

Averham Kelham & Staythorpe Parish Council

Kelham Residents Responses to a request for opinions on secondary school catchment areas

Background

The closure of Manners Sutton Primary School in Averham resulted in the re-allocation of its catchment area to Dean Hole School in Caunton, Lowes Wong School in Southwell and in the case of Kelham to Muskham Primary School in North Muskham.

As a “Tuxford Family School”, Muskham Primary School is a feeder school to Tuxford Academy for key stage 3 or year 7 onwards.

The village of Kelham however, whilst being in the catchment area of Muskham Primary School for reception, infant & junior pupils, it currently lies within the catchment of The Suthers School in Fernwood for key stage 3 or year 7 onwards.

There is a similar situation in Averham and Staythorpe where the catchment junior school is Lowes Wong or Dean Hole (for Averham Park) followed by Suthers School in Fernwood for Key stage 3 or year 7 onwards.

However as a result of an approach to Minster School and subsequent consultation, from September 2024 intake, Averham and Staythorpe will be included in The Minster School catchment area. This achieves the following;

1/ It allows children from Staythorpe, Averham and Averham Park to transition from their catchment junior schools (Lowes Wong and Dean Hole) with their friendship groups to Minster School avoiding the trauma of joining secondary school on their own (currently Suthers in Fernwood).

2/ It avoids the bus journey through or around Newark which will be particularly arduous when a) the A46 bypass work is commenced, b) the road is flooded.

3/ Historically many children from Averham and Staythorpe have attended and still do attend The Minster School so the potential increase in numbers is very minimal. However, residing in catchment, would give a significantly higher priority in admissions policy than is currently afforded to them.

So the Parish Council would like to hear the views of all residents of Kelham (not just those with school age children) on secondary school catchment for Kelham? Considering that currently there is a prospect of pupils residing in Kelham attending their catchment school in North Muskham but transitioning at age 11/ year 7 to Suthers School in Fernwood when the majority of their cohort transition to Tuxford.

Responses received (names have been omitted)

1. Our three children have been through the school system and the youngest left in 2019. Being in Kelham is less than ideal and there is no straightforward answer to the secondary school question. For us, there was confusion over catchment and feeder schools and huge concern over the quality of Newark schools. It seems that this confusion still exists.

Fernwood seems a ridiculous catchment school for Kelham children, Minster is much more convenient in terms of travel, and children are far more likely to have friends around Southwell and surrounding villages than Fernwood/Balderton.

Where is the bus to Fernwood? Not from Kelham I assume?

Speaking from experience, and especially if you have several children, a bus from the village is a blessing and saves parents an enormous amount of time and money.

We fought hard to get our eldest into Minster as that was our first choice and there was a bus from the village, but we failed even after appeal.

She was at Muskham Primary and had no problem getting into Tuxford as it was a feeder school.

However, there was no bus from the village so we had to drive her to Muskham and pay for the bus as we weren't technically in catchment. Is this still the case? Obviously this is an issue for parents with lower incomes. For parents who both work full time, how do their children get from the bus stop at South Muskham to Kelham? It's certainly not safe for them to walk!

Also the importance of children being able to transition to secondary school with their primary school cohort. The transition is already hard enough, so if Kelham children are going to North Muskham Primary, then they should have an automatic right to go to Tuxford with their friends. A free bus should also be provided.

Moving them to Fernwood where they know no one would be really tough.

2. I currently live in Kelham with 2 primary school children going to Muskham and a child at Tuxford. Tuxford have no transport from the village meaning the only way to get her to school is taking her to the next village and leaving on her own so I can then get back for the others to get their school bus. Doing the reverse on a night. This leaves the children at risk as they can't get home themselves if there is a problem. It also makes their school day much longer as they catch their bus at 7.45 and don't return until 4.10 on an evening.

I feel as there is already transport to the Minster from Kelham that their catchment should also cover Kelham. Giving parents the option to choose what is right for their children.

I did apply to Suthers originally as my catchment school but didn't get in as it was oversubscribed, leaving me questioning whether Kelham should be in their catchment particularly with all the new housing that is been built around the school.

3. I took my child (currently year 5 at Muskham) to a few open days this October just to get an idea of secondary schools before needing to decide next year. We went to look at Tuxford, Minster and Suthers. Tuxford came out as a favourite of ours, we felt it was the best overall and the one most of her friends at Muskham will be attending, but the drawback is being out of catchment. This makes our odds slightly lower for getting in and also if we did get a place, we would have to pay for school bus transport which ends up being very expensive for a school

year. Annoyingly the catchment area for Tuxford currently ends before you get to the top of Ollerton Road in Kelham (which even more annoyingly is the road we live on) I don't understand why Muskham was assigned the primary in catchment for Kelham but then the feeder school Tuxford isn't.

I did email both NCC admissions and Tuxford Academy to see if there was any plan to relook at catchment areas and got the following reply:

All secondary schools in Nottinghamshire are own admission authority schools are therefore are responsible for their own admission arrangements, including any catchment area in line with the requirements of the Schools Admissions Code 2021. NCC is not aware of any proposed change to catchments area for the schools you list below, however you are advised to contact the school directly if you require further information.

Sue Jackson
Clerk AKS Parish Council