

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	26 May 2022
Subject:	St Teresa's Catholic Infant School - Determination of Proposal to Close		
Report of:	Head of Education	Wards Affected:	Birkdale; Cambridge; Norwood;
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Education		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

On 3rd February 2022 Cabinet approved the publication of the Statutory Notice for the proposal to close St Teresa's Catholic Infant School. The purpose of this report is to seek a determination on the proposal for the closure of the school. In accordance with the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 the decision maker for this proposal is the local authority.

Recommendation(s):

- (1) That the contents of the report are noted
- (2) Members agree to the closure of St Teresa's Catholic Infant School with effect from 31st August 2022.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

The Local Authority has the power to consider all options including closing a maintained school following the statutory process detailed in the report.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

Alternative options have been explored by the governing body with support from Officers prior to the governing body making their request.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The financial deficit is projected to be -£103,500 at the end of the 2021/22 financial year. The final deficit position at the 31st of August 2022 is expected to be higher than this due to the closure costs identified in paragraph 5.3. This will take the final sum to approximately -£190,000, however, will be the subject of change and will be reported in a future financial monitoring paper. This will be funded by the Council's school closure reserve.

There will also be a loss of funding for Education functions to maintained schools (£300), the loss of Traded Service income (£34,450) and reductions to the amounts de-delegated funding towards specific central functions (£2,850). These will need to be met from existing service budgets however, due to the recent number of these changes a full analysis is being undertaken and the outcome of the financial implications on the education service and other support services will be determined and reported to Cabinet together with any resulting recommendations and potential mitigations.

The overall financial position of the school will be carefully monitored up to the point of closure and will be reported to members when this is known. This will be a more financially favourable option for the Council rather than the school remaining open and the deficit increasing further which would impact on the overall Council finances.

(B) Capital Costs

N/A

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): Staff from Corporate Finance and Corporate Personnel together with Business Support have continued to provide support to the Governors and Leadership Team of St Teresa's Infant School over the last 18 months.	
Legal Implications: Proposals to close the school will continue to follow the requirements of the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulation 2013 and statutory guidance.	
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.	
Climate Emergency Implications: The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	Yes
Have a neutral impact	No
Have a negative impact	No
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes
The school building is not being used to its full capacity and heating and lighting are still required for a small number of staff and pupils. This proposal will mean less use of energy and will also impact on car use in the area.	

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Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: All children will still be able to attend a Catholic school.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: All children will be able to attend the school which they would normally move to in KS2 as this school is an infant school.
Commission, broker and provide core services: All children will be able to attend a Catholic school in the catchment area.
Place – leadership and influencer: N/A
Drivers of change and reform: N/A
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: N/A
Greater income for social investment: N/A
Cleaner Greener: N/A

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6770/22) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.4970/22) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Public consultation on the proposal has taken place in accordance with statutory requirements. As part of the consultation process meetings were held with staff, governors, and parents.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

Contact Officer:	Tricia Davies/Marie Stevenson
Telephone Number:	Tel: 0151 934 3428/3427
Email Address:	Tricia.davies@sefton.gov.uk/marie.stevenson@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

Appendix A: Public Notice and Complete Proposal St Teresa's

Background Papers:

Opening and closing maintained schools: statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers, November 2019, Department for Education.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools>

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 At their meeting on 3rd February 2022, Cabinet considered the outcome of the consultation and agreed to proceed to the publication of the statutory proposal to close the school.

2. Publication of statutory proposal

2.1 The public notice and complete proposal were published on 2nd March 2022. A notice was published in the Southport Champion and a copy of this together with the complete proposal was published on the Sefton Council website. The four-week representation period ended on 30th March 2022.

2.2 Four representations were received from members of the local community (two by letter and two by email) which expressed concern about the closure of the school and the future use of the building as they did not want to see it demolished for housing and the character of the area destroyed. They were anxious to know what will happen to the building as they wish to see it continue as something of value to the community. There were also concerns about vandalism and anti-social behaviour. These representations are available for inspection by Cabinet Members and the Archdiocese of Liverpool who are responsible for the building have been made aware of the comments.

3. Decision making process

3.1 In accordance with the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulation 2013 the local authority will be the decision-maker for the proposal.

3.2 The decision must be made within a period of two months of the end of the representation period, or it must be referred to the Schools Adjudicator.

- 3.3 The Department for Education does not prescribe the exact process by which a decision-maker carries out their decision-making function. However, the body or individual that takes the decision must have regard to the statutory decision makers guidance contained in “Opening and closing maintained schools: Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers” published by the DFE at the following link:<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools>
- 3.4 When issuing a decision, the decision maker can:
- Reject the proposal
 - Approve the proposal without modification
 - Approve the proposal with such modifications as they think desirable, after consulting the LA and/or proposer (as appropriate); or
 - Approve the proposal – with or without modification-subject to certain conditions (such as the granting of planning permission) being met.
- 3.5 Where the LA is the decision-maker, within one week of making a determination they must arrange for their decision and the reasons for it to be published on the website where the original proposal was published. They must arrange for notification of the decision and the reasons for it to be sent to:
- the Secretary of State
 - the governing body/proposers (as appropriate)
 - the Schools Adjudicator
 - The Diocesan Board of Education of any Church of England Diocese in the relevant area
 - The bishop of any diocese of the Roman Catholic Church any part of which is comprised in relevant authority area ; and
 - Any other body considered appropriate (e.g., any other relevant religious authority);and
 - the trustees of the school where relevant e.g., site trustees).

4. Implementation

- 4.1 The proposer must implement the proposal in the form approved, including any modifications made by the decision-maker.
- 4.2 Following the notification to the Secretary of State, the DFE’s School Organisation Team will make the necessary amendments to the school’s GIAS records (Get Information About Schools).

5. Financial Position

- 5.1 St Teresa’s Catholic Infant School has been struggling financially for several years and the Governing Body has worked hard to reduce costs but have unfortunately not been able to set a balanced budget since 2018/19.
- 5.2 The school ended the 2020/21 financial year with a deficit of -£55,316 and although the Governing Body has made several staffing adjustments in August

2021 the current budget shows the deficit rising to -£103,500 by the end of the current financial year.

- 5.3 There will continue to be staffing and running costs in 2022/23, if the school continues to operate until 31st August 2022. When the school closes there will be closure costs associated with the discontinuation of the site along with any potential contractual liabilities that are still outstanding and severance costs for displaced staff. The final sum is expected to be approximately -£190,000 but will be subject to change. There may be some residual School funding from 2022/23 to offset some of the additional costs but this cannot be calculated at this time.
- 5.4 Maintained schools pay a contribution from their delegated budget each year to the Local Authority towards the costs of meeting its statutory education functions and central services to maintained schools. The amount St Teresa's currently pays for this is £3,150 and this income will be lost when the school closes.
- 5.5 St Teresa's Infant School also buys into many traded services from the Council which will cease when the school closes and this will mean a further reduction in income to the Council of approximately £34,500.

6. Standards

- 6.1 St Teresa's Catholic Infant School was rated as Good at its last Ofsted inspection.

7. Pupil Numbers/School Capacity

- 7.1 St Teresa's Catholic Infant School had 2 pupils left on roll at the time of the January 2022 School Census which meant that they had 97.7% surplus places. Once the consultation for the proposal to close was announced parents chose to seek alternative school places for their children and the remaining pupils were also waiting for appropriate places to be found for them. There are three other Catholic primary schools in the Southport area with a total of 420 infant places between them including Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary, St Patrick's Catholic Primary and Holy Family Catholic Primary.

8. Impact on the community

- 8.1 This proposal will remove 90 infant places. St Teresa's is the sister school of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary and is already part of the Our Lady of Lourdes community as in the past pupils from St Teresa's have moved into KS2 at Our Lady of Lourdes.
- 8.2 There is concern about what will happen to the school building if the school closes as this will impact on the local area. The building is the responsibility of the Archdiocese of Liverpool, and no decision has yet been made about what will happen to the building. It will be their decision to decide how the building is used in future.