

Rockland St Mary and Surlingham Primary School Federation

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Sept 10th 2019

Dear all

Thank you to everyone who responded to the recent consultation on changing the age ranges at Rockland St Mary and Surlingham Primary Schools.

Overall there were 110 responses, with 59% of people in support of the proposal. A full report of the findings is available on the School's website – <https://rocklandsurlingham.org.uk>

Although the majority of people supported the proposal we have taken the decision not to move ahead with making the changes at this time.

Ofsted will visit the schools this year, so continuing to drive up the standards of teaching and learning, ensuring that our children receive the best education and enrichment whilst at school, needs to be the focus of our efforts.

We also recognise that there is strong feeling among those who are not in support of the proposal and wish to address the concerns they raise prior to taking a decision on whether this is the right change for our schools.

During the consultation there was overwhelming support for moving the pre-school, enabling it to be available for more hours each week. We will continue to work with Sunbeams to incorporate a pre-school offer at one of the school sites.

Best wishes

Louise Cornell

Chair of Governors for Rockland St Mary and Surlingham Primary Schools

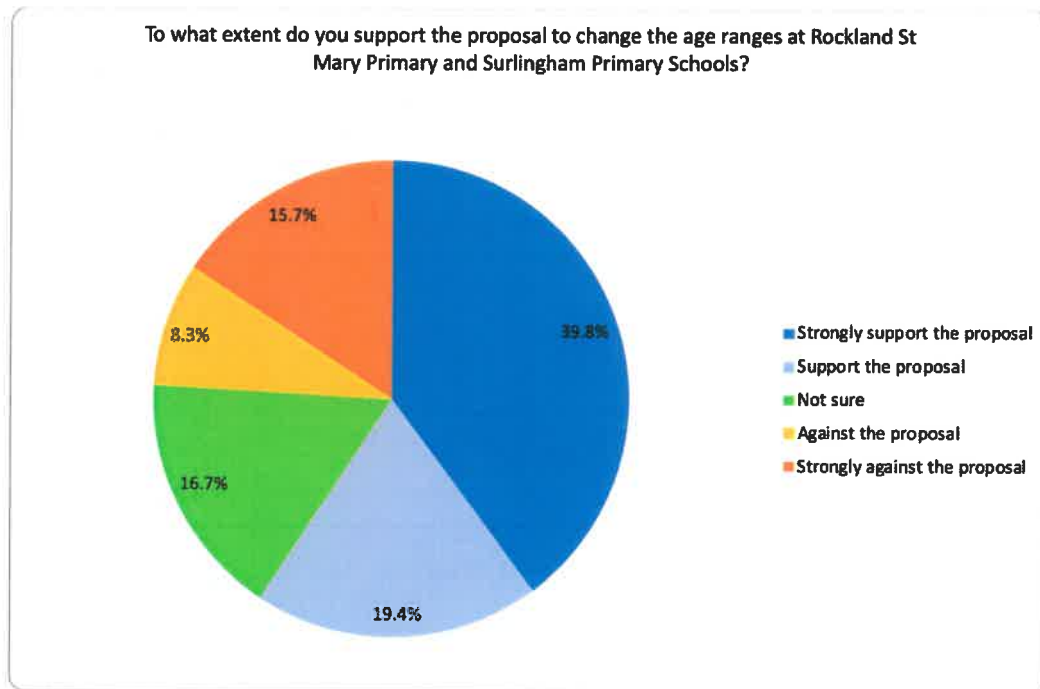
Executive Headteacher: Mrs J Humphrey

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

Report of the consultation on changing the age ranges at Rockland St Mary and Surlingham Primary Schools

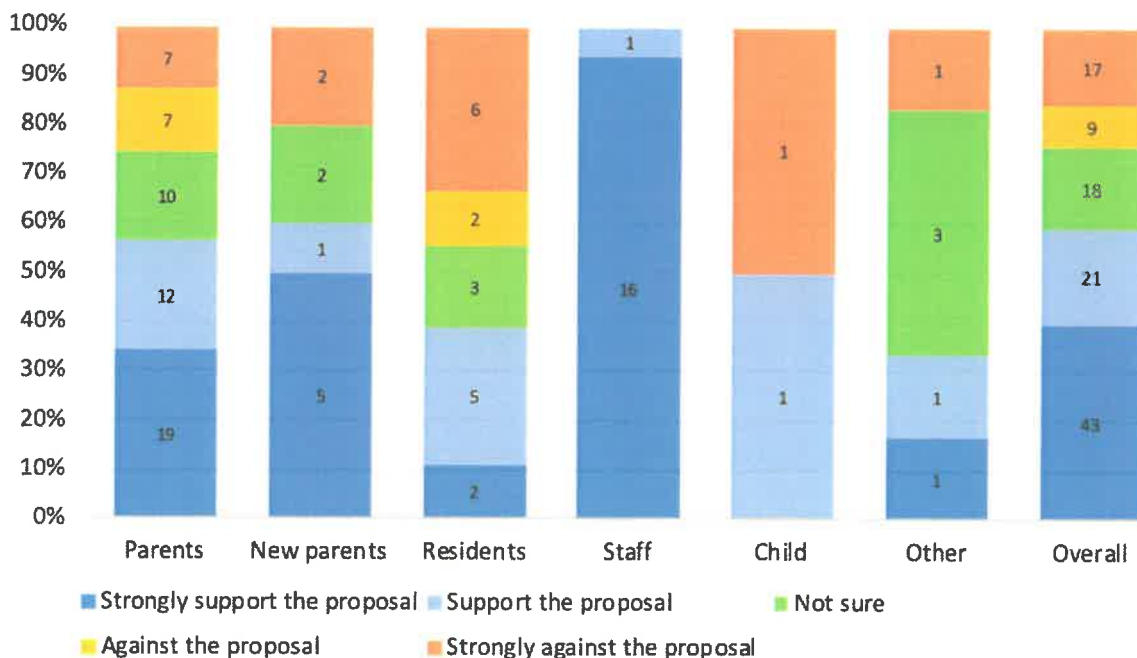
1. The principle of changing the age ranges

Overall 59% of respondents either strongly supported (40%) or supported (19%) the proposed change in age ranges at the two schools. Just under a quarter of people were against the proposal, 16% strongly against and 8% against.



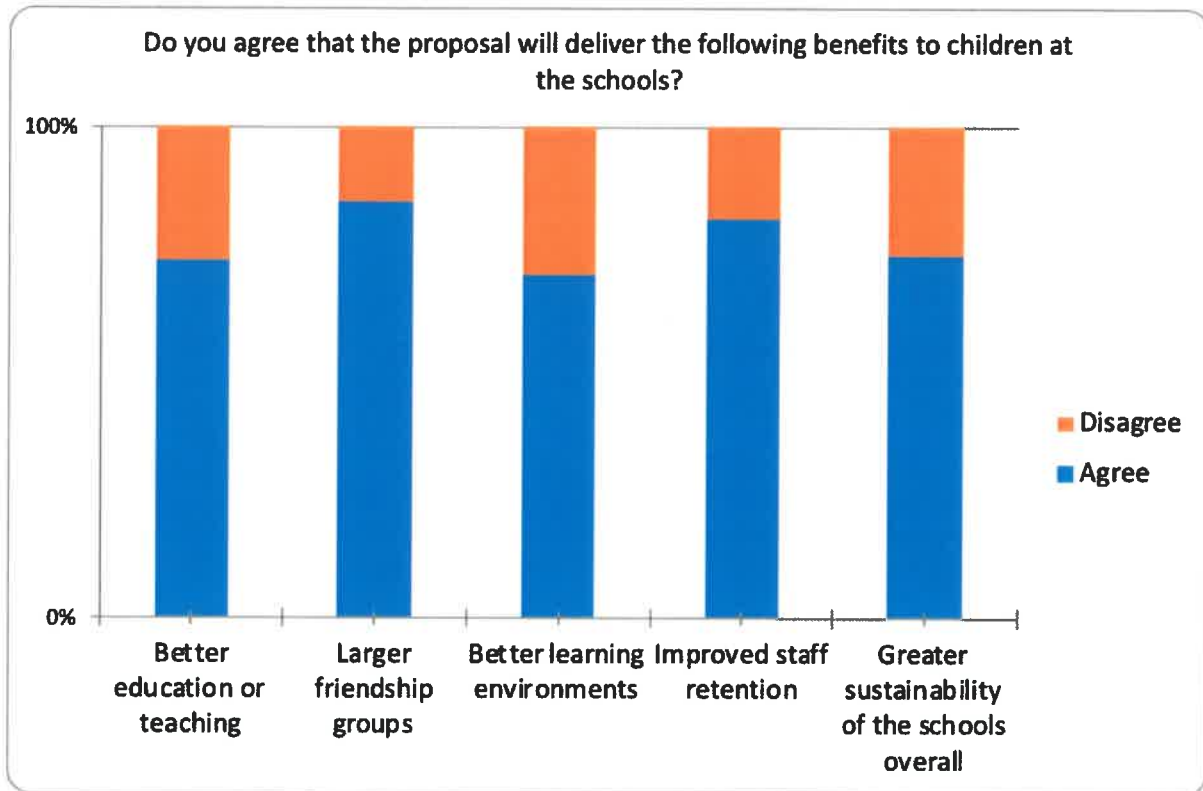
There was a marked difference in view between the different stakeholders who responded. Residents were least supportive of the changes whilst staff were unanimously in support. 56% of current parents supported the proposal.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU SUPPORT THE PROPOSAL TO CHANGE AGE RANGES AT THE SCHOOLS?



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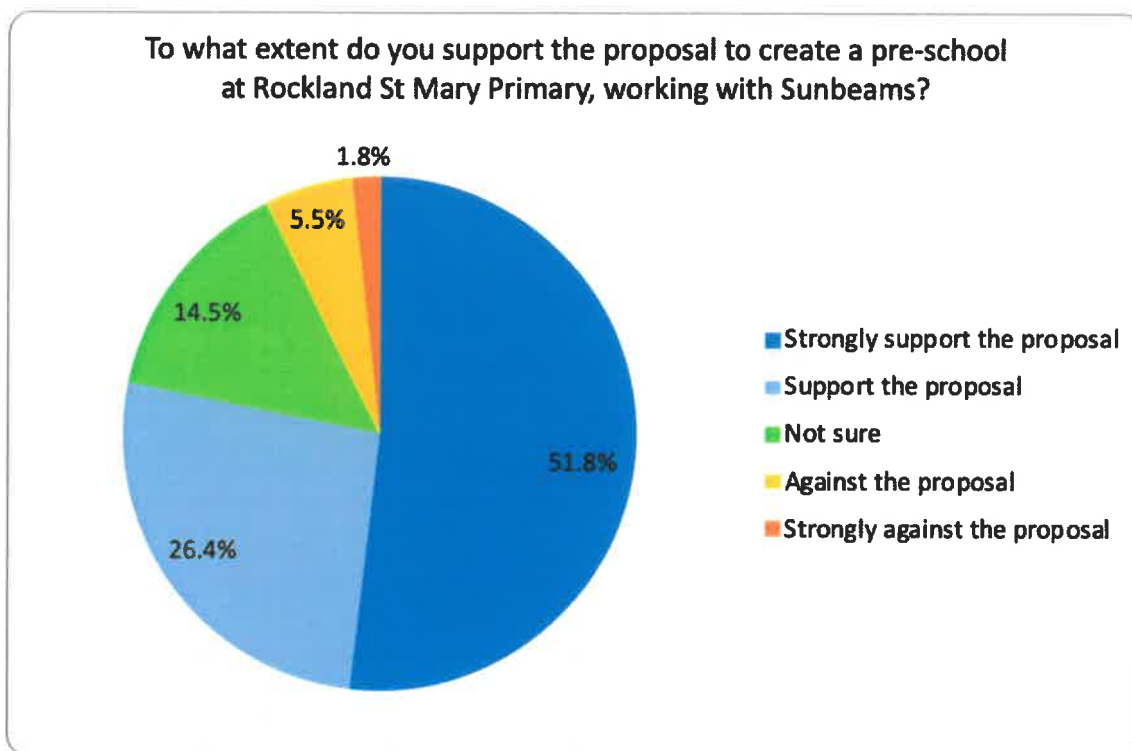
The majority of respondents agreed there were benefits in delivering the proposed changes, with larger friendship groups and improved staff retention most agreed with.



2. Pre-School

There was strong support for establishing a pre-school at Rockland St Mary Primary, with 78% of respondents strongly supporting (52%) or supporting (26%) the proposal. Staff and parents of children at the school were most likely to support this, 100% and 82% respectively, whereas only 50% of residents who responded supported the proposal.

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3. Concerns

Two thirds of people who responded to the consultation identified their concerns with the proposal. The key concerns are listed below:

Concern	Number of respondents who identified this
The logistics of drop-offs, especially if parents have children in different schools	40
Increased traffic in the villages and the negative effect this will have on the environment	17
The disruption it will cause for children	12
Insufficient justification present for making the changes	8
Concern around moving away from mixed classes	7
Children losing the benefit of walking/cycling to school	7
Concerns around Sunbeams joining the schools	6
Siblings being separation	5
Uniform	5
Admissions – in particular whether children at Rockland would get a place at Surlingham	4
Concern that some existing parents would choose to move their children elsewhere	3

NB where respondents identified more than one concern all concerns have been categorised

The logistics of having children at different schools was the most common concern, identified by both parents, future parents and residents. This included concern about parking as well as timings of the school day and the extra time it would take to drop children at school. Some people indicated that this would be personally difficult due to work commitments. A number of respondents said they felt more information on September 2019

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how the logistics would be managed should have been provided as part of the consultation. Residents in particular had concerns about an increased traffic and parking.

Just under 10% of respondents expressed their disappointment that the changes would prevent children from walking or cycling to school, with this having health implications. Some people expressed that being able to walk their children to school was the reason they chose to live where they do.

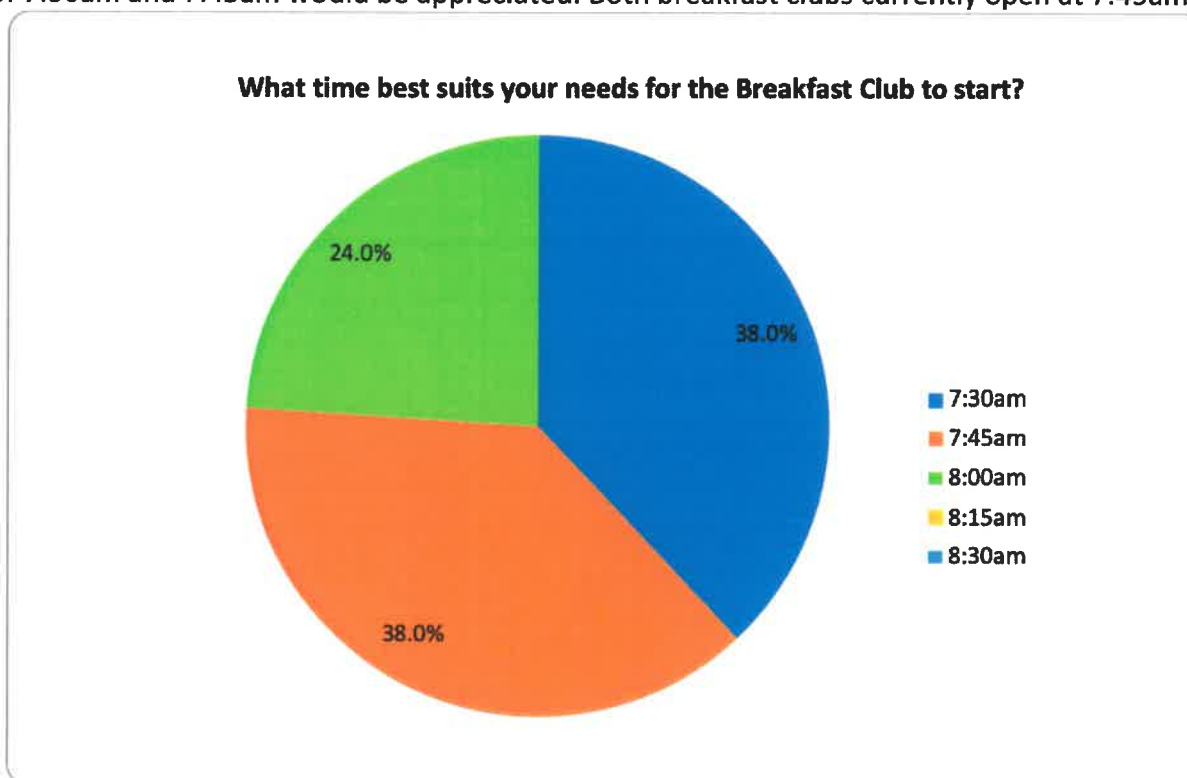
Around 15% of people who responded felt the changes would cause a lot of disruption for children in the schools, which would have a negative impact.

Just over 10% of respondents cited that there was insufficient justification for making the changes, particularly in reference to the future sustainability of the schools and whether the changes would attract more people. Questions were also raised about the benefits / dis-benefits of mixed age classes, with concern expressed that there still would not be the numbers to have single age classes.

A few people were concerned that existing parents would choose to move their children elsewhere, though this was not something that any parents confirmed they would do in the consultation responses received.

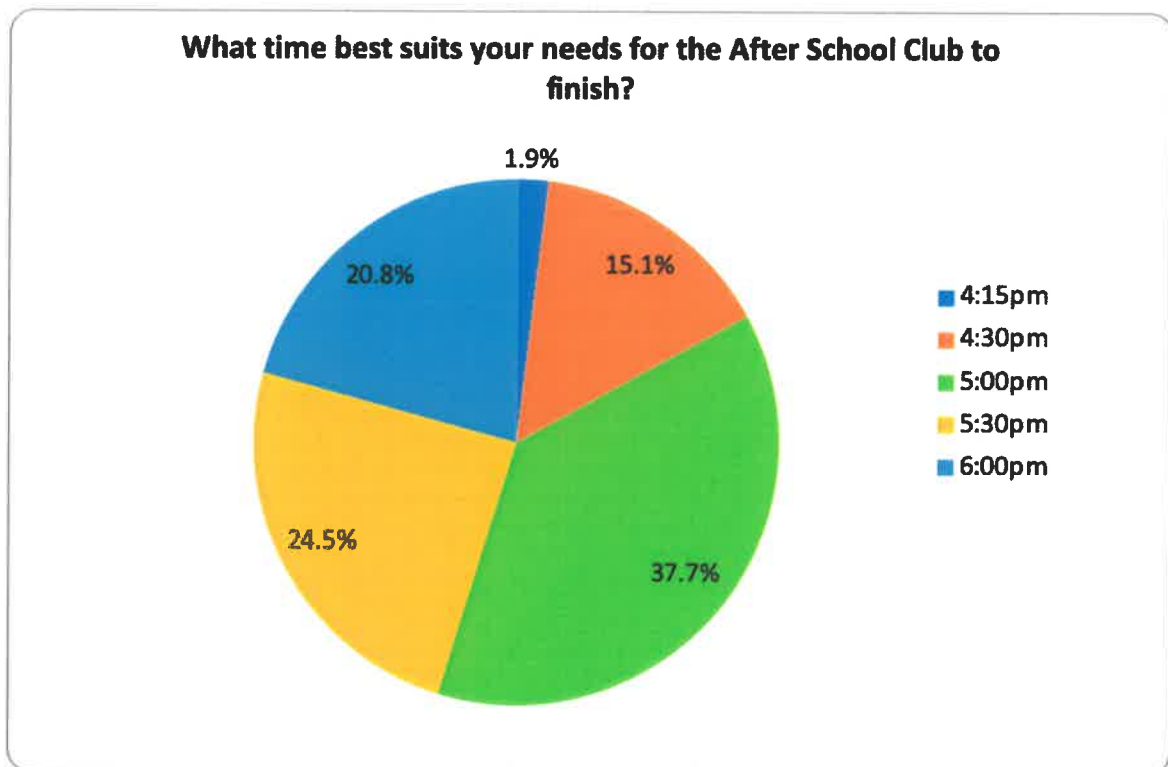
4. Breakfast & After School Clubs

50 people responded to the question about breakfast club, with the results indicating that the earlier start times of 7.30am and 7.45am would be appreciated. Both breakfast clubs currently open at 7.45am.



After school clubs current run for an hour after school finishes – to 4.15pm. The consultation clearly demonstrates that there is demand for additional provision. 53 individuals answered this question, with 83% of them indicating that a club that finishes after 5pm would be best to meet their needs.

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5. Uniform

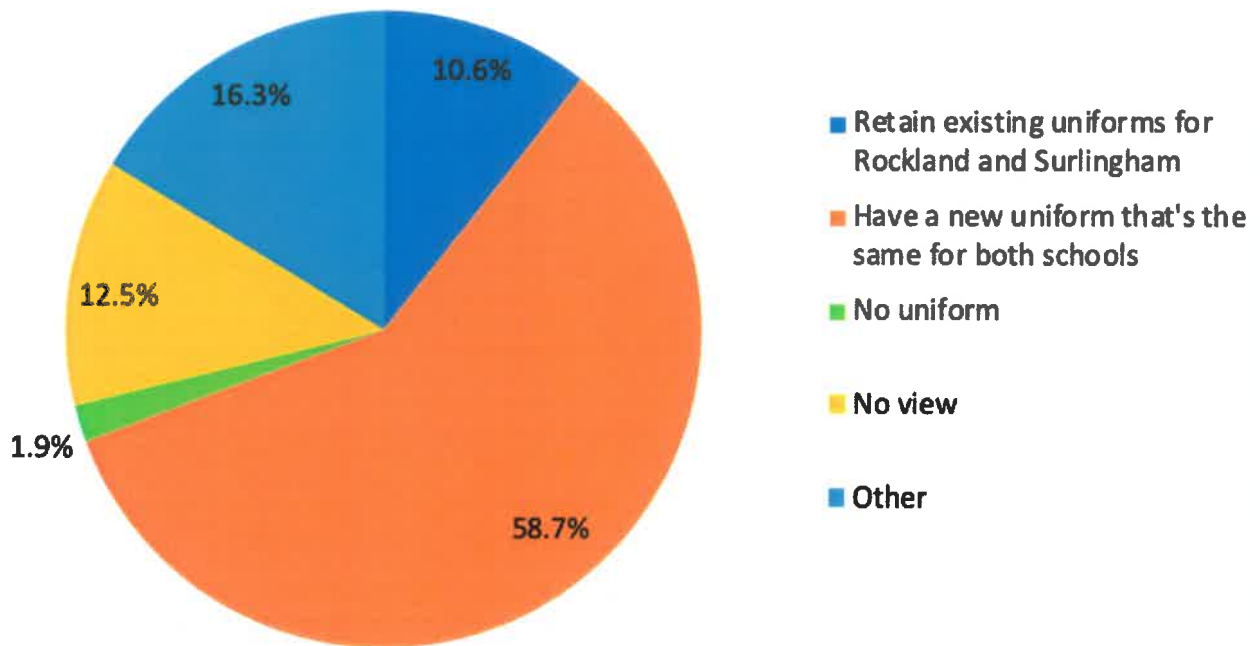
95% of respondents answered the question about school uniform. The majority felt that if the changes go ahead there should be a new uniform that's the same for both schools.

Some people commented that the uniform should only become compulsory at Reception age, and not for the pre-school age children. There were also comments from parents about the cost of buying new uniforms and it was suggested that there could be a transition period before any change had to apply.

There were also suggestions about having the same type and colour of uniform, but different shades for different schools.

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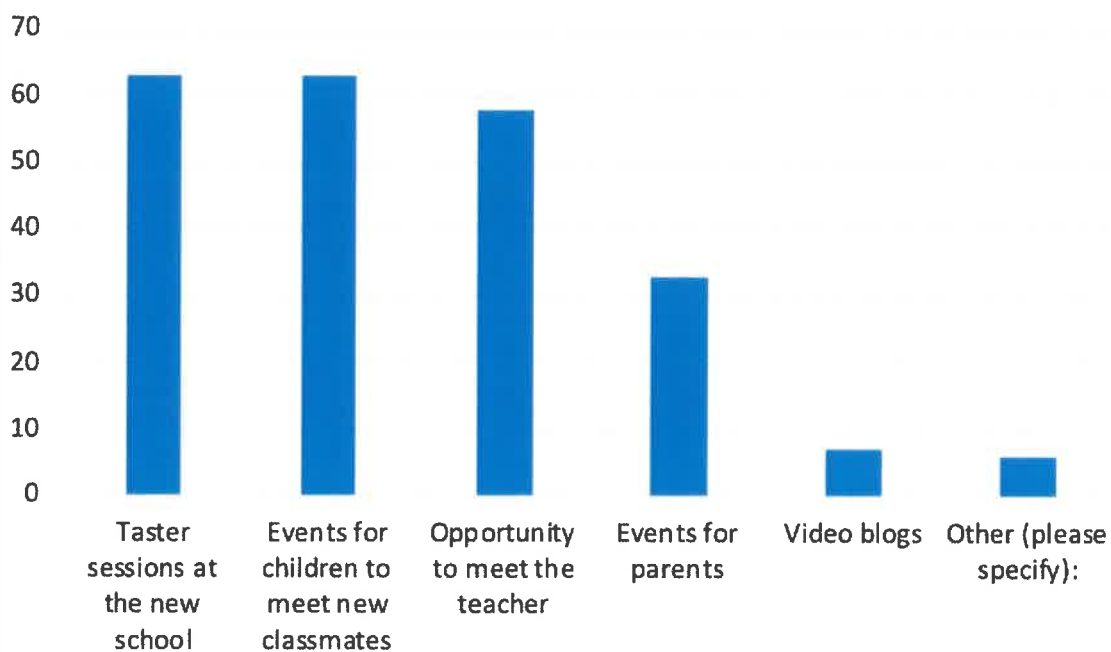
What do you think we should do about school uniform?



6. Transition Arrangements

We asked parents with children who would be affected by the changes to identify the activities they would like to see to ensure their child settles well into the new arrangement. Taster sessions, events for children to meet their new classmates and opportunities to meet the teacher were most popular.

What activities do you think would help to ensure your child settles well into the new arrangement?



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7. Other comments about the proposal

Respondents were asked to provide any further comments they had on the proposal – 47 did so, with the key themes identified below.

Comment Theme	Number of respondents
Pleased / excited about the proposal	17
Focus on improving teaching/learning or wait for Ofsted before making changes	7
Issues with the consultation process	6
Alternative change proposed	4
Comments in relation to Sunbeams	4
Logistics of delivery	4
Fine as we are, no change needed	3
The decision should be school leaders, not parents/residents	2
Seems to benefit RSM over SPS	2
Repetition of concerns from previous question	3

NB. Where respondents provided more than one comment all have been categorised

The most significant comment was from people who were in support of the proposal with many of these expressing their excitement about the potential changes.

Almost 15% of people who responded to this question suggested it would be better to wait until after Ofsted with the focus of people's time being on continuing to raise standards of education at the schools. It was suggested that a good Ofsted judgement would do more to attract children than making structural changes.

Six respondents expressed their views about how the consultation had been undertaken, highlighting that insufficient information was provided in the consultation document, no minutes of meetings had been shared and that consultation events were poorly organised.

The following is a breakdown of the respondents who provided further comments:

- 28 parents
- 10 residents
- 4 future parents
- 4 staff
- 1 child

8. Response from Parish Councils

One response was received from a local Parish Council. Bramerton Parish Council responded to the consultation in support of the proposal. However, they felt that the following should be considered prior to implementing any changes:

- Transport between the two villages
- Start and finish times
- Admissions policies
- The hours of operation for Sunbeams Pre-School as longer hours could result in increased users
- Alternative parking at Rockland St Mary

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- Local parents need to be encouraged to use their local school, with the reasons why this is not happening being explored.

The full response is available on the school website.

9. Response from the Local Authority

Norfolk County Council did not support our proposal. Whilst they understood the rationale behind it and our intent to enhance the quality of teaching they opposed it for the following reasons:

- It goes against their current policy of combining infant and junior schools
- The proposed model would create schools of less than 105 children in number, which does not comply with their current strategy
- Current figures suggest that single year classes would not be possible in all years
- There will be implications for the Local Authority's transport budget as some children would be eligible for free school transport
- They envisage that transport will be a key issue for parents
- The pre-school would not provide childcare for working parents who may require a full day's care.

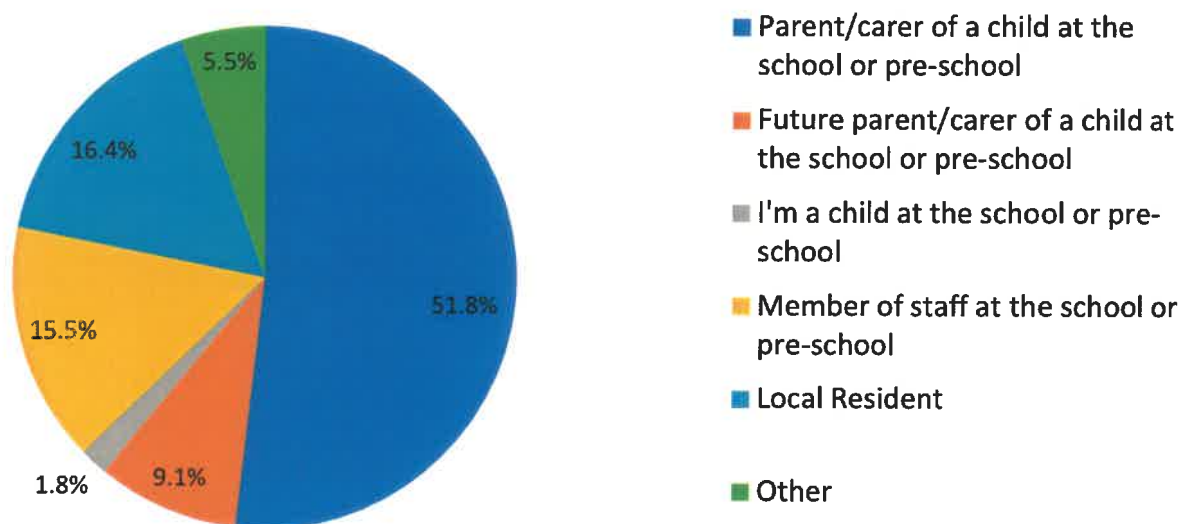
The full response is available on the school website.

10. Response from other schools / pre-schools

None was received.

11. Who responded

What is your current relationship to the schools or pre-school?



From: Yvonne Wonnacott <bramertonpc@outlook.com>

Sent: 23 July 2019 18:36

To: Head - Old Buckenham Primary <executivehead@oldbuckenham-pri.norfolk.sch.uk>

Subject: Re: Bramerton Parish Councils Response to Consultation on proposed change of age ranges at Rockland St Mary and Surlingham Primary Schools

Good Evening Julia,

With reference to the consultation on the proposed change of age ranges at Rockland St Mary and Surlingham Primary Schools. You kindly agreed to an extension till close of play 24th July 2019 to allow the Parish Council to discuss this item at our next meeting. This item was discussed at our Parish Council meeting on 22nd July 2019 at which it was agreed that the Parish Council supports this proposal. However, the Parish Council feels that the following items need to be taken into consideration before and when implementing any future changes;

1. Transport between Rockland St Mary and Surlingham (and other villages) is an important issue that needs to be taken into consideration, particularly where parents did not have their own transport, and/or where parents might have children in both schools. Would free school transport be available?
2. Would both schools have common start and finish times? This could be an issue for parents with children in both schools.
3. The admissions policies for both schools requires clarification; for instance would the admission policies have the same criteria?
4. Recommend that if Sunbeams pre-school is moved to Rockland St Mary that the hours of pre-school are re-evaluated as currently the operating hours are limited due to other users of Bramerton Village Hall. Longer hours could result in an increased number of users due to greater flexibility.
5. Alternative parking at Rockland St Mary needs to be considered as School Lane is already highly congested at school times, and the relocation of Sunbeams to this site would make the situation much worse.
6. Local parents need to be encouraged to use their local schools and the reasons why this is not always happening at present need to be explored.

Kind Regards

Yvonne Wonnacott

Parish Clerk to Bramerton Parish Council

Louise Cornell
Chair of Governors
Rockland St Mary & Surlingham Primary School Local Governing Body

2 July 2019

Dear Louise

Thank you for sharing the change of age groups consultation proposal for Surlingham and Rockland Primary Schools. I am responding on behalf of the Local Authority following the consultation information you have provided.

The information is very clear and detailed and shows that you have a considered organisational vision for the future of these two schools.

The Local Authority understands the rationale behind the proposal and the obvious intent on the part of the Trust to facilitate quality teaching and to provide an appropriate curriculum for all the children.

However, the Local Authority is unable to support the proposed change of age ranges at Rockland and Surlingham Primary schools and opposes the changes for the following reasons:-

- The stated policy of Norfolk County Council is for Infant and Junior schools to combine wherever and whenever possible to create all through Primary schools. This is to mitigate the dip effect on children's progress that a change of school at the end of key stage 1 is known to have. This change would create a new junior and a new infant school.
- The published strategy for school organisation in Norfolk states that any changes made should not create a school of less than 105 on roll. The creation of this infant school, with an initial anticipated number on roll of less than 30 [not including any additional pre-school children] would not comply with this. At least one class would still need to be mixed age, the finances would continue to be challenging, and the school could be verging on unsustainable before its inception. Similarly the junior school with less than 70 on roll could have sustainability issues.
- Pupil numbers at both schools indicate that at least in the first instance pupil numbers would not sustain individual year group teaching, a clear rationale for the change, and that it may not be a viable option for a number of years as current numbers move through the schools.

The schools have geographical limitations in terms of attracting larger numbers because they are bordered by the river.

- There will be implications for the Local Authority transport budget.

It is likely that the cost to the local Authority will increase as children may be living across the entirety of the new catchment area.

The walking route between the schools has been assessed and determined to be available, in accordance with NCC's school transport policy. This means there could be considerable implications for the schools and families. The declared intention of the Trust is to stagger drop off times.

Parents with transport would possibly be able to manage a double drop off in 20/25 minutes as long as there were no hold ups, somewhere to park, no need to talk to staff, no need to assist the child or inform the school office of anything.

Parents with no transport and children at both schools may have to walk the distance between the schools, a distance of just over 2 miles, plus possibly the distance from their home depending on where they live and the ages of their family.

Families could qualify for free transport for 1 child and not another depending on where they live and their ages meaning that they would be involved with waiting for the transport and taking their other child to school.

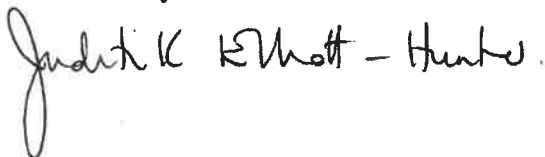
The implications for staggered start and finish times are therefore large, meaning a probable half hour difference. The complicated arrangements for the Trust would need to be flexible and vary year on year as new families join and others move on.

- A pre-school working to school hours whilst being able to provide 30 hours childcare would not be offering a service to working parents who may need full days care and/or including breakfast and after school care unless provided at both schools. This would involve significant additional staffing and transport and the related financial implications would affect sustainability.

The Local Authority has been working with Governing Boards and Multi Academy schools to promote the sustainability of small schools in Norfolk for the last 6 years and against an extensive background of the factors that have emerged from this work, cannot be supportive of this consultation.

We very much appreciate the approach of the Sapientia Multi Academy Trust in working with us to find solutions for small schools and we continue to uphold the presumption against closure where schools are sustainable.

Yours sincerely



Judith Elliott-Hunter
Senior Advisor
Education Participation, Infrastructure and Partnerships