

Background and Further Information on the Proposed Reorganisation of C of E Primary School Provision in Bristol City Centre.

1. St Michael's-on-the-Mount and St George Schools are Voluntary Controlled C of E primary schools, located in central Bristol. In recent years both schools have operated below their capacity with a large proportion of empty places. St Michael's has a capacity of 210 (7 year groups of 30 pupils). St George has a capacity of 105 (7 year groups of 15 pupils). Numbers of pupils starting school in Bristol peaked in 2016. Falling birth rates mean there is now less demand across the city and the falling numbers at St Michael's and St George reflect this.

Numbers on Roll from January School Census		
	St Michael's	St George
2010	184	80
2011	193	89
2012	184	81
2013	194	81
2014	201	85
2015	196	83
2016	180	79
2017	165	91
2018	170	68
2019	137	57
2020	107	58

2. The schools have not been able to attract sufficient numbers of parents to apply for places for their children in the Reception Year. The table below shows the first preferences since 2015. When Bristol was experiencing growth in applications for Reception, pupils were regularly offered places as the preferred school was oversubscribed. With demand for primary school places now falling, fewer pupils are offered a place that is not in a preferred school. Additionally, fewer pupils are being offered the schools in other year groups as in-year applications can be accommodated in preference schools.

First Preferences (on-time applications)		
Admission Year	St Michael's	St George
September 2015	13	2
September 2016	10	5
September 2017	17	0
September 2018	6	5
September 2019	7	8
September 2020	7	0

3. Although both schools are judged to be 'Good' by Ofsted, the financial issues faced by the schools mean that the governors do not feel able to provide an appropriate standard of education on both sites.
4. To meet the financial and organisational challenges faced by having low numbers of pupils the schools have implemented changes such as sharing a headteacher and business manager and reorganising classes. This has not however proved sufficient to allow the schools to continue without further changes.

5. Following a number of years operating as a 'Federation' with one Governing Body and one Headteacher it is now proposed that the schools are amalgamated. This could have been achieved with the closure of one of the schools but to ensure equity, particularly with regard to staff, it is proposed that both schools close and a new school is opened in their place.
6. The new school will open in the buildings of St Michael's. This site was chosen as the St George site is not large enough to accommodate all the pupils from both schools and would not allow the school to operate at full capacity of 210 pupils, should this be needed in future.
7. If the proposals are approved, all pupils from both schools can be accommodated in the new school. Under DfE guidance parents will be asked to apply for a place at the school and a formal offer made. The majority of pupils are already attending the St Michael's site but for some pupils attending St George, the home to school travel distance may be further. The vast majority of pupils will continue to be within the statutory walking distance.
8. As most pupils will be able to continue to walk to school there is no anticipated increase in car use caused by the proposals.
9. The new school will open significantly below the capacity of 210. This will mean that funding will be challenging from the start. Staffing and class structures will need to reflect the available budget. Costs relating the school buildings can be reduced as there will only be one site to maintain.
10. The amalgamation has been proposed following discussions over a long period involving the schools, the Diocese and the LA and offers an opportunity to continue to provide C of E primary education in the city centre.
11. Under statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education (Opening and closing maintained schools - Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers), proposals to close ("discontinue" in legislation), the Local Authority is the 'Decision-maker in these circumstances. Proposers and decision-makers must have regard to the guidance when making proposals and decisions and decisions must be made with regard to the factors outlined in the guidance and follow the relevant statutory process.
12. If the proposal is approved, the St George building would initially be considered for other education uses.