

# Rockland St Mary and Surlingham Primary School Federation

Walnut Hill, Surlingham, Norwich NR14 7DQ  
Tel/Fax: 01508 538214  
Email: [office@surlingham.norfolk.sch.uk](mailto:office@surlingham.norfolk.sch.uk)  
Web: [www.surlingham.school.co.uk](http://www.surlingham.school.co.uk)



School Lane, Rockland St Mary, Norwich, NR14 7EU  
Tel/Fax: 01508 538345  
Email: [office@rockland-st-mary.norfolk.sch.uk](mailto:office@rockland-st-mary.norfolk.sch.uk)  
Web: [www.rockland-st-mary.norfolk.sch.uk](http://www.rockland-st-mary.norfolk.sch.uk)

May 10<sup>th</sup> 2019

Dear parent/carer and members of the wider community

## Proposed changes to Rockland and Surlingham Primary Schools

Rockland St Mary and Surlingham Primary Schools have worked together for many years, sharing a governing body and Head Teacher, and both joining Sapientia Education Trust in September 2017. In response to feedback received from parents and staff, governors have been considering how best to make our schools the first choice for local families in the catchment by giving children the best education and opportunities for larger friendship groups.

We are proposing to formally amend the age range for each school so that:

- **Rockland St Mary Primary** has Early Years and Key Stage One provision for children aged 2 to 7 (Pre-school to Year 2), with this incorporating the Sunbeams Pre-School currently located in Bramerton. See enclosed letter from Sunbeams.
- **Surlingham Primary** has Key Stage 2 provision for children aged 7 to 11 (Year 3 to Year 6)

After careful consideration by the Local Governing Body and Sapientia Education Trust we believe it will have a number of benefits:

**Opportunity for single year classes:** Where the number of children in each year group is large enough we will be able to have a dedicated class and teacher for that year. We know that some years currently will not support this – for example there is only a combined total of 6 children in year 1. This will dramatically improve the focus of teaching, allowing staff to give more targeted support for those who need it and greater stretch for the more able children.

**Larger friendship groups:** More children in each year will provide the opportunity for larger friendship groups at school.

**Before & after school clubs:** More children of the same age in each school will enable us to provide an enhanced before and after school club offer that runs 7:45am - 5.30pm.

**Pre-school:** These changes will allow the class space to introduce a pre-school at Rockland St Mary Primary, working with Sunbeams, providing much needed childcare for younger children in our villages. Our Executive Head Teacher, Mrs Humphrey, has recent experience of successfully incorporating a separate nursery into a primary school.

**Better learning environments:** With fewer year groups in each school we can ensure that learning resources, school facilities and outdoor areas are much more tailored to the age of the children.

**Executive Headteacher: Mrs J Humphrey**

*Surlingham School is a member of the Sapientia Education Trust, a charitable company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales with company number 7466353*

**Improved staff retention and wellbeing:** Teachers will be able to focus on one particular year group and those with similar year groups will be able to work alongside each other in the same school. Initial staff responses to the proposal have been overwhelmingly positive.

**Greater sustainability:** We know that having mixed aged classes and small year groups puts some parents off sending their children to our schools. This proposal, alongside good teaching and learning opportunities, will attract more children to our schools which is essential for their longer-term sustainability.

We see this as a really positive opportunity for our schools and welcome your feedback. This communication is the start of a process of engagement and formal consultation prior to submitting a request to the Department for Education, who would make the final decision on any changes.

The timelines we're working to are:

- May 2019: Initial engagement
- 3 June-14 July 2019: Formal consultation on the proposal
- July/August: Full consideration of consultation responses
- September 2019: Governor decision on whether to go ahead with the proposal
- October 2019: Submit an application to the Department for Education
- December 2019: Department for Education decision on requested changes
- January 2020: Changes to admission requirements for each school, if agreed
- September 2020: Changes delivered in school, if agreed

We will be holding a question and answer session at Surlingham Village Hall on Monday 20 May between 6 and 7pm, which will include a briefing on the proposal at both 6pm and 6:30pm. This is open to everyone. Alternatively, you can provide feedback directly to the chair of governors ([lcornell@surlingham.norfolk.sch.uk](mailto:lcornell@surlingham.norfolk.sch.uk)) or post your comments into the suggestions box in the foyer of either school. There will be further opportunities for having your say as part of the formal consultation starting in June.

As questions come in we will add further information and FAQs to the school's website <https://rocklandsurlingham.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely



Louise Cornell

Chair of Governors, on behalf of Rockland St Mary and Surlingham Primary School Local Governing Body



Bramerton Village Hall  
East Hill Lane  
Bramerton  
Norfolk  
NR14 7EQ

Tel: 01508 538438

Website: [www.sunbeamseast.co.uk](http://www.sunbeamseast.co.uk)

Email: [sunbeamseast@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:sunbeamseast@tiscali.co.uk)

Registered Charity Number: 1039587

10<sup>th</sup> May 2019

Dear parents/guardians

Attached is a letter from the local schools, Rockland St Mary Primary School and Surlingham Primary School regarding some proposed changes that are planned for our local pre-school and Primary school services. These proposed changes are important and, if approved, will result in Sunbeams closing in its current form.

The financial viability of Sunbeams has been in question for a number of years. In recent times public funding for early years education has failed to keep pace with increases in costs (particularly the impact of the National Living Wage). This means that Sunbeams has become increasingly reliant on fund-raising to supplement income. The medium to long-term outlook for Sunbeams in its current form is very uncertain. In an effort to try and secure the long-term provision of pre-school services in the area we have in recent years been in dialogue with the local Primary schools. The objective has been to try and seek a collaboration which would secure a local pre-school for the area and also address the declining numbers in both Primary schools. In recent years the Primary schools themselves have had problems, but now they are part of the Sapientia Academy Trust the situation is much improved and both schools are progressing well.

After several discussions and meetings with the Sapientia Academy Trust we believe the best option would be to integrate a pre-school offering with Rockland St Mary Primary School. If approved, this would result in Sunbeams closing in its current form. However, it is intended that the ethos of the current pre-school (and staff if they choose to) will continue to work in the new provision provided from Rockland St Mary Primary School. The new pre-school would be under the management of the Sapientia Academy Trust as part of a proposal to restructure both Surlingham Primary School and Rockland St Mary Primary School. These changes are proposed to take effect from September 2020.

The proposals are outlined in the attached letter from the Chair of Governors on behalf of the Schools Local Governing Body.

There will be a six week consultation period for parents, staff of Sunbeams, school teachers and other stakeholders to put forward questions and to share views and concerns.

The Committee and staff of Sunbeams believe this is the best option for preserving (and increasing the amount of) pre-school services within our local community. The proposed new pre-school will be able to offer longer hours / sessions; (which has always been something that has been requested by parents but which Sunbeams are not able to offer at our current location), be able to offer the full 30 hours of funded childcare (which Sunbeams also are not able to offer), and will also have significantly improved financial stability. The pre-school children would also be able to become familiar with the school environment, therefore making the transition to Reception year easier.

I realise that the pre-school element may not affect all of you directly but the proposed changes will affect everyone in the local community. We want to be as open as we can with you during this consultation period. The most important element to us is ensuring a smooth transition for our children who will be staying on with the pre-school and moving across to the school.

There will be a question and answer session at Surlingham Village Hall on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> May between 6 and 7pm, which will include a briefing on the proposal at both 6pm and 6:30pm. This is open to everyone. The Chair of Governors for the schools, Staff of the Schools, Sunbeams Staff and Committee will be in attendance to answer any questions or concerns. In the meantime please do not hesitate to contact any of the Sunbeams staff or committee if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely



Louise Linford  
Chair of Sunbeams Committee  
07717501141

Julie Lincoln  
Secretary of Sunbeams Committee  
07738570147

Steve Johnson  
Treasurer of Sunbeams Committee  
07880340782