

Responses to the Published Proposal

1. Background

- Prior to publication of a formal proposal consultation was undertaken with parents and staff, including meetings on 1st November 2022 with attendance by school governors and Bristol City Council officers.
- Following this period of consultation with parents and staff, the school governors asked the Local Authority to proceed with the proposal that the school should close with effect from the end of the current academic year, 2022/23.
- The proposal was published on 18th November and was in place for the statutory 4-week period, ending on 16th December 2022. A short version of the proposal was published in the Bristol Post and the proposal was sent to Statutory consultees and the Department for Education. The school sent copies of the proposal to parents and staff on the day of publication. All statutory consultees (the Secretary of State, the C of E Diocesan Board of Education and the bishop of the Roman Catholic diocese) were also sent a copy in line with statutory guidance.
- The proposal asked for responses to be sent to the Local Authority's School Place Planning Manager by email or post.
- The response rate was very high compared to similar proposals published in 2020. Some responses consisted of multiple emails where questions were asked and responded to. Responses were received from the relevant Union on behalf of staff, together with parents and other members of the community. There were also a small number of responses received after the deadline which raised very similar points to those made by previous respondents.

2. Summary of Responses Received

The main themes have been summarised below.

There was very strong general theme in responses about the part St Barnabas has historically played and continues to play in the local community and how that would be affected by closure.

Special Educational Needs/Pupil Support

Many of the responses have referred to the school's experience with and support for pupils with SEND, particularly those with autism. The small classes and high pupil to staff ratio and the caring nature of the school have also been referenced. There were a number of people asking about a possible Specialist Resource Base or even a conversion of the school to a Special School. There was a view that it will cost more to educate the pupils in special schools than in St Barnabas.

Finances

Some responses stated that the school should be supported financially until numbers improve.

Accuracy of Data, Pupil Numbers, Places in Surrounding Schools

There were questions around the basis of the data being used including numbers of pupils from new housing and surrounding schools reducing their intakes.

Site/Facilities

Some respondents described how the school offers good green space and playing field, with others not having these facilities. There were also questions about the future use of the site.

Process

There was some criticism of the process including a suspicion that staff were not being allowed to comment

3. Responses

The following are responses received to the proposal. Responses have been edited to remove any reference to individuals and repetition.

It appears that the council allowed too many schools to open in error and this has resulted in too many primary places in the area. It is unjust that the most culturally rich school (with the most outdoor space) with the most diverse pupil population should be the school that gets closed.

Its sad to hear that St Barnabas is closing and something we don't want to happen, its a school that our family have been attending for over 20 years with many of our children graduating and many more hopefully following in their siblings footsteps. By closing St Barnabas you're essential robbing them of their right to enjoy their education in a place they love and feel safe.

I hear St Barnabas is on track for a good Ofsted. I Strongly believe that the council should financially support St Barnabas until it becomes financially secure again as it seems as though it is the council's mistake that has led to this problem. The children shouldn't be made to suffer for a miscalculation.

I'm writing to strongly object to the closure of this school. I understand that the school is not at capacity at present, but I feel that it is incredibly short-sighted if BCC decides to close the school permanently. As you'll be aware there are recent and on-going multiple new developments in close proximity to St Barnabas and people living in those new developments will need somewhere for their children to go to school. The other primary providers in the vicinity are not in a position to either fulfil that demand or expand to accept additional year groups, e.g. St Werburgh's primary and Cabot primary in St Paul's. While there may have been falling rolls at St Barnabas in recent years, that will not necessarily continue and the short term gain in closing the school, will likely result in long term negative issues for the area.

It will also cost the Council a significant amount of money to close the school, through redundancy payments to staff; although I suspect that this will be offset by the sale of the site, no doubt to a housing developer, which in turn will build residential property on the site, creating the demand for more school places in the local area, which again, cannot be met by either St Werburgh's or Cabot. Where will the children who would have gone to St Barnabas go, and where will the children who are currently pupils there be relocated, when there aren't the local spaces for them?

St Barnabas has improved significantly in recent years, and it's very likely to receive a rating of Good or Outstanding following Ofsted inspection. This will no doubt boost the numbers of people applying to send their children there and shows what a valuable local asset this is.

I know that the Council is strapped for cash and has been starved of finances by 12 years of the Tories withholding the necessary funding to local authorities but closing St Barnabas and selling the land off for housing (which will no doubt happen) is not the answer in this case.

I am a volunteer for a charity called Transforming Lives for Good (TLG). We provide early intervention for children who are struggling at school and not engaging with learning or school life. This can be for

a number of reasons but trauma, neglect, poverty, domestic violence and poor language skills because English is not the child's first language can all be contributory factors. Sometimes there are also low level special educational needs that don't meet the high bar for statutory support but still contribute to low engagement. TLG started working at St Barnabas in 2019 at the invitation of the Senco with 5 coaches, now 4. Each child is selected by the Senco for support and we work with a child for a year. Our support carried on during the pandemic and lockdowns as a very high percentage of children at St Barnabas are considered 'vulnerable' and the school remained open to most of their children and face-to-face teaching continued. What I have seen is that St Barnabas is a very special, ethnically mixed school with particularly dedicated staff and a value system that treats each child as an individual with their own needs. As a small school it is able to give these vulnerable and very often deprived children the nurturing and individual attention they need. Its catchment area means that it doesn't get the resources provided by active PTAs and it frequently seems underfunded but it is resourceful and creative with what it has. There are always exciting new projects and learning opportunities underway. It has a wonderful green space in the middle of the city and sport, forest-type school and vegetable gardening are all used to engage and teach these inner-city children. It is an appalling shame that Bristol City Council is not able to support a school that is doing such dedicated and skilled work in a part of the city with very high needs and many children at risk of never properly engaging with formal education. What will happen to these children? In larger schools where high attainment is the absolute priority and the high achieving children are given most attention, these vulnerable children will slip out of sight and their needs be ignored, or else their frustrated behaviour will become so challenging that they end up being excluded. St Barnabas is also a true community school and belongs to St Paul's. By closing it you are depriving this disadvantaged area of its own community school that is shaped and responsive to meet local needs.

I can't believe the council is trying to shut a school with such amazing SEN support. I live over in Easton and have 2 severely Autistic (now adult) sons. They were never in mainstream education but if they had been St Barnabas would have been at the top of my list as I know that it is incredibly inclusive and the SENCO is an ASC expert. I thought it was getting an ASD resource base too? I really think it is a travesty to shut a school in such a deprived area which supports the some of most vulnerable in society - the poor and the disabled.

We have very good friends whose son goes to the school. He is autistic and has thrived at the school it is the most local school to them and they had such a super feeling when they first looked around. There was also talk of there being a special needs unit in the future which was obviously a draw too. Should the school be shut they would lose this incredible resource. Due to a poor Ofsted rating the popularity of the school dropped in favour of others in the area, however the academic grades can not be compared to the effect that the space has on the mental health of its pupils. As a teacher myself I am well aware of the importance of consistency in a child's life, especially, but not exhaustively, when the child has SEN. Not only would my friends family and lives be changed negatively by this decision but it would also have a huge impact on many other families - it provides a safe green space for many disadvantaged children who do not have access to any at home. The cost of making staff redundant and also finding suitable alternative places for the children with SEN will be high and a lengthy process. There are so many new developments nearby - surely the more school places the better?

I am a resident in St Werburghs and St Barnabas is my closest school. I strongly believe that St Barnabas is an important school for the community. I understand that it serves SEN kids extremely well as well as deprived families from St Pauls. It will be so disruptive to these vulnerable children to pull them out of school and redeploy them wherever you can find a space. I also understand that the school is used

by several other schools – Fairlawn and Dolphin as well as by local football teams and holiday clubs. Where do these schools and clubs access a local playing field if St Barnabas closes?

I don't have a family yet, but hope to in the imminent future and would love to send them to St Barnabas.

As a local resident whose child attended St Barnabas School some years ago, I would like to outline some of the reasons I think the school should not close: It has long been an excellent school with a caring culture. It has been an important part of the community with a good mix of children from all different backgrounds. During lockdown it ran a food bank for the local community as part of its wider commitment to local people. When, in the past, the demand for school places was suddenly high, St Barnabas responded by adding portacabin classrooms in the playground. Now we see many new developments in the local area: Brooks Dye Works, Ashley Road flats just before the motorway and flats by Stokes Croft traffic lights. Demand may have dropped but it is not difficult to see an expansion in the near future. It would be expensive to close the school and then in a few years have to reopen it again. I hope you will take a long term view and factor in likely increases in new refugees coming from Ukraine, Albania, Afghanistan and other parts of the world. Bristol needs the primary school infrastructure to offer enough local places to welcome new families.

It is with great sadness that I heard about the proposal to close St Barnabas Primary school. This is a school with a deep and significant connection to its local community which has served children exceptionally well over the years and continues to do so now. The low number on role should not be seen as a reason to close this school but as an opportunity to offer genuinely personalised learning to the children in the school. Closing the school and moving the children to other places will have an extremely detrimental impact on their wellbeing and academic progress and these children have already had a very disrupted education due to the Covid Pandemic. The children, families and dedicated Staff should not be put through further disruption. They need Bristol City Council to offer support and to take a longer term view of the contribution of this school to them and the local area. This is a school that is working hard to support children and families locally and the City Council should recognise this and explore all possible ways of securing the school's future.

I live on Ashley Road and value the community here hugely. I am originally from Bristol but moved away and brought up my family in East London. They are now grown up and I am back in Bristol. I often walk past St Barnabas and it reminds me of the local primary school my kids went to: in the community so they could walk to school, where the kids' parents went themselves, a place with space outside for them to play and a park around the corner, and a place where they learn about the world and they make friends with kids who are different from them.

I believe its really important to Bristol to keep places like St Barnabas alive and I'm asking you to keep the school open. This area is changing, and the community is changing, with more Student housing and new developments. Yes, there have always been divided communities in Bristol and yes I know the financial challenges Bristol Council faces are extraordinary, but St Barnabas is more than juSt a primary school. With its history and its place within this community, its value is precious to this city. I hope it can be saved, not just for the pupils and the parents and carers now and in the future, but for the rest of us.

I am writing to express my deep sorrow to hear that St Barnabas is being threatened with closure. I feel this is a huge loss to the city and everything should be done to try and revive the school. My wife and I are looking to Start a family and had hoped our children might attend St Barnabas when they are old enough. We have friends with children there who love the school. In the modern age of huge

classes and education on mass, St Barnabas offered something rare and special. A small school which can focus on the individual, the minority, the child that needs a little extra help. It is a shame that we are sacrificing so much for some utilitarian ideal of efficiency. I would beg you to reconsider the decision and try to save this wonderful institution.

Hello, I have accepted a place at St Barnabas for my son to start in April. It is a warm and nurturing school and will suit his needs better than the oversubscribed St Werburghs school, which he found too busy and overwhelming. This is the only other school within walking distance for us (we don't drive) and he is looking forward to it. Please don't close this school

I'm writing to ask you to protest the planned closure of a tiny c of e school in St. Paul's. It's served the community for many decades and is of great cultural importance. It's a school that serves a poor community with many black and refugee families who are easy targets. The school has excellent SEN provision something we need more of not less in this city. The school is about to get an Outstanding Ofsted which will attract many new pupils. Small is beautiful for SEN and it's great outdoor space is a huge asset. Families in the area will be massively disadvantaged by having to travel for the school run. This school is an enormous asset to the children it supports please help save it.

I would like to add my reasons for keeping St Barnabas School open. I have been a resident of Albany Road for over 20 years and have seen this school grow. St Barnabas School has been the heart of the St Pauls community for 160 years. It provides an inclusive and nurturing environment for local children. It provides excellent support of children with Special Needs and Disabilities and of children from families on low incomes. Also there is currently a lot of new developments in the area who would benefit from the use of this local school. Disrupting the children with SEND who will need to be placed somewhere else. Have already signed the paper petition left at St Paul's Library to save St Barnabas. It looks like another act of desecration - as per the proposal to sell-off the Central Library. Especially over the past few years people have come to appreciate the benefits of green space and the benefits - not least to children (start them young) of gardening: St Barnabas has done this for years. And it has always been notably embracing in the diversity of its children enrolled. The adjacent area already swamped by the Brooks housing development.

I'm writing concerning the potential closure of St Barnabas school in St Pauls. I've previously lived in Bristol for over 7 years and will be moving back early next year and living locally in the area. I was very much considering sending my child to the school - as you can imagine I was very disappointed to hear the news. I'd hope as a local parent that the decision to close the school is reversed - I will keep my fingers crossed.

I am writing on behalf of my husband and myself, to register our support for St Barnabas School, and our opposition to the proposed closure. We have visited the school many times over the last six or seven years, since our grandson Started at the school, now followed by his younger brother and sister. We were always struck by its' peaceful and supportive atmosphere, the beautiful gardens enjoyed by all the pupils, and the friendliness and helpfulness of all the staff. It is a small school, and this seems to be why it is under threat, and yet this is perhaps its' greatest strength. Our eldest grandson is autistic and has received incredible support at the school, which has given him confidence and allowed him to thrive and flourish, where in another larger more impersonal school, he may have struggled. This is a real community school, and the support for the community was clear to see during the pandemic. We understand the current economic pressures but would ask that you think long and hard before putting short term savings above longer term benefits.

I personally wanted to write to you to inform you that my daughter has been going to St. Barnabas Primary which she has been attending from Reception year. My daughter enjoys going to this school not only has she been thriving academically but she also bonded with her teachers over the years which have helped her build her confidence and find her voice. The school has been making it their mission to not only ensure that the children achieve their full potential academically but also ensured that they are mentally and emotionally well, especially during the pandemic. We are hoping for my younger son to attend reception in the next school year as we had a great experience with my older daughter which is why I am hoping that St. Barnabas school remains open. The school has a long history with the St Paul's community and its environs. I live in St Paul's and have four children, all of whom attended. It is disappointing for me and my children to witness our school's closure. The school had made a significant contribution to community inclusion by providing a wonderful environment for communities with diverse ethnic backgrounds and cultures. As a former school governor, I can attest that this school provides excellent support for children with special educational needs and disabilities. The school provides assistance to low-income families.

I am requesting that Bristol City Council consider this decision and allow for broader community participation. It will also be important if you consider the concerns of the local community school staff and current and former students who all want to see their school open. As a local resident, I am well aware that the St. Pauls district has multiple challenges, which is why I am amazed that an educational institution such as St Barnabas primary is threatened with closure. It has a well establish track record of success under very difficult circumstances and is well established within the local community. I am very puzzled at the decision to destroy something so successful. Please reconsider this decision.

I have just received a notice saying that there are plans to close St Barnabas School. I am very concerned that this should not happen - it is a centrally placed school in the heart of St Paul's and the school, and its young pupils and families, are all part of a long standing and vibrant community. To remove the school would leave a huge hole in that community. I used to volunteer at the original St Barnabas school on the site which is now the Malcolm X centre and was very pleased when it was reprovisioned at its current site. I would ask that you think very carefully before putting this closure plan into action, as I believe the loss of the school would only be detrimental,

I am writing to you to urge you to keep St Barnabas school open. I did some work there as an artist in education a while ago and was really impressed by not only how well it supports its children with additional needs, but also of the very positive relationship it has with the local community. You will know of course, the huge financial costs involved in closing a school: redundancy for teachers and auxiliary staff, and re-establishing EHCP support packages for children with additional needs. St Barnabas serves a growing community with many families of low incomes, and it does this really well. Please don't dismantle this valuable resource.

I am writing to you regarding my thoughts for St Barnabas that I previously communicated to Fairlawn Primary. I've been aware throughout my time as a parent in Montpelier that the schools here have often inadvertently competed against each other. It would make sense to combine them all into one Montpelier Primary School including St Barnabas, Fairlawn and Dolphin. St Barnabas could then offer a pre-school facility in addition to reception as they have the outdoor space suitable for forest school. There would be lots of potential to offer an enhanced SEN function at one of the other sites. This would offer a better and more cohesive community primary school experience overall. I appreciate that this is merely a view from a local resident of Montpelier, but I also write as a parent of a child still at Fairlawn and a facilitator of a grass roots football club (Montpelier Mambas) who have been given access to St Barnabas school every Sunday during football season to train Montpelier children from

years 3-6 to play football. I hope that something can be done to keep the venue as a school even if it is not possible to operate as a C of E school in the future.

As a parent of a nursery school age child in St Werburghs I was shocked to hear of the plans that St Barnabas might be closed. As you will know the area has seen a recent influx of people with unsurprisingly, predominantly families moving into the new, 4 bed houses on the old brook dye work site. For us St Barnabas would be the second choice for our son to attend (St Werburghs is slightly closer). But most of all we are really worried about the pressure that this would put on primary school places in the area, especially given all the new families. It would be great if the area could remain family friendly, including enough schools!

I am writing to protest and advise against the closure of the amazing Saint Barnabas school! My favourite nephew is the very happy recipient of an education there. The small class sizes, lovely staff and great outdoor space really suit him, as he's neurodiverse and therefore excels in an environment which can flex around him a little more. He's made lovely friends and great progress even in only 1 term, and we would hate for all his hard work to be undone.

I am a GP in a deprived part of Bristol and am very distressed to hear about the closure of St Barnabas primary school in Montpelier. St Barnabas is Steeped in local history and culture and is an integral part of the St Paul's community which has historically been underserved. Why would you choose this small, nurturing school to be closed over larger, multi-trust academies? I have heard particularly good things about its SEN provision which is so crucial with specialist spaces being so limited city-wide. I really hope this consultation helps you realise how special small schools like this are and prevents the closure.

I am so upset to hear about the closure of St Barnabas Primary. I am a Mum of 1 child (and hopefully more) and I have heard such things about St Barnabas. I have a strong suspicion that my son may be on the Autism Spectrum and I have heard that St Barnabas is wonderful for child with Special Educational Needs. I have also heard that it has lovely grounds and my son loves being outdoors.

We have two children (aged 3 and 1) and were planning on moving to the area this year, contingent on the school remaining open. We are highly impressed with the level of support the school offers for children with special educational needs.

I am writing to you as I am troubled by the potential of St Barnabas school closing down. I have admired the school for many years and had hoped I would be able to send my children there when they were old enough. It is amazingly unique with such a wonderful safe green space within that makes this school so worth keeping and treasuring. Please considering keeping the school open as I truly believe with all the new local developments going on there will be a need for this school in a few years time and by then if it has gone it will be such a great loss. It provides SEN care otherwise largely hard to access in Bristol, which has been of hugely tangible benefit to my nephew. In addition to SEN provision, the school's cultural history (with particular regard to race), provision of green space & places for many children of disadvantaged backgrounds ought to be compelling reasons to reconsider its closure.

I am writing to express my deep sorry to hear that St Barnabas is being threatened with closure. I feel this is a huge loss to the city and everything should be done to try and revive the school. My wife and I are looking to start a family and had hoped our children might attend St Barnabas when they are old enough. We have friends with children there who love the school. In the modern age of huge classes and education on mass, St Barnabas offered something rare and special. A small school which can focus on the individual, the minority, the child that needs a little extra help. It is a shame that we are

sacrificing so much for some utilitarian ideal of efficiency. I would beg you to reconsider the decision and try to save this wonderful institution.

I am a Mum of two, a primary school teacher and I now work as a civil servant. I am writing because I am so saddened by the proposed closure of St Barnabas Primary. I chose St Werburghs Primary for my son because it is next to our house but I had not heard of St Barnabas. It is tucked away out of sight and it is not talked about much amongst friends who have children. I have one friend who sent their child there and loves it, they saw beyond the Ofsted report and loved its inclusivity and diversity. I understand that St Barnabas is under new, excellent leadership which is turning the school around. St Barnabas is now very highly talked of- the parents have been doing a wonderful job publicising their campaign to save the school and I think it will now be on a lot more parents' radars. That coupled with a good Ofsted would make the school a popular choice and I believe it should be given a chance to thrive again, particularly in light of all the new housing going up around us.

I have a 5 year old and 1.5yr old and am in the process of relocating to St Werbergs from south London. I have heard only amazing things about the school and planned to send my children there. We urge you to consider an alternative solution and provide stability and continuity to the children who attend this school.

It is with great sadness that I hear of the potential closure of St Barnabas CEVC Primary School. I believe I can talk about this school from the unique position of having been a Primary Mental Health Specialist working across East Central Bristol primary schools and later as a member of Staff at St Barnabas, working in pastoral care with the children and their families. St Barnabas CEVC Primary School is outstanding in its support of all children, particularly in relation to their social and emotional needs and is a safe place for children and families in Montpelier and St Pauls. From my experience, this support and understanding of the impact of trauma, poverty, poor housing and parental mental illness is second to none in the locality and with the incredible hard work of the Staff, children are achieving academically and making progress against, for many; a backdrop of difficult home lives. St Barnabas works with and tolerates the distress of these children, providing therapy as well as trained and empathic staff, to help them change their behaviours and be ready to learn. Many of the children at St Barnabas will be re-traumatised by a change of school, needing to build new relationships with unknown adults, and, I doubt, the resultant emotional overspill for these children will not be tolerated by other local schools. This could lead to exclusions and a further negative impact on the mental health of these children and their families. I understand that the site of St Barnabas is to remain as an educational establishment. Why is it not possible for the existing pupils to finish their primary education there? Considering the fact that there were surplus primary places in East Central Bristol, why were two new primary school allowed to be established in the area in recent years? I understand that the number of new pupils entering the school in the Reception class has doubled from the previous year, which would indicate that local families are once again seeing the advantages of the caring and nurturing environment St Barnabas provides, not only through its teaching and pastoral support of the children and families, but also the physical environment, with its green open spaces, woodland, garden and large play spaces. Many children in the area do not have gardens or a safe physical place to play and St Barnabas provides them with this. I would urge the Council to think very carefully about the closure of St Barnabas and the very special needs of its pupils who need to continue to be nurtured and understood by staff who know them in order to fulfil their potential.

As a parent of St Barnabas school with younger children who we are planning to send there I'd like to voice my objection to the planned closure. There are a high proportion of SEND children at St Barnabas many of whom will not cope in other multi entry mainstream schools with limited external space. My son is one of these pupils. These pupils will require places at special schools which will cost the council

significantly more money per pupil. Furthermore St Barnabas has been a victim of its bad Ofsted rating, no middle class parents have considered it due to this. The area has gentrified quickly in the last few years and a lot of young couples have moved to the area particularly with Brooks dye works and other developments. With a revised Ofsted and the emergence of additional children I firmly believe the number will be sustainable within the next 3 years.

I would like to object to the closure of St Barnabas on several grounds. 1. The value St Barnabas provides is far greater than it appears on a balance sheet. Due to the small numbers they provide personalised support to SEND children, emotionally vulnerable, children from refugee families with little or no English and children from deprived backgrounds. Without this incredible support there is no doubt many of these children would require specialist provision or 1 to 1 support in another mainstream school. This would cost significantly more than keeping St Barnabas open. 2. Access to green space. The school provides the only access to safe green space many of these children have. It is also used by the other schools in the area for sport as their grounds are insufficient for sport or access to nature. Without this lots of inner-city children would be deprived of their human right to access nature and green space. 3. The other schools near by that supposedly have space have gone down to single form entry and are not accepting any pupils in several years. Please reconsider keeping St Barnabas open until its next Ofsted rating and give it a chance to continue being a wonderful central pillar of our community.

I have been living on East Grove for over 20 years now and never tire of hearing the kids outside, laughing learning exercising etc. Please let the school continue to be a safe haven in the inner city and allow it to specialise. The space is perfect for SEN pupils, those with sensory issues who can flourish in a more peaceful environment than most other schools can offer. Local children can walk to school, I know other children come from as far as Knowle to attend the holiday clubs. On Sundays there is a free volunteer led football club for local kids. The council would be losing much more than it would gain from closing this school. Also bearing in mind that a school on a site as inappropriate and frankly decrepit as St Michael on the Mount is still open, why on earth close St Barnabas? The school is also a notable employer of local residents, generations in some cases, adding to the positive impact that St Barnabas has in the area. As a resident of East Grove, I would also be extremely concerned about the site changing use. Due to access issues (Brook Road, Albany Road, Sussex Place) and local traffic, parking and pollution in the surrounding roads (Ashley Road, Ashley Hill, Lower Ashley Rd) the site would be completely unsuitable for residential use. There have already been more sizeable residential developments recently than the area can reasonably sustain. So I am writing to ask the council to treat St Barnabas as the precious gem it is. Please keep St Barnabas open! The school is such a valuable asset for the whole community.

Joint Submission, signed by Staff from St Barnabas

Staff at St Barnabas are saddened and concerned by the proposal to close St Barnabas CEVC Primary School. Key concerns articulated by teachers and teaching assistants are as follows:

1. Contrary what is stated in the consultation notice, learning at St Barnabas is rich and diverse. This is enhanced by an exceptional learning environment. The St Barnabas learning environment offers a unique setting which has been fundamental to the success of many of its learners and will be difficult to replicate in other local schools.

St Barnabas families love the learning that the school provide. Despite the last Ofsted inspection in September 2018 grading St Barnabas as Requires Improvement, it is making rapid progress. The last

interim inspection report stated, “leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school” (May 2021).

Since 2018, St Barnabas has implemented a bespoke curriculum through Curious City. This curriculum covers the breadth of the national curriculum but draws on the children’s life experiences and frames of reference so that the curriculum is relevant and engaging to them. The St Barnabas curriculum celebrates the multicultural make-up of its families, and engages with the rich heritage that our families have.

St Barnabas has an exceptional learning environment. Its outdoor facilities are excellent and include a garden, vegetable garden, MUGA court, outdoor learning space, field, forest and outdoor climbing / play equipment. Many local schools including Dolphin and Fairlawn, come and use our outdoor facilities on a regular basis because they do not have much outdoor space of their own. St Barnabas has two sensory rooms (one for high impact proprioceptive interventions and one for calming sensory support). All these facilities serve to enhance the learning experience of our children.

Other local schools cannot offer this level of provision in their learning environment. Some of our children will struggle to be in a school that does not offer specialist facilities to support sensory processing needs or spaces to calm when they are distressed. This will make it more difficult for them to be successful and their behaviour is more likely to become distressed.

2. St Barnabas has an above average proportion of SEND pupils who currently receive excellent provision. A significantly higher proportion than average have EHCPs and the priority St Barnabas has placed on inclusion has enabled them to be successful in this mainstream setting. However it is likely not all of them will be as successful in larger mainstream settings that do not provide the same level of SEND support.

St Barnabas has a SEND Register that is significantly above the national average. In November 2022, it was 24% SEND (national average 16%) including 7% of the whole school being EHCP pupils (national average 4%) and 10% of the school having Top up funding. The national average proportion of pupils accessing HNB funding across the country is 4% compared to 10% at St Barnabas.

Despite the high proportion of pupils with SEND, St Barnabas has prioritised offering an inclusive education that ensures all children with SEND are supported to access the curriculum. St Barnabas has a reputation for delivering a high level of support for children with additional needs. There are many parents and families who are concerned that their children’s needs are not going to be met as comprehensively in another setting. It is very likely that some of these pupils will struggle in a mainstream school and some pupils will end up needing specialist provision; a much more costly option for the local authority.

In addition St Barnabas has successfully supported children who have been excluded from other schools in East Central and others who have left local schools feeling that their needs are not being met. St Barnabas staff are very concerned that these pupils will have to go back to schools where they have not previously felt well supported and who do not offer the same inclusive ethos.

St Barnabas children who have SEND, and others who have lower level SEMH needs, are likely to struggle with the transition to another school. The move from a school where they feel safe to a new, unfamiliar setting to them could trigger distressed behaviour unless it is very well supported. There is a risk that some this distressed behaviour could cause exclusions for some children.

3. St Barnabas is an integral part of the local community and plays a vital role supporting many vulnerable families. These families are going to struggle to find other nearby schools that offer the same level of support.

St Barnabas has approximately 56% families who are EAL, 70% are BME and 50% Pupil Premium. Despite having a BS6 postcode it serves a highly deprived area and many families who are first, second or third generation immigrants. The majority of St Barnabas families have been reliant on the support of the school in some way. During the Covid pandemic the school supported many families through the foodbank that they opened on the school site and which continues to run from a nearby community facility. At the same time, using donations and a charitable partnership with businesses, the school provided laptops for every pupil enabling every child to continue accessing a high quality daily education led remotely by their teachers. For this, in 2021, St Barnabas beat Eton College to win an International BETT Award. This is just one example but illustrates St Barnabas School's commitment and determination to serve its local community and deliver the best service possible to its families.

A significant proportion of St Barnabas families continue to access support through the school. The school has parents that have difficulties with mental health and need direct support from the school team; lots of families are also living in extreme poverty and require support to access services; other families are supported by the school to access local authority and statutory support services because for example they don't have the language, IT or confidence to access these systems themselves. For many families St Barnabas is known as an accessible, kind community facility where they can ask for support when needed. For many vulnerable families St Barnabas has been an integral support enabling them to access services which they would not have had the means to access themselves.

As a team, St Barnabas staff are all committed to serving the local community as part of our role within the school. We are committed to going above and beyond our job descriptions. We are concerned that by closing St Barnabas many of our families will struggle to access the support that they need which will result in more families falling into crisis situations that will put more children at risk of harm.

4. St Barnabas has a high proportion of vulnerable and disadvantaged children who require a high level of support in school. Staff are concerned that nearby local schools are not equipped with the resources to support this level of need and that it will result in a significant proportion of St Barnabas pupils being excluded or needing to move to specialist provision.

St Barnabas currently has 93% of its pupils identified as vulnerable by at least one indicator. This includes 24% SEND; 7% EHCP; 57% EAL; 50% Pupil Premium. Many pupils have multiple vulnerabilities. In addition, a significant proportion of the school have 'low level' social, emotional and mental health needs that do not meet the threshold to go onto the SEND Register but without skilled support will result in distressed and challenging behaviour. There are also a proportion of pupils in the school who are vulnerable to the influence of gangs and criminal exploitation.

Distressed Behaviour

St Barnabas has high expectations for behaviour and in the last 2.5 years has used the Pivotal approach which has had a significant positive impact on behaviour. This has been noted by the Local Authority School Improvement Partner. St Barnabas's nurturing approach, seeing behaviour as a means of communication, has meant that there are many children who thrive at St Barnabas because the children know that staff are on their side, are committed to helping them and therefore through the right support for the causes of distressed behaviour, gradually improve their behaviour.

In some schools these children are often excluded before having the support to address the root of their distress. St Barnabas are concerned that these vulnerable children will find it particularly challenging moving to a new setting. If they are not supported carefully, they are likely to display challenging behaviour which could quickly make them vulnerable to exclusion. Exclusion is highly traumatic for children and families. It is also extremely costly for the local authority.

Further comments

Are the local authority communicating openly and transparently with the school?

St Barnabas staff are also confused about why a SEND resource base was not agreed for the school despite two applications being made and despite it having the space, expertise and the ability to manage such a facility. A specialist resource base could have provided the financial injection that could have enabled long term financial viability for the school to have been a possibility. Despite initial messages from the local authority that St Barnabas was likely to be a strong contender in the bidding process, no thorough explanation for why its bids have been unsuccessful has been given to the school. Staff feel that there could have been more openness and transparency in the dialogue regarding the proposed resource base as well as in this consultation process which feels ad-hoc and lacking the planning and professionalism we would have expected from the local authority.

Joint submission from Ashley Ward Councillors

Could you please add this response form the three local councillors for Ashley ward. We have had numerous representations from parents and residents about the closure of this much-loved local school.

Whilst we are of course aware of the financial pressures of the council we do believe this school is worth saving. We are aware that there are a lot of new homes that have recently been built (Carriageworks, Paint Works etc) and more significant developments are in the pipeline (eg Dove Lane). We are concerned that these developments have perhaps not been given sufficient weight in future school numbers. It would be tragic if the school was to close if only to discover it is needed in a few years' time.

We are aware that the school has been working hard to reduce its costs looking at areas such as joint year group classes and just wonder if the shortfall in pupil number funding can be mitigated in any way to at least postpone the closure until we are more certain of future demand.

Thank you for your consideration

Tim Wye, Amirah Cole, Jude English - Councillors for Ashley Ward