive Director of Children's Services at Norfolk County Council will decide whether to move to the next stage. This is not the final decision on the proposals. It is a decision about whether the proposal should continue through the formal process.
Statutory notice published, if agreed	Early in the Spring Term	A formal notice is published to explain the proposal and invite further comments. This is a required step for school amalgamation proposals.
Formal representation period	Early in the Spring Term	During this period, anyone can make comments. All comments received must be considered before a final decision is made.
Final decision	In the Spring Term	The Executive Director of Children's Services at Norfolk County Council is the decision-maker and will consider all the information, including consultation feedback and representations, before deciding whether the proposal should go ahead.
Proposed amalgamation date, if approved	31 August 2027	If the proposal is approved, this is the date Walpole Highway Primary School would close and formally amalgamate with West Walton Community Primary School. Children would officially start at West Walton at the beginning of the new academic year in September 2027
Catchment change process, if needed	Once a final decision has been made in the Spring Term	If Walpole Highway Primary School closes, changes to local catchment areas may be needed from this date. A referral will be made to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator.
Academisation process if needed	From the closure of this consultation, the governing board will keep stakeholders updated with their decisions if they decide to go ahead.	If the school closes, the Governing Body will decide if they would like to proceed with making an application to join West Norfolk Academies Trust

More information can be located in Frequently Asked Questions that can be found at the bottom of the consultation webpage.

How to have your say

We want to hear from you about these proposals.

You can respond to this consultation in the following ways.

Online:
https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/windmill-ww

Email:
Please ensure that your email is marked with reference: **WINDMILLWW**

schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk

Post:
FREEPOST IH 2076, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2DL.

Please mark your letter with reference: **WINDMILLWW** *You do not need a stamp.*

Public meetings:

Wednesday 25 November 2026, 2pm to 3pm

Walpole Highway Primary School
School Road, Walpole Highway, Wisbech, Norfolk, PE14 7QQ

And

Monday 30 November 2026, 2pm to 3pm

West Walton Community Primary School
School Road, West Walton, Wisbech, Norfolk, PE14 7HA

If you need any arrangements made in order for this event to be accessible to you, please contact schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk or let the school office know.

Please send your response by **Monday 21 December 2026 at 12:00**

You can comment on any or all three parts of the consultation. You do not need to answer every question.

Responses received after the consultation closure cannot unfortunately be considered. Please submit your response by the deadline so it can be included in this consultation. If a statutory notice is subsequently published, there will be a separate opportunity to make formal representations.

Privacy statement

Norfolk County Council is the data controller for the personal information collected through this consultation. We would like to hear your views on the proposals. We will use the information you provide to:

- understand how the proposals may affect different people and communities;
- analyse the feedback received;
- understand the views of different stakeholder groups;
- prepare consultation summaries and reports; and
- inform the consultation and decision-making process.

The form collects your consultation response, comments, stakeholder category and school connection. It does not ask for your name, postcode, contact details or other information that directly identifies you.

Please only include information that is necessary and relevant to your response. Avoid including names, contact details or other information that could identify you or someone else, as well as sensitive personal information such as details about health, ethnicity or religion.

Our lawful basis for using your information is **public task under Article 6(1)(e) of the UK GDPR**, as the processing is necessary for Norfolk County Council to carry out its public functions relating to school organisation, education provision and consultation.

These functions are supported by the:

- **Education and Inspections Act 2006**;
- **Education Act 1996**;
- **School Admissions Code 2021;**
- **School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2013**; and
- **School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013**.

Your response may be accessed by authorised Norfolk County Council officers, elected members and relevant governance or decision-making bodies where this is necessary for the consultation. Approved organisations providing IT or administrative support may process information on behalf of Norfolk County Council.

Consultation responses may be summarised in reports or discussed at relevant school meetings to help inform consideration of the proposals. We will take steps to remove or redact identifying information before responses are shared, discussed or published, so that individual respondents are not identified. However, information may be disclosed where Norfolk County Council is required or permitted to do so by law.

We will keep consultation responses and associated records for **five years**, after which they will be securely deleted or anonymised.

Returning your response

You can respond to the consultation online through Citizen Space, by returning a completed paper form through your school office, or by emailing your comments directly to us.

If you return a completed paper form through your school office, the school will scan the form and email it to Norfolk County Council's School Organisation Team. This enables us to receive and consider your response.

If you prefer, you can email your comments directly to us. Your email may include your name, email address and other personal information contained in your message, signature or attachments. Once we have recorded and processed your consultation response, we will securely delete the email and any personal information that is not needed for the consultation record.

- Paper forms and comments sent directly by email do not result in Citizen Space collecting technical information about you, such as your IP address or information about your browser or device.

For more information about how Norfolk County uses your information and your information rights, please read the Norfolk County Council general privacy notice.

If you need this document in large print, in audio, Braille, in an alternative format or in another language, please contact customer services on 0344 800 8020. Or for Text Relay, call 18001 0344 800 8020 (text phone) and we will do our best to help you.

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Appendix 1- Consultation Response Form

These pages can be detached and handed into your school office:

Consultation on the proposed amalgamation of Walpole Highway Primary School with West Walton Community Primary School associated, catchment change and academisation from September 2027

Consultation period: Wednesday 18 November 2026 to Monday 21 December 2026 at 12:00

Let us know what you think of the proposals.

Part A:

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to amalgamate Walpole Highway Primary School with West Walton Community Primary School?

Please tick a box.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree or disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Don't know

Why do you say this? Please write in the box below.

**Please do not include personal information*

Part B:

How far do you agree or disagree with the changes proposed to the catchment area of Walpole Highway Primary School and West Walton Community Primary School?

Please tick a box.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree or disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Don’t know

Why do you say this? Please write in the box below.

Part C:

How far do you agree or disagree with the schools remaining in the Windmill Federation joining West Norfolk Academies Trust?

Please tick a box.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree or disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Don't know

Why do you say this? Please write in the box below.

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 for children? Please write in the box below.

Please tell us who you are (tick all that apply):

- ☐ Pupil
- ☐ Parent / Carer
- ☐ Member of the Parent Teacher Association
- ☐ Member of staff
- ☐ School governor
- ☐ Local resident
- ☐ Local business
- ☐ Local sports group
- ☐ Local community group

Other (please specify):

At which school?

Your views will help us decide if these proposals go ahead. You can tell us your views by returning this completed form to:

- The school office at Walpole Highway Primary School and West Walton Community Primary School
- Accessing our online survey

  https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/windmill-ww

This consultation ends Monday 21 December 2026 at 12:00