

The Future of St Barnabas C of E Primary School

Background

It is with much regret that Bristol City Council, together with the Governing Body is proposing the closure of St Barnabas C of E (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School.

St Barnabas C of E Primary is a small, urban primary school for children aged 4-11. The school has a published admission number (PAN) of 30. This is the number of children the school can admit into the Reception year group if there is sufficient demand. The total capacity of the school is 210 pupils. The school has been under-subscribed for a number of years and total pupil numbers fall significantly short of the school's capacity.

The school currently has only 70 pupils on roll (November 2022). 13 of these are in Year 6 and will be leaving the school in July. Only 10 children started in the Reception year group in September 2022.

Number on roll by year group

Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
10	10	8	6	9	13	13

(October 2022)

Total Numbers on Roll since 2015 (October school census)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Reception	26	21	28	18	10	11	5	10
Year 1	25	25	26	24	13	8	8	10
Year 2	24	27	24	19	19	10	9	8
Year 3	27	25	26	21	12	16	9	6
Year 4	28	28	26	21	13	12	16	9
Year 5	42	28	25	21	17	10	9	13
Year 6	45	46	29	25	18	17	8	13
Total	217	200	180	149	102	84	64	69

The governing body and staff have worked hard to mitigate the effects of falling pupil numbers, by reducing staffing, including deleting the Deputy Headteacher post, and changing the class structure over the last 2-3 years. There are currently 4 mixed year group classes which brings challenges for staff in delivering the full curriculum across Early Years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. This reduction to the staffing and class structure is as a direct result of falling pupil numbers and the subsequent budget reduction that this brings since school budgets are based largely on pupil numbers.

The governors and headteacher have also had to consider further reduction of staffing and class structure for the current year and moving forwards, such as to a 3 class structure for example. The governors see this as unsustainable in offering the quality and breadth of provision that is required and that the pupils deserve.

In-year budget deficits have been substantial. Reserves from previous years have been used to minimise disruption to pupils but these have now been exhausted and the school is facing a major budget deficit in future years.

The budget reduction also impacts directly on staff roles. There are increased responsibilities because a smaller number of staff have to cover all responsibilities and duties. This in turn brings recruitment challenges.

Future Demographic

There are currently around 25% surplus places in the local area and this is forecast to increase. Area health authority data which provides the number of 0-4 year olds living in the area shows a continuing decline in the numbers of pre-school aged children and parental preference for admission to the school has been low in recent years. Surrounding schools also have available places but attract a higher number of parental preferences.

Other Options

Before reaching the conclusion that the school had become unsustainable, other options were looked at.

Amalgamation (merger) with another school is not possible as there are no other local voluntary controlled C of E schools that would be suitable and the underlying issue of low pupil numbers in the St Barnabas building would remain.

Many of the surrounding schools belong to Multi-Academy Trusts where additional support can be offered and where costs can be shared. Unfortunately it has not been possible to find a Trust that could accept St Barnabas as the current and projected pupil numbers mean the school is regarded as financially unviable. Although there has and continues to be, new housing development in the area this is not generating additional demand for pupil places.

A suggestion was made of possible conversion to a Special School. This is not possible under School Organisation legislation which still requires the primary to close and a new special school opened. Currently new special schools can only be opened under the 'free school' programme and cannot be proposed by the Council.

Finances

Schools are mainly funded by an amount of money for each child attending the school. Support has been provided by the City Council and Bristol Diocese but maintaining high quality provision with good teaching and learning is difficult on a low budget.

The school is judged by Ofsted as one which 'Requires Improvement'. This judgement was initially made in 2017 and since this time the staff and governors have been working hard to provide the best possible education for all children. However, delivery of a full and balanced curriculum at St Barnabas C of E Primary School is difficult with such a small and decreasing number of children.

Admissions and transport arrangements

Should St Barnabas C of E Primary School close on 31 August 2023, parents and carers would be able to express a preference for a place at an alternative school. Bristol City Council will manage this process and ensure there are local places for all families. Parents and carers would be asked to complete an in-year admissions application form and to name up to three schools they would prefer their child(ren) to attend. Bristol City Council would try to meet parent and carers' preferences wherever possible but cannot guarantee to do so as it would depend upon vacancies at that time. Admission Officers from Bristol City Council would be available to support families in completing in-

year applications. The process would not be on a first-come, first served basis as all parents would have an opportunity to consider their options.

Staff

The staff group is aware of the circumstances, and the recognised trade unions have been notified of the consultation. Staff are invited to submit responses to the public consultation. A separate consultation process will be arranged for staff regarding their future, if a decision is made to close the school. In the event of closure, the governing body and Council would aim to mitigate the number of redundancies by seeking redeployment opportunities. There would also be support for staff in finding alternative employment.

The Decision-making Process

The decision to consult on the future of the school has not been made lightly but is being brought forward in light of the low demand for school places and the challenges the school faces in delivering the curriculum to such a small number of children. No decision to close the school has yet been made. This document is part of a statutory process that must be followed and is a legal requirement. Consultation is taking place with all pupils, parents, staff of the school as well as other stakeholders, for example Unions, MP and local Councillors for a period of four weeks. Following this period responses will be considered by the City Council's Cabinet and a final decision made. This will be in February. If closure is approved, then the school would close on 31 August 2023.

All documents and updates will be provided on the school website and also on Bristol City Council's consultation website www.bristol.gov.uk/stbarnabas.

How to share your views and seek further information

If you require further information or wish to comment on the proposal you can write to:

Email: ian.bell@bristol.gov.uk

Post: Ian Bell, Place Planning Manager, Education and Skills (CH), Bristol City Council, PO Box 3399, Bristol BS1 9NE.

The closing date for responses is 16th December 2022, by 12:00 PM (midday) (4 weeks from date of publication).

Information Required under Annex B of the Department for Education’s “Opening and closing maintained schools - Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers” (November 2019)

**St Barnabas Church of England Primary School
Albany Road, Montpelier, Bristol BS6 5LQ**

SECTION 15 OF THE EDUCATION AND INSPECTIONS ACT 2006 (AS AMENDED BY THE EDUCATION ACT 2011) and the SCHOOL ORGANISATION (ESTABLISHMENTS AND DISCONTINUANCE OF SCHOOLS) REGULATIONS 2013

Proposal to close St Barnabas Church of England Primary School on 31st August 2023.

1. Contact Details

This information is the Full Proposal published by Bristol City Council, to close St Barnabas Church of England Primary School, Albany Road, Montpelier, Bristol BS6 5LQ.

2. Implementation

The proposal is to discontinue St Barnabas Church of England Primary School with effect from 31 August 2021. The proposal is not related to any other school organisation proposal.

3. Reason for closure

St Barnabas is a one form entry C of E Primary school. The school has consistently admitted fewer pupils than the capacity which has had a significant impact on the school’s financial situation.

Projected numbers of pupils in future years indicate there will be a surplus of pupil places within the immediate area which will increase will continue for the foreseeable future. This means that the number of pupils will remain low and this would result in the school continuing to have significant financial issues for the long term. This makes the school unsustainable and unable to provide a good quality education.

Over a number of years, the Governors and Bristol City Council have considered a number of options to improve the long-term viability of the school, none of which have proved effective for the long term.

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.

4. Pupil Numbers and Admission

St Barnabas is a C of E Primary Voluntary Controlled School for children aged 4 – 11 and offers up to 30 reception places each year, with a total capacity for 210 pupils across all year groups. Although numbers of pupils at the school have fluctuated for many years, they have been consistently well below the capacity. There are currently 70 pupils on roll (November 2022).

5. Displaced Pupils

There is sufficient capacity within the local school system to offer suitable alternative provision now and into the future. Any pupil displaced as a result of a school closure would be given support and assistance by the Council to obtain a suitable place at another school.

6. Impact on the community

Pupils currently attending St Barnabas and future pupils in the area can be accommodated in local schools.

Whilst the Council recognises the school has had a long history within the community and is saddened to propose closure, the school governors have been unable to find any viable and sustainable options for the future of the school.

7. Rural Primary Schools

The school is not designated as a rural primary school under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order 2016.

8. Special Educational Needs Provision

The school is not recognised by the local authority as reserved for pupils with special educational needs. Should the proposal be implemented, the Council would work with any pupils who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or may have been identified with additional needs to ensure their needs are met in the most appropriate setting.

9. Balance of denominational provision

Currently very few C of E children attend the school. The proposed closure would not remove the choice of denominational provision from the area. C of E primary schools in the city have significant numbers of surplus places.

10. Maintained Nursery Schools

Not applicable

11. Sixth form provision

Not applicable

12. Travel

The vast majority of pupils will continue to be able to walk to school. When required travel support will remain available in line with the LA's Home to School Transport Policy. Details of this can be found by visiting www.bristol.gov.uk/schools-learning-early-years/school-travel

13. Procedure for making representations (objections and comments)

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal (until 16 December 2022), any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to:

ian.bell@bristol.gov.uk or

Ian Bell, School Place Planning Manager, Education and Skills (CH), Bristol City Council, PO Box 3399, Bristol BS1 9NE.

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