

ANNEX A St. Teresa's School - Statement

The Governing Body of St. Teresa's school have agreed the following statement regarding the future:

*It is with deep regret that the Governing Body of St. Teresa's R.C. Infant & Nursery school, Birkdale, reluctantly accepts that Sefton Council propose a managed closure process starting as soon as possible and that sets in motion a process that ensures the best outcomes for its children and staff.*

*The Governors have taken this very difficult decision in the best interests of all our pupils, their families and the staff. The current low pupil numbers and continued uncertainty over the future of the school are making it extremely difficult for the school leadership and teachers to provide the highest quality education experience that the children deserve and that dedicated professionals like those of St. Teresa's would wish to provide. The falling roll, compounded by the absence of any assurances about the school having a long-term future that could have provided the necessary encouragement to prospective families wanting to commit to St. Teresa's for their children, has, over time, also created a budget with an increasing deficit. Having considered this very carefully, the Governors do not want this situation to continue.*

*Although our excellent pupils continue to work hard and do their best, they do this against a background of understandable parental concerns over the school's future, increasing anxiety among the staff and no clear timescale over when decisions will be made by appropriate authorities.*

*Since an unexpectedly adverse Ofsted report in 2016, the Governors have tried every possible initiative to reverse a gradual decline in pupil numbers which can make any school extremely vulnerable. Governors have marketed the school using every means possible, promoting it at every opportunity, made new appointments that led to a 'Good' Ofsted report in 2018 and ensured that the budget was managed as economically as possible since pupil-led funding was consistently declining due to the falling roll.*

*The Governors also requested structural changes such as a reduced pupil admission number, a federation with another local Catholic school, as well as an expansion to admit Key Stage 2 (KS2) pupils that would have allowed children to stay at St. Teresa's through to 11 years-old. We felt that these initiatives would have helped to ensure the future of the school as well as meeting the expressed needs and wishes of parents, past and present. Ultimately, Governors could not implement initiatives such as the KS2 expansion without the agreement of other authorities. We accept that there are different legitimate views over these initiatives.*

*The Governors have always sought to act with integrity and in the best interests of the school, its pupils and its staff and always hoped our prolonged efforts would preserve a well-established and much-loved small Catholic school; we now accept this is no longer possible. Governors do not wish to prejudice the futures of the remaining children, for whom parents will need to find alternative schools, nor the staff who will require re-deployment or redundancy payments. We wish to co-operate with, and be led by, the Council and the Archdiocese in the spirit of the Gospel and with the willingness to work together for the welfare of all involved including the Governors themselves who, as volunteers, have shown considerable dedication to the school and have, despite many setbacks, maintained over time their efforts to support St. Teresa's to the best of their ability.*

*Governors request that there is a prompt response to this statement, that Sefton Local Authority assumes the role of proposer in the process that follows in relation to the statutory*

*process set out in the DfE document 'Opening and Closing Maintained Schools (November 2019)', and that communications be agreed with all parties for purposes of clarity and to prevent unhelpful rumours.*

*On behalf of the Governing Body, St.Teresa's R.C. Infant & Nursery School, Birkdale*