Norfolk County Council

Frequently Asked Questions

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

We understand that families, pupils, staff and local residents may have questions about what these proposals could mean for them. We do not have all the answers at this stage, but we are committed to listening, being open about the process, and sharing information as it becomes available.

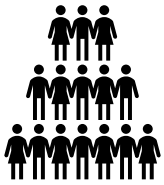
Here are some frequently asked questions around school closure by amalgamation that you may find useful.

1. The Amalgamation Proposal

	**Why are we only hearing about this now?** We understand that some people may feel disappointed that they are only hearing about these proposals now. Before a consultation can begin, the governing body and the Council need time to understand the challenges facing the school, look at possible options and decide whether a proposal should be considered. We wanted to make sure there was enough information available before asking people for their views.
	**Has a decision already been made? Could the decision be changed if people disagree?** A final decision has not been made. We are consulting because the proposals are still being developed, and we want to hear people's views before any decision is taken. This is your opportunity to tell us what you think, share local knowledge, and suggest ideas or alternatives. All responses will be carefully considered. What you tell us can help decision-makers understand the issues that matter most to pupils, families, staff and the wider community, and may influence the final outcome.

	No decision about next stages will be made until the consultation has ended and all feedback has been reviewed.
	**Why is West Walton Community Primary School being considered as the school to remain open through the amalgamation process? Why does the school need to be enlarged?** The school is being considered because there is sufficient space to accommodate pupils from both schools. No new buildings or extensions would be needed to accommodate more pupils. 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.
	**Can the Walpole Highway Primary School stay open longer to attract more pupils?** We understand why people ask this and why many would like more time. Unfortunately, keeping a school open for longer does not guarantee that more pupils will join. Families often want certainty about their child's education and may be reluctant to choose a school if its future is unclear. The proposal has been developed using current pupil numbers, future forecasts and information about the school's long-term sustainability.
	**Small classes are good. Why can't the school stay open with fewer pupils?** Schools receive most of their funding based on the number of pupils attending. As pupil numbers fall, funding also falls, but many of the costs of running a school stay the same. Over time, this can make it harder to maintain staffing, resources and the wider opportunities available to pupils. When considering the future of a school, we have to think about both the quality of education and whether it can be sustained in the long term.

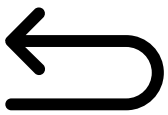
£	**Is this proposal just about saving money?** No. We understand why people might feel concerned about this, but money is only one factor. The Council and governing body must also consider pupil numbers, future demand for places, educational outcomes and whether the school can remain viable in the future. The aim is to ensure that children continue to have access to a high-quality education for many years to come.
	**Could another school close in the future?** No one can predict exactly what the future will bring. Pupil numbers and demand for school places can change over time, so the Council regularly reviews schools across Norfolk to make sure there are enough sustainable places for local children.
	**Why not wait and see if more funding becomes available?** We understand why people may hope that future funding could improve the school's position. However, the challenges facing the school are not only about funding. They are also linked to low pupil numbers and the number of empty places available. Waiting may create further uncertainty for children, families and staff without addressing the underlying issues.
	**Have housing developments been taken into account?** Yes. When planning future school places, the Council considers housing developments, birth rates, population changes and other local information.

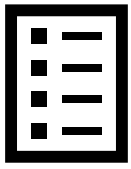
	These forecasts help us understand how many school places may be needed in the future.
	**What about the other schools in the federation?** Similar proposals are also being considered for Terrington St. John Primary School and Tilney St. Lawrence Primary School. These proposals include possible changes such as amalgamation, catchment changes, enlargement, and academisation. As the schools are part of the same federation, the proposals are linked and have been developed together to help secure a sustainable future for education in the area. You can find out more about the proposals for Terrington St. John Primary School and Tilney St. Lawrence Primary School here: https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/windmilltt  You are welcome to comment on any or all of the proposals as part of this consultation.

2. The Consultation Process

	**How will my views be used?** Every response will be read and carefully considered. Your feedback may highlight concerns, ideas or local knowledge that we were not aware of. This is one of the many reasons we carry out consultations. The information gathered during the consultation will be considered alongside other evidence before any decision is made.
	**Will children be asked what they think?** Yes. We believe it is important to listen to children and understand their views.

	We will consider ways for pupils to share their thoughts and feelings in an age-appropriate way. Their views will be taken into account alongside other feedback received during the consultation and will help us understand the impact the proposal may have on children, any questions they may have or where they may need support. We know that some children may find it easier to share their views than others. School staff know your child well and can help support children to express their thoughts and feelings.
	**Tell us what you think** We know this proposal may affect people in different ways, and we would like to hear your views. Your feedback will help us understand local concerns, experiences and ideas before any decision is made. https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/windmill-ww
	**When will I hear more? How will I know what is happening and when?** A school closure proposal must follow a set process, which means decisions cannot be made straight away. The main stages are: 1. **Consultation** – We ask for views. 2. **Review of Responses** – We consider the feedback received. 3. **Decision on Whether to Proceed** – We decide whether to move forward. 4. **Public Notice and Representation Period** – A formal proposal is published and stakeholders can further share their views. 5. **Final Decision** – Decision-makers consider all the information. 6. **Implementation** – If approved, support and transition arrangements are put in place.

	We will keep stakeholders updated throughout this process.
	**Why are you asking about the catchment area now?** If the school closes, its catchment area will need to change. We are asking about this now so that families can understand the possible impact of the proposal and share their views. The catchment change would only happen if Walpole Highway Primary School closes by amalgamation.
	**Why is academisation being considered now?** We understand that this consultation includes several proposed changes, and that this may feel like a lot to consider at one time. The Governing Body can see the potential long-term benefits of the school joining West Norfolk Academies Trust and wanted to consider this alongside the other proposed changes. Rather than consulting on each proposal separately, we felt it would be clearer and more transparent to bring the proposals together so that people can see the wider picture and how the different changes may relate to each other. No decision has been made on academisation. The governing body are seeking views on this proposal, alongside the other elements of the consultation, before any decisions are taken. If you wish, you can provide feedback specifically on the academisation proposal, rather than commenting on all parts of the consultation. Your views on this element will be considered as part of the overall decision-making process. 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.
	**What happens if the schools do not amalgamate?** If a final decision is made not to close the school, both would remain open.

	However, the issues that led to the proposal would still need to be considered and monitored. Any decision will only be made after all the evidence and consultation responses have been reviewed.
	**How will equality impacts be considered?** We recognise that changes like this may affect people in different ways. An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out to help us understand whether the proposal may have a greater impact on certain groups of people and whether any support or actions may be needed. This information will be considered before any final decision is made.
	**Who will make the final decision?** If the proposal progresses to the next stage, there will be a further opportunity for people to make formal representations before a final decision is taken. The final decision will be made by the Executive Director of Children's Services at Norfolk County Council. They will consider all of the available information, including consultation responses, before deciding whether to proceed with the proposal. They may also ask for changes to be considered or for other options to be explored before reaching a final decision. Families, staff and the wider community will be kept informed throughout the process. Updates on each stage of the proposal and information about what happens next will be shared through the school and other communication channels as appropriate. This aims to ensure that everyone understands where the proposal has reached, what decisions have been made, and what opportunities remain to share their views.
	**What do the terms mean?** **Closure (or Discontinuance)** When a school permanently closes and stops operating. "Discontinuance" is the formal term for a school closure. **Amalgamation** When two or more schools come together to form one school.

	Merger A general term often used to describe schools joining together. **Enlargement** When a school's official capacity increases. This does not always mean a bigger building. Sometimes it simply means existing space is used differently. **Catchment Area** The local area served by a school. Children who live in the catchment area may receive priority for places. **Academisation** When a school becomes an academy and joins a multi-academy trust. **Consultation** A period when people can share their views, concerns, and ideas before a decision is made. **Statutory Process** The steps that must be followed before certain school changes can take place. **Public Notice and Representation Period** A formal notice published to explain a proposal and tell people how they can have their say before a decision is made. Anyone can make comments, objections, or support the proposal **Decision-Maker** The person or organisation responsible for making the final decision after considering all the evidence and feedback received. **Governing body** A group of people who are volunteers who help oversee the school and federation and plan for its future. **Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)** A group of academies that work together under one trust. **Pupil Admission Number (PAN)** The number of children a school normally admits into a year group each year. **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)** A review that helps decision-makers understand how a proposal might affect different groups of people and whether any support or changes are needed.

3. What Happens if the School Closes?

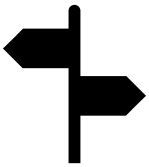


What will happen to my child?

If the Walpole Highway Primary School closes, we will work closely with families to help children move to West Walton Community Primary School. Information, advice and support will be provided throughout the process.

Schools will also work together to help children settle into their new environment. This might include

- School visits.
- Opportunities to meet new staff and classmates
- Activities to help children settle.
- Information sharing between schools.
- Support for vulnerable pupils



Can I choose which school my child attends?

Yes. Your child does not have to attend West Walton Community Primary School.

Parents can apply for any school. There are enough places available at nearby schools for all pupils from Walpole Highway Primary School if the proposal goes ahead.

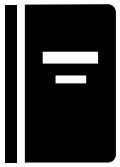
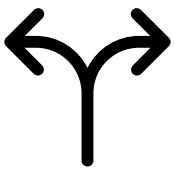
You can find out more about applying for school places here: School admissions - Norfolk County Council

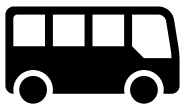


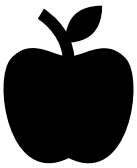
What about my child's friendship groups?

When applying for a new school place, families can consider where their child's friends may be going. However, school places cannot be offered based on friendships alone, and it may not always be possible for all friendship groups to move together.

Schools will work to support children as they settle into their new school and build friendships with other pupils.

	**What if my child is anxious or upset about the proposal?** We recognise that some children may find uncertainty difficult. School staff know their pupils well and will continue to provide support during the process. If the proposal is approved, transition arrangements will be designed to help children feel confident and settled.
	**How will my child's learning be affected?** While the consultation and decision-making process is taking place, Walpole Highway Primary School and West Walton Community Primary School will continue to operate as normal. Children will continue attending lessons, taking part in clubs, school trips, assessments, special events and other activities wherever possible. The school will continue to focus on providing the best possible education and support for its pupils. We encourage children and families to continue enjoying all aspects of school life during this time. If the proposal is approved, schools will work together to support a smooth transition and minimise disruption to children's learning.
	**Do I have to wait until a decision has been made before I move my child?** No. You do not have to wait for a final decision before applying to move your child to another school. Parents and carers can apply for a place at another school at any time if they feel that this is the right decision for their child and family. Some families may prefer to wait until the outcome of the proposal is known, while others may decide to make alternative arrangements sooner. This is a personal decision. It is important to remember that no final decision has been made. If the proposal does not go ahead, your child could have moved schools when they may otherwise have been able to remain at their current school. If the proposal is approved, schools and the local authority would work together to provide transition support for affected pupils. This may include visits, opportunities to meet staff and pupils, and activities to help children prepare for

	the move. Children who move schools before a decision is made may not be able to take part in all of these transition arrangements.
	**Will transport be provided?** This will depend on your child's individual circumstances and the Council's home-to-school transport policy. If the proposal goes ahead, information and advice about transport will be provided to affected families. You can find out more here: Transport for 5 to 16-year-olds - Norfolk County Council about eligibility for transport
	**My child has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan. What happens?** Children with EHC Plans will continue to receive the support they are entitled to. The Council will work closely with families and schools to make sure any transition is carefully planned and that appropriate support remains in place.
	**My child has Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). How will they be supported?** If the proposal is approved, we will work closely with families, schools and relevant professionals to help plan and support each child's transition. We recognise that some children may need extra preparation, reassurance or support when moving to a new school.
	**Will families have enough time to choose another school?** Yes. If the proposal is approved, families will be given time to consider their options and apply for another school if needed.

	The Council will provide guidance and support throughout the process to help make any transition as smooth as possible.
	**Would the school name, logo or uniform change?** If schools come together as a single school, there would be no change to school name, logo or uniform.
	**What will happen to breakfast clubs and after-school clubs?** We know that many families rely on these services. If the proposal is approved, further information will be provided about the childcare, clubs and activities available at other schools and any arrangements that may support families during the transition.
	**Will my child still receive free school meals?** If your child is currently eligible for free school meals, this entitlement would continue in line with the relevant eligibility criteria. Further information would be provided if any changes were needed as part of a transition.
	**What happens if my child is in Year 6?** Year 6 pupils will continue their education at the school as normal, including taking their SATs in May and participating in all planned activities during their final year of primary education. As Year 6 pupils are due to move to secondary school at the end of the summer term, they are likely to be less affected by the proposal than younger pupils. They will continue with the normal secondary school transition process and move to their secondary school as planned. The school will continue to support pupils throughout their final year, helping to ensure they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.



What will happen to staff?

We know that many children and families have strong relationships with school staff and may want to know what this means for them.

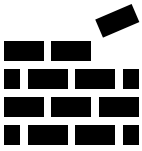
At this stage, we cannot discuss individual staff arrangements. Any staffing matters would be handled separately, confidentially and through the appropriate employment processes.



Will my child and the community be able to say goodbye to the school?

We know that schools are about much more than buildings. They are places where children learn, make friends and create important memories. Schools can also play an important role in the wider community and the history of a village.

If the proposal is approved, schools will work together to consider how pupils can celebrate their time at the school and recognise its history and achievements.



What happens to the school building?

No decision has been made about the future of the building.

If Walpole Highway Primary School closes, decisions about the site would be considered separately. The Council would first look at whether the building is needed for another educational purpose before considering any other options.



What we do and don't know yet

What we know now

- Why the proposal is being considered
- The consultation timetable and decision-making process

What we do not know yet

- If the proposal will definitely go ahead
- Which school each child may attend
- Final transport arrangements
- Detailed transition plans
- Future use of the site
- Final staffing arrangements



Can’t find the answer to your question here?

You can speak to staff at the school or contact schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk