

Decision Pathway – Report



PURPOSE: Key decision

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 25 February 2021

TITLE	Proposal to Close St Pius X Primary School		
Ward(s)	Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe & Withywood, Hengrove.		
Author: Ian Bell	Job title: Place Planning Manager		
Cabinet lead: Councillor Anna Keen	Executive Director lead: Jacqui Jensen		
Proposal origin: BCC Staff			
Decision maker: Cabinet Member			
Decision forum: Cabinet			
Purpose of Report:			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the proposal by governors to close St Pius X Catholic Primary School. 			
Evidence Base:			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Governing Body of St Pius X School have proposed closing the school from 31 August 2021. This requires approval from the Local Authority as the ‘Decision Maker’ under Department for Education Statutory Guidance. 2. For a significant number of years St Pius X has faced educational challenges, resulting in the school moving between providing an “Inadequate” provision of education and “Requires Improvement”. It has currently been in Special Measures for a period of 2 years. (Ofsted Rating June 2018) 3. The school has consistently admitted fewer pupils than the capacity which has had a significant impact on the school’s financial situation meaning a deficit budget has had to be set for the last 3 years. During this time the City Council and the Diocese of Clifton has provided both substantial financial support as well as advisory and educational support. 4. From an analysis of pupil places across the area and projected numbers of pupils in future, it is apparent that there is a surplus of pupil places within the immediate area and this will continue for the foreseeable future. This means that even should St Pius X come out of special measures the number of pupils would remain low and this would result in the school continuing to have significant financial issues for the long term. Current Reception figures stand at eleven pupils. Regrettably therefore, this makes the school unsustainable and unable to provide at least a good quality Catholic education. 5. Over a number of years, the Governors have worked closely with the Clifton Diocese and Bristol City Council to carefully consider a number of options to improve the long-term viability of the school, none of which have proved effective for the long term. 6. Owing to the school’s financial situation and low numbers of pupils, the school is not viable to be taken on within a Multi-academy Trust, which has been an option consistently explored by the Diocese of Clifton. 7. The Governing Body have followed the appropriate process under Department for Education Statutory Guidance. 8. All required information required is set out in the full proposal. 9. If the proposal is approved, parents will be asked for their preference of alternative school. Where possible places will be offered at preferred schools. An alternative school place will be offered for every child displaced as a result of the closure. 			
Cabinet Member / Officer Recommendations:			
That Cabinet:			

1. Approves the Governing Body's recommendation to close St Pius X Catholic Primary School.

Corporate Strategy alignment:

1. This proposal will help to improve educational outcomes to help the city become Fair and inclusive.

City Benefits:

1. With pupil numbers remaining very low and a lack of improvement to educational standards, the governing body do not feel the school can offer a suitable education. Improving educational standards and opportunities will benefit the community in the longer term.

Consultation Details:

1. The proposal was the subject of consultation with parents, staff, the LA and Catholic Diocese prior to publication of the full proposal. This included online meetings with parents and staff.
2. As required in the statutory guidance the full proposals were published on the school website on 18th December 2020, with a shorter version published in the Bristol Post. The proposals were also sent to Department for Education and others as required by the guidance. The notice period ended on 15th January 2021.
3. Consultation responses are summarised in appendix B.
4. Most respondents expressed their regret that a small school with a caring ethos was being proposed for closure, whilst recognising the financial difficulties caused by low pupil numbers.

Background Documents:

1. Opening and closing maintained schools - Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers (Department for Education, November 2019) [Opening and closing maintained schools1012.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91122/opening-and-closing-maintained-schools-1012.pdf)
2. Education and Inspections Act 2006 (As amended by the Education Act 2011) [Education and Inspections Act 2006 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/42/section/1)
3. School Organisation (Establishments and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 [The School Organisation \(Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools\) Regulations 2013 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/1211/section/1)
4. Full Proposal and Public Notice [St Pius X Catholic Primary School - Home \(st-piusx.bristol.sch.uk\)](https://www.st-piusx.bristol.sch.uk)
5. Ofsted Inspection Reports [Ofsted | St Pius X RC Primary School](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspections/141444)

Revenue Cost	£	Source of Revenue Funding	
Capital Cost	£ n/a	Source of Capital Funding	n/a
One off cost <input type="checkbox"/>	Ongoing cost <input type="checkbox"/>	Saving Proposal <input type="checkbox"/>	Income generation proposal <input type="checkbox"/>

Required information to be completed by Financial/Legal/ICT/ HR partners:

1. Finance Advice: At the end of 2019/20 the school had a surplus balance of £56k and is forecasting to end 2020/21 with a £110k surplus. Due to the falling number of pupils, funding for 2021/22 will reduce by £96k (taking into account teachers pay and pension grant funding), so unless pupil numbers significantly increase the financial situation is not sustainable without substantial savings and the school will be operating in a deficit position. When closing a maintained school the balance will return to the LA, there is a reserve available which will cover any deficit balance. The final position, which is likely to be a deficit, will only be know when closure date is confirmed and the cost of any redundancies are calculated.

Finance Business Partner Graham Booth – Finance Manager, Children & Education 27 January 2021.

2. Legal Advice: Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act empowers the governing body of a voluntary aided school to publish proposals to discontinue its own school following the statutory process as detailed in appendix Aii. The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 specify how the proposals are to be publicised, which bodies are to receive copies and a statutory consultation period. The consultation detailed in Appendix B complies with the specified requirements in the Regulations. The proposals were consulted on prior to

the statutory consultation with the responses summarised in Appendix B. The responses must be taken into account by Cabinet when taking the decision. The statutory consultation period of 4 weeks, inviting comments or objections, ended on 15th January 2021 and no objections or comments were received during that period. The equalities impact assessment at Appendix E will assist Cabinet in complying with the public sector equality duty when making this decision.

Legal Team Leader: Sarah Sharland Team Leader Litigation Regulatory and Community Team. 16th February 2021.

3. Implications on IT: No impact on IT services.

IT Team Leader: Simon Oliver, 4 January 2021.

4. HR Advice: The governors are working with advice from the LA. Should the decision to close the school be approved the school will follow it's procedure for consulting staff and issuing notice, and allowing them to make representations to the Governing Body. Any employees with two or more years' service who do not get a job elsewhere within the authority (or employer covered by the Redundancy Payments Modifications Order) will be entitled to a redundancy payment, calculated in accordance with the school's severance policy (which is based on the council's). All severance costs will fall to the school's budget.

HR Partner: Jan Mackenzie 21 January 2021

EDM Sign-off	Jacqui Jensen	6 th January 2021
Cabinet Member sign-off	Councillor Anna Keen	27 th January 2021
For Key Decisions - Mayor's Office sign-off	Mayor's Office	27 th January 2021

Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal A (i) – Background Information A (ii) – Full Proposal and Statutory Notice	YES
Appendix B – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external • Summary of consultation carried out by St Pius X School	YES
Appendix C – Summary of any engagement with scrutiny	NO
Appendix D – Risk assessment	NO
Appendix E – Equalities screening / impact assessment of proposal – to follow	YES
Appendix F – Eco-impact screening/ impact assessment of proposal	YES
Appendix G – Financial Advice	NO
Appendix H – Legal Advice	NO
Appendix I – Exempt Information	NO
Appendix J – HR advice	NO
Appendix K – ICT	NO
Appendix L – Procurement	NO