
Report to: Cabinet **Date of Meeting:** Thursday 5 November 2015

Subject: St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College – Outcome of the Consultation on the Proposed Closure of the School **Wards Affected:** St Oswald’s and neighbouring wards where pupils reside

Report of: Head of Schools and Families

Is this a Key Decision? Yes **Is it included in the Forward Plan?** Yes

Exempt/Confidential No

Purpose/Summary

The purpose of this report is to report the outcome of the consultation on the proposed closure of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College (known as St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School) and to seek approval to publish a Statutory Notice relating to the proposal.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- i. the responses to the statutory consultation process be noted;
- ii. it be noted that the Archdiocese of Liverpool had requested the Council to proceed with the publication of the statutory notice: and
- iii. approval be given to the publication of the Statutory Notice on the closure of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College.

How does the decision contribute to the Council’s Corporate Objectives?

<u>Corporate Objective</u>		<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1	Creating a Learning Community			X
2	Jobs and Prosperity			x
3	Environmental Sustainability		X	
4	Health and Well-Being		x	
5	Children and Young People	x		
6	Creating Safe Communities		x	
7	Creating Inclusive Communities			x

8	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening Local Democracy		x	
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Reasons for the Recommendation:

The Local Authority has the statutory power to close a maintained school following the statutory process detailed in the report.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

There are costs arising from the closure of the school. Based on the projected (pro-rata) budget commitments for St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College in 2016/17, the estimated closing deficit of the school on 31st August 2016 is likely to be in the region of -£550,000. There will also be severance costs for any displaced staff who cannot find alternative employment to be added to this total. The redundancy costs and capital costs could be in excess of £510,000 if no staff find alternative employment. The costs at this stage can only be estimated as the funding allocation for 2016/17 will not be finalised until January 2016.

The Schools Forum have agreed to centrally retain the residual 7/12ths school funding allocation for St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College in 2016/17, if the closure is agreed. This funding will be available to support the closure costs but there may also be a requirement to use some of this funding to help support transitional arrangements for displaced students transferring to alternative schools in September 2016. It is anticipated that any costs associated with the closure of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College will be ultimately contained within the DSG or from the Council's Closed Schools Reserve Account. If the closure proposal is delayed there is a significant financial risk to the Council as the Closed School Reserve Account has finite resources and any escalated deficit may not be contained within the resources available.

(B) Capital Costs N/A

Implications:

The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out below:

Legal: The consultation on the proposal to close the school has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Education Inspections Act 2006 and specifically the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulation 2013/3109 as amended.

Human Resources: As part of the consultation process meetings were held with staff in the school and their trade union representatives.

Equality

- | | | |
|----|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. | No Equality Implication | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | Equality Implications identified and mitigated | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. | Equality Implication identified and risk remains | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Impact of the Proposals on Service Delivery:

N/A

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

The Chief Finance Officer (FD 3850) has been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

The Head of Regulation and Compliance (LD.3133/15) has been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

Are there any other options available for consideration?

There are no alternative viable options.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting.

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Background Papers:

None

1. Background

- 1.1 St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College is a voluntary aided school and, as such, is managed by a Governing Body, the majority of which are appointed by the Archdiocese of Liverpool.
- 1.2 St Ambrose Barlow has suffered from falling pupil numbers for a number of years. The school has a capacity of 600 pupils and at the start of the consultation process only had 384 on roll. Since July this number has decreased and at the time of writing this report the school has 177 pupils on role.
- 1.3 Governing Bodies have a responsibility to ensure their school delivers a good education and a duty to set a balanced budget each year. The Governing Body of St Ambrose Barlow has worked very hard over the last few years to reduce costs and set a balanced budget whilst minimising the impact on standards. This has been against a backdrop of a funding freeze, falling pupil numbers and increasing cost.
- 1.4 The Governing Body of St Ambrose Barlow met on 29 June 2015 to consider the financial position of the school going forward in the light of no foreseeable increase in pupil numbers and increasing cost. The budget situation was exacerbated by pension changes and pay awards which increase staffing costs by around 4.5% and the continued freeze in education funding at 2010 levels. The Governing Body consider that they could not reduce costs further and be able to operate as a school delivering a suitable broad curriculum and a good standard of education. Following this meeting the Archdiocese Director of Schools and Colleges wrote to the Director of Children's Services on 30 June formally requesting

“the Council to start a statutory consultation proposing the closure by August 2016 of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School, Netherton.”

In this letter the Archdiocese Director of Schools and Colleges stated that:

“...unfortunately, as the funding of schools is now almost wholly based on the number of pupils on roll, Governors have been managing with a budget that is half the size of the average Secondary school budget at a time when the Government is insisting on the highest attainment in the broadest choice of subjects. It is simply not possible for the school to cover these increased expectations within the budget available to them. Nor are they able to set a deficit budget as the law does not allow them to do this.”

- 1.5 At its meeting on the 3rd July 2015 Cabinet agreed to commence the statutory consultation process with regards to the proposal from the Archdiocese of Liverpool for the closure of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic, with effect from 31st August 2016.

2. Consultation Process

- 2.1 In accordance with section 16(3) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 a proposer of a school closure must have regard to any guidance

issued by the Secretary of State. The guidance in question is the School Organisation Guidance issued in January 2014.

The following bodies and individuals were consulted –

- Parents/carers of pupils at St Ambrose Barlow
- Staff at St Ambrose Barlow
- Governors of St Ambrose Barlow
- Union Reps
- Parents/carers of pupils at feeder primaries (Holy Spirit, OLOW and St Benedict's)
- Ward Councillors (Netherton & Orrell and St Oswald's)
- Directors of Neighbouring LAs (Liverpool, Lancashire and Knowsley)
- MPs (John Pugh, Bill Esterson and Peter Dowd)
- Archdiocese and Diocese
- General letter to all HTs of Sefton schools
- General consultation invite on Sefton Council's Website.

2.2 A copy of the consultation leaflet is attached to this report for information at Annex B. The consultation also consisted of meetings with staff, governors and families, and provided the opportunity for discussion and written representation. The consultation process enabled all stakeholders to express their views but was important to allow parents and families (particularly those due to begin Year 7 in September 2016) to be made aware and to consider their options prior to the start of the new academic year.

3. Outcome of the Consultation

3.1 The following is a synopsis of the consultation process

3.2 Consultation Meeting with Staff - 13 July 2015

On the 13 July 2015, senior officers from the Local Authority and Archdiocese met with the staff of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College to provide details about the proposal to close the school and receive questions and suggestions.

The meeting opened with a short presentation by the Local Authority about the proposal, the various stages of the statutory process, the decrease in pupil numbers and the impact on the school's budget.

Staff felt that the timing of the letter from the Archdiocese to the Local Authority requesting them to start a statutory consultation process had caused panic and anxiety throughout the school community. The Archdiocese agreed that the timing was not ideal, but stated that everything feasibly possible had been done by the school governing body to find further savings and avoid a large budget deficit; however, the future projection of pupil numbers meant that action needed to be taken so that an illegal budget was not set for 2016/17 and an announcement could not be delayed until after the summer holidays.

Staff asked if it was true that letters had been sent to the families of year 5 and 6 children in feeder primary schools, suggesting that they should choose another school rather than St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College. This was repudiated by both the Local Authority and Archdiocese – no such letters had been sent to families. Moreover, if any letters were to be sent out over the next few weeks, they would actually remind families that St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College was indeed part of the next admissions round and would not dissuade anyone at all from applying for 2016.

Staff asked why was the school closing within one year; the normal process runs over two years. There was particular concern for the year 9 pupils starting their GCSE studies. The Archdiocese responded by stating that the governors had explored every avenue to keep the school financially secure but if they had waited another year the budget deficit would simply increase and they would not be able to set a legal budget. Moreover, the pupil numbers were continuing to fall and there was no guarantee that parents would send their children to the school in future years.

Staff suggested that they were not fully aware of the seriousness of the financial situation. The Local Authority responded that the governing body had held staff awareness meetings for the last few years which made clear the extent of the financial difficulty because of the significant fall in pupil numbers.

The Chair of Governors stated at length the extent of savings made and how everyone associated with the school had worked diligently to prevent the current situation.

The Archdiocese and Local Authority both acknowledged that it was a worrying period for all staff and talked about support that would be put in place, should staff require it.

Staff felt extremely angry about the financial considerations which were being put before the education of pupils. Many staff stated that they thought the school was outstanding and providing a much better education than other neighbouring schools. Staff stated that some of their pupils had informed them that they would not attend other local schools. It was explained that the pupil's education was at the heart of the proposal.

Staff noted that it was simply wrong to close the school, particularly given the 'positive' Ofsted reports and exam success of the school.

Staff questioned the consultation process and felt the decision had already been made to close the school.

3.3 Consultation Meeting with Parents, Carers, and Pupils - 13 July 2015

On the 13 July 2015, senior officers from the Local Authority and Archdiocese met with parents, carers and pupils at St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College to provide details about the proposal to close the school and receive questions and suggestions.

The meeting opened with a short presentation by the Local Authority about the proposal, the various stages of the statutory process, the decrease in pupil numbers and the impact on the school's budget.

A significant issue for the parents/carers/pupils was the timing of the letter from the Archdiocese to the Local Authority which requested them to start the statutory consultation process. Many parents felt that the letter caused unnecessary panic and anxiety throughout the local school community, which resulted in many families requesting different schools for their children over the summer period. The Archdiocese agreed that the timing was not ideal, but stated that everything feasibly possible had been done by the school governing body to find further savings and avoid a large budget deficit; however the future projection of pupil numbers meant that action needed to be taken so that an illegal budget was not set for 2016/17 and an announcement could not be delayed until after the summer holidays.

Some parents believed that the Local Authority's Admissions Service had been attending other school meetings and advising parents not to choose St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College. This was repudiated and it was made clear that all Local Authority staff were fully aware that no decision had been made about the school's future because a statutory consultation process was underway. The Local Authority would inform all feeder primary schools that St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College was still an option and would be part of the next admissions round.

Parents wanted to know what options were available to save the school and exactly how the school was funded. The Local Authority responded that if a robust proposal was put forward that demonstrated that the school would be financially secure in order to provide the broad curriculum required, this would certainly be considered by the governing body, Local Authority and Archdiocese. The Local Authority and Archdiocese both provided details about how funding is allocated by central government, mainly on the basis of pupils numbers; moreover, it was noted that central government had frozen the funding schools get since 2010.

A number of parents made comparisons between St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College and neighbouring schools, particularly in terms of standards. The Local Authority responded by acknowledging the excellent work that takes place at St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College and the positives from previous Ofsted inspections, but also noted that the school still Requires Improvement following the most recent inspection; some neighbouring schools have also been judged as Requires Improvement and others are Good.

Naturally, those parents with vulnerable children wanted to know what support was available should the school close. The Local Authority responded by informing parents/carers that support would be given by the school and the Local Authority's Special Education Needs and Inclusion Service. If the school closed, it was of paramount importance that those children experienced a smooth transition.

A number of parents asked if there was an intention to sell the land to housing developers. The Archdiocese responded that because no decision had been

made about the school's future, there had been no consideration whatsoever about land usage.

The Local Authority highlighted that an information leaflet had been produced, which gave parents/carers further information about the support available to discuss admissions, transport, and SEN queries.

Many parents stated that they had actually attended the school as pupils themselves, and they had nothing but praise for the teaching staff and head teacher.

There were a number of individual questions raised and responded to at the meeting. Officers from the local authority and the Archdiocese remained after the meeting ended to enable parents to discuss individual concerns.

3.4 Consultation meeting with Governors of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College held on 16 July 2015

On the 16 July 2015, senior officers from the Local Authority and Archdiocese met with parents, carers and pupils at St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College to provide details about the proposal to close the school and receive questions and suggestions.

The meeting opened with a short presentation by the Local Authority about the proposal, the various stages of the statutory process, the decrease in pupil numbers and the impact on the school's budget.

Governors were aware of the financial position of the school and the challenges they had faced over the last few years. Of particular concern was the potential impact on staff in the school that had been loyal to the school for many years and there was some discussion on the support which would be provided for staff.

The governors were aware of an action group being formed by the parents and were going to meet them to discuss their suggestions during the consultation period. Officers asked that the parents group be made fully aware of the extent of the funding problems in the school and the fact that this was likely to become worse as pupils moved to other schools as had already started to happen

3.5 During the consultation period comments were invited via an internet web page

The Local Authority established a dedicated webpage which enabled parents, carers, pupils, staff, governors, councillors, and residents to view background information about the proposal to close St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College and the opportunity to comment online via an electronic form. The Local Authority received 130 comment forms.

The majority of comments express a real desire to keep the school open because it is viewed as an integral part of the local community. Both pupils and parents state their deep respect and admiration for all the teaching staff at

the school, and highlight that staff genuinely know every pupil, which adds to a safe and secure environment. There is concern that this environment and pupil/staff rapport may not be replicated in a much bigger school. Also mentioned was pastoral care and support is a major strength of the school and, again, many pupils and parents express a concern that this may be lost in a bigger setting.

Many pupils note the potential disruption to their academic studies and uncertainty in making GCSE options. The continuance of a good education is a fundamental concern.

Pupils noted how staff, go over and above of what is expected to ensure targets are met and real progress is made. A number of pupils are extremely proud of their academic achievements to date and are anxious that this may not continue if they have to move schools. Pupils also highlight that there is no bullying in the school and how anxious they feel about the potential break-up of strong friendship groups.

A number of parents noted that they had attended the school as pupils and are now very proud that their own children also attend the school. There were also a number of comments which noted the achievements and success of former pupils.

Transport and travelling to other schools was a major concern for both pupils and parents. Some parents are concerned about additional costs that may be incurred. Some pupils and parents noted a concern about travelling to and from other schools in the dark.

A number of comments asked about the potential use of the land and building, if the closure is agreed. Some parents questioned the wider impact on the community in terms of property values and the risk of increasing socio-economic problems in the area.

The timing of the letter from the Archdiocese was raised by a number of parents; many felt the letter caused uncertainty and anxiety throughout the local school community. Some parents questioned why a longer period of consultation could not be given, as this would enable more time to increase pupil numbers and seek financial alternatives. Particular concern was raised about Years 6/7 and Year 9 pupils.

Parents with vulnerable children wanted reassurance of the support available should their child have to move schools.

A significant number of pupils and parents state that other neighbouring schools would not be able to provide the same excellent educational standards and ethos as St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College.

A small number of comment forms contained inappropriate language.

3.6 Outcome of the further meetings with Staff and Governors of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College held on 23 September 2015

On the 23 September, senior officers from the Local Authority and Archdiocese met with staff of St Ambrose Barlow. This meeting was additional to statutory requirements.

The Local Authority opened the meeting by recapping the consultation process, the current pupil numbers which had reduced from 384 to around 180, and the projected deficit which had increased to around 1.3 million.

There was further discussion on the support which would be available for staff.

Staff asked about the possibility of receiving redundancy figures. The Local Authority responded that estimates were now being prepared and would soon be available.

Staff spoke about former pupils being poorly treated in other schools. The Local Authority and Archdiocese stated they would look into the matter and would ensure every support possible and additional resources were available to ensure successful transitions. The Local Authority and Archdiocese asked for further details so this could be investigated. No further details were provided by staff about these concerns. Officers subsequently visited the main schools which pupils had moved to and spoke to a number of parents and found the exact opposite to be the case with the receiving schools providing significant support to facilitate a smooth transition for pupils moving from St Ambrose Barlow.

Staff stated that the Local Authority's Admission Service was informing parents that the school was closing. This was strongly repudiated by the Local Authority. The matter had been raised previously and it was made clear again that all Local Authority staff are fully aware that the consultation process is ongoing and no decision has been made about the school. Admissions advice - verbal and written - is that the school will be part of the next round and letters will be sent to all feeder primaries making the situation very clear.

Staff stated that there was no moral or professional integrity to the process and the Archdiocese and Local Authority could keep the school open and should be doing more to recruit additional children to the school, particularly given the school's performance as one of the best schools in Sefton. Staff requested that the 2015 results be published on the Local Authority's website. The Local Authority responded to this regarding how schools are funded and stated that the results would be made public once validated.

Staff noted the incredible work of the parents group, the tremendous amount of fund raising they had done, and the support they had generated to keep the school open. Staff also believed that closing the school would impact upon numbers at South Sefton Sixth Form Centre and a possible impact upon RC faith in the area.

Staff stated that they were unaware of the seriousness of the school's financial situation. Union officials stated there had clearly been issues with communication. Union officials also put the school closure into context by noting the closure of other neighbouring schools and the establishment of the Free School in Sefton. They also asked for clarity on redundancy process, timescales the urgent provision of redundancy estimates requested by staff.

The Chair of Governors noted once again that staff awareness meetings had taken place which discussed the falling pupil numbers and serious impact on the budget.

Staff noted the timing of the Archdiocese letter asking the Local Authority to start the consultation process - this had an impact of further reducing pupil numbers and that's why the projected deficit is even bigger than first stated in July. Staff also stated that the final paragraph of the letter was critical of the Local Authority for not investing in the school infrastructure.

Staff asked if money is raised by selling the land would it be reinvested in other schools. The Archdiocese stated that no consideration whatsoever had been given to the land.

Staff stated that the proposal was not in the best interests of the pupils. The Local Authority responded that the school would not be able to provide the standard of education required with the budget available to the school and that this was what the Archdiocese had stated in their letter of 30 June 2015 requesting consultation on the closure take place.

3.7 Outcome of the further meetings with Parents/Carers/Pupils held on 23 September 2015

On the 23 September, senior officers from the Local Authority and Archdiocese met with parents, carers and pupils of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College. This meeting was additional to statutory requirements.

The Local Authority opened the meeting by recapping the consultation process, the current pupil numbers which had reduced from 384 to around 180, and the projected deficit which had increased to around 1.3 million.

Parents asked why more money could not be found for the school? The Local Authority responded that funding for schools comes from central government. Most of it – over 90% - is based on pupil numbers. The problem at St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College is that numbers are falling but costs are rising and there is therefore less money available. The current situation means that there are more children in Year 11 than in Year 7. The school governors and staff have put a lot of effort into trying to increase numbers and reduce costs.

Parents have asked if there are any alternatives to closure? Both the Local Authority and Archdiocese stated that if a fully costed proposal was presented and there was a significant increase in pupil numbers, this would indeed be considered as no decision has been made on the school closure. The

worsening of the financial position since the consultation began was reiterated.

Parents also asked about alternative schools and the numbers of places available? The Local Authority responded by informing parents that a lot of places are available in Sefton – over 1,500 – but not in all year groups. If parents want to move their children to another school then they should contact the Local Authority's Admissions Service to receive impartial advice.

Parents wanted to know why the letter from the Archdiocese was sent two weeks before the summer holidays. The Archdiocese responded that because of the issue of falling numbers and the way in which funding for schools is based on pupils, the governors have done a tremendous amount to find savings and increase pupil numbers. The budget for September 2016 will be based on numbers in the school in October 2015. The school governors had managed to set a balanced budget up to March 2015, but because of falling numbers they were unable to do this for the following financial year. They would have had to significantly reduce staffing again to set a balanced budget and that would not be in the best interests of the pupils' education. The decision had to be made whether to tell parents or not. The decision was made to tell all parents. The numbers for September 2015 were only received in March and the governors indicated in May that they wouldn't be able to set a balanced budget in future years. The letter to parents was sent at the end of June.

Some parents stated that local primary schools were encouraging families not to send their children to St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College because it was going to close. The Archdiocese and Local Authority strongly contested this and stated that all primary schools had been reminded that no decision had been made and that St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College would be part of the next admissions round.

Parents wanted to know why failing schools were taking pupils from St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College and getting additional funding. The Local Authority stated that this was not the case and many of the neighbouring schools get good results and Ofsted inspection outcomes. The latest GCSE results would be published once the data has been validated and parents would be able to see how St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College compares to other Sefton schools.

There were a number of individual questions raised and responded to at the meeting. Officers from the local authority and the Archdiocese remained after the meeting ended to enable parents to discuss individual concerns.

3.8 Written responses and petition

A number of written responses were received which echoed the comments made at the consultation meetings. A number of individual queries were received and these were all responded to with specific answers.

A petition containing 173 signatures opposing the closure of St Ambrose Barlow has been received.

64 standard letters were received opposing the closure of the school and a sample letter is included as Annex C.

3.9 Feedback from Ward Councillors

Some concern was expressed by local councillors that misinformation was circulating in the community as part of the consultation process. In order to help address this, the consultation leaflet was updated to reflect these issues and this was sent to parents before the second consultation meeting (Annex B)

3.10 Questions at Council

The parents group attended the Full Council meeting on 17 September and asked if the Council would consider a deficit budget for the school. The Cabinet Member stated 'the Governors of the School have worked throughout the last year to identify a future budget plan which is financially sustainable. The option to provide a short term deficit budget has been explored extensively over the last year with the Governing Body. The consultation now being followed is as a direct result of the work already undertaken to stabilise the school's finances without success. The Council will continue to advise the school in its consideration of any new viable, sustainable and achievable financial plan which the Governors may wish to submit prior to the end of the consultation period.'

3.11 Other Consultees

No responses were received from the other consultees.

4. Financial Position

4.1 St Ambrose Barlow has been struggling financially for a number of years and the Governing Body has worked hard to reduce costs and set a balanced budget.

4.2 The table below summarises the financial position of the school over the last two years and the projected financial position for 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Year	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Preliminary forecast 2016/17
	£	£	£	£
Total Expenditure	2,980,712	2,695,497	2,606,061	2,626,999
Total Funding	2,781,084	2,481,610	2,425,597	1,175,689
Budget surplus / (deficit)	(199,628)	(213,887)	(180,464)	(1,451,310)

Balances B'fwd	670,565	470,937	257,050	76,586
Est. Balances C'fwd	470,937	257,050	76,586	(1,374,724)

- 4.3 As stated above the Governing Body has worked hard to reduce costs each year as a result of significant reductions in funding due to insufficient pupil numbers. However, even with savings in expenditure, the school has had to use approximately £200,000 of school balances each year to balance the budget.
- 4.4 The current financial position indicates that the school is currently overspending by approximately £180,000 this year, at a time when the school is potentially required to increase resource expenditure to raise standards. By 1st April 2016 the school will only have minimal balances available to support future budget pressures. The movement out of the school by a large number of pupils, since the consultation process on closure commenced, means that the revised projected financial position for 31st March 2017 is a deficit of over £1.3m which is significantly worse than previously reported.
- 4.5 The Governing Body have considered all options and are not able to provide an action plan to address the increasing deficit and bring the budget back into a balanced position. As a result St Ambrose Barlow is, therefore, not financially viable beyond the end of the 2015/16 financial year.
- 4.6 No sustainable viable financial proposals have been put forward as part of the consultation process.

5. Standards

- 5.1 St Ambrose Barlow was inspected in June 2015 and is classed as 'requiring improvement' by Ofsted. This is the second such judgement the school has received and the school will be classed as inadequate if they are inspected again and have not become a good school. Given the continued financial pressure the school are not able to invest in improving standards in order to move to good at their next inspection.
- 5.2 In 2015 the percentage of pupils gaining 5A*-C including English and Maths at GCSE fell slightly as did the percentage of pupils making expected progress in English and Mathematics. Some schools in the local area achieved worse outcomes in 2015 but a number achieved significantly better outcomes than St Ambrose Barlow. Overall the outcomes for the school are significantly below the Sefton and North West averages.

6. Pupil Places

- 6.1 There are significant surplus pupil places in secondary schools in the south of the Borough. The 2014 School Organisation Data Book indicates that there are 2,235 pupils in schools in the Bootle planning area with 2,966 places available (a surplus of 731) and a total net capacity of 3,107. Similarly there are 460 surplus places in the Litherland Area, 468 surplus places in the

Crosby Area and 393 surplus places in Maghull Area. Analysis of individual schools data shows that there is sufficient net capacity in other Catholic secondary schools in the area to accommodate all of the pupils from St Ambrose Barlow and significant alternative options should families wish to go to another school. The Archdiocese has given a commitment that all pupils, from St Ambrose Barlow, who want a place at a catholic school, will be offered one.

7. Archdiocese of Liverpool

- 7.1 The Archdiocese of Liverpool have confirmed in meetings with officers that they are still of the view that St Ambrose Barlow is not viable as a school beyond the current academic year and have asked the Council to proceed with the publication of the statutory notice in respect of their proposal to close the school by 31 August 2016. A copy of the letter from the Archdiocese is set out at Annex D.

8. Statutory Notice

- 8.1 A copy of the statutory notice and detailed proposal are attached to this report for information at Annex A.
- 8.2 Following publication of the notice there will be a 4 week statutory period for representations to be made.
- 8.3 Any representations regarding the proposal will be considered by Cabinet in January 2016 when a final decision on closure will be made.

9. Summary and Conclusion

- 9.1 Following the proposal from the Archdiocese to consult on the closure of St Ambrose Barlow consultation ran from 6 July to 13 October. A range of stakeholders were directly engaged and public meetings were held with staff and parents. A second round of meetings with staff and parents were included to ensure everyone had the opportunity to express their views.
- 9.2 Over the summer a number of pupils have left the school and the projected financial deficit for 2016/17 has increased from £280,000 to £1.3m.
- 9.3 A range of comments were made during the consultation process on the perceived impact of closing the school and a written petition was received opposing the closure with 173 signatories as well as 64 standard letters opposing the proposed closure.
- 9.4 During the consultation process there was a significant amount of passion for the school to remain and concern about what would happen to the community if their local secondary school closed but no viable and sustainable proposals to keep the school open were received.
- 9.5 Any delay in closing the school will result in the Council becoming responsible for funding the deficit which will increase significantly year on year.

- 9.6 The school does not have the capacity or resources to improve educational outcomes to move forward as Ofsted have identified they need to.
- 9.7 There are sufficient places in other local schools to accommodate all of the pupils from St Ambrose Barlow if the school closes.
- 9.8 The Archdiocese have confirmed their view that the school is not viable and reiterated their proposal that the school should be closed by August 2016.
- 9.9 In conclusion the only realistic way forward is to accept the proposal from the Archdiocese to close the school at the end of this academic year and proceed with the publication of the statutory notice.
- 9.10 Subject to Cabinet agreeing to publish the statutory notice; the notice will be published and there will be a four week statutory representation period. Any representations will be reported to Cabinet in January for a final decision as the proposal from the Archdiocese to close the school

**Annex A – Draft Statutory Notice and Proposal
to discontinue St Ambrose Barlow Catholic
College**

St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College, Copy Lane, Netherton

Notice is given in accordance with section 15(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that Sefton Council intends to discontinue St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College, Copy Lane, Netherton L30 7PQ on 31 August 2016.

Places will be offered for displaced pupils at alternative Catholic schools in the South Sefton area. Parents will also be advised that they are able to seek admission to any other high school.

The standard eligibility criteria within the current Sefton Transport Policy will continue to apply to displaced pupils. Those pupils who are eligible for assistance with transport costs will normally be offered a public transport travel pass which will help to work against increased car use.

This Notice is an extract from the complete proposal. Copies of the complete proposal can be obtained from: School Organisation and Capital Programme Team, Children, Schools and Families, Sefton Council, Town Hall, Oriel Road, Bootle L20 7AE. Telephone 0151 934 3427 or at www.sefton.gov.uk/stambrosebarlow

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal, any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to School Organisation Team, Children, Schools and Families, Sefton Council, Town Hall, Oriel Road, Bootle L20 7AE or by emailing: school.organisation@sefton.gov.uk

Signed: M Carney, Chief Executive and Authorised Officer of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Publication Date: November 2015

PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE ST AMBROSE BARLOW CATHOLIC COLLEGE, COPY LANE, NETHERTON L30 7PQ

Proposals published by: Sefton Council

Contact Address: School Organisation & Capital Programme Team, Sefton Council, Town Hall, Oriol Road, Bootle L20 7AE, email: school.organisation@sefton.gov.uk

Date proposals published: 18 November 2015

School Name: St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College

School Address: Copy Lane, Netherton, L30 7PQ

School Category: Voluntary Aided

Implementation

The proposed date for closure is 31st August 2016.

Objectives and reason for closure

The objectives of the proposal are to discontinue St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College with effect from 31st August 2016 because the Governing Body is unable to set a balanced budget beyond 31 August 2016. This is a situation that has been generated within the context of low pupil numbers given that the funding of schools is largely based on the number of pupils on roll. Pupil projections demonstrate that increase in the pupil population is highly unlikely to increase in the short or medium term and there are a significant number of surplus places in other local secondary schools.

The school is currently graded as 'requires improvement' by Ofsted following its latest inspection in June 2015. This is the second consecutive such judgement and the school will be classed as inadequate at their next inspection if Ofsted do not consider they have progressed to being a good school. The school do not have the resources available to improve standards.

Pupil numbers

Pupil numbers in secondary schools in South Sefton have been falling over a number of years and this trend will continue for the foreseeable future. St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College has a planned admission number of 120 and provides 600 places for pupils aged 11 to 16. Places are provided for both boys and girls. The school has no reserved provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Table 1 shows the pupil numbers at the school over the last 10 years which are consistently well below the capacity of 600.

Table1: Numbers on roll 2006 to 2015

Year	Number on Roll (January School Census)
2006	453
2007	425
2008	426
2009	434
2010	438
2011	430
2012	437
2013	427
2014	385
2015	382

Current Pupil numbers on roll based on the October 2015 School Census are:

Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total
14	40	13	40	70	177

This means that St Ambrose Barlow has 70.5% surplus places as at October 2015.

There are significant surplus pupil places in secondary schools in the south of the Borough. The 2014 School Organisation Data Book indicates that there are 2,235 pupils in schools in the Bootle planning area with 2,966 places (surplus of 731) and a total net capacity of 3,107. Similarly there are 460 surplus places in the Litherland Area, 468 surplus places in the Crosby Area and 393 surplus places in Maghull Area. Analysis of individual schools data shows that there is sufficient net capacity in other Catholic secondary schools in the area to accommodate all of the pupils from St Ambrose Barlow and significant alternative options should families wish to go to another school. The Archdiocese has given a commitment that all pupils, from St Ambrose Barlow, who want a place at a catholic school, will be offered one.

School Finances

Due to the falling pupil numbers the school has been struggling financially and has relied on the use school balances each year to support the annual budget commitments. The school is overspending by £180,000 in 2015/16 and is projected to have a financial deficit of over £1,300,000 by 31st March 2017 (based on current pupil numbers and existing school financial commitments). The school governing body and the leadership team have worked extremely hard to reduce costs and find savings, but are now at a stage where they are unable to address the increasing deficit and bring the budget back to a balanced position. As a result, the school is not financially viable for the longer term. Schools are not legally allowed to set a deficit budget without a financially sustainable action plan that will bring the school back into a balanced budget position.

Impact on educational standards

St Ambrose Barlow was inspected in June 2015 and is classed as 'requiring improvement' by Ofsted. This is the second such judgement the school has received and the school will be classed as inadequate if they are inspected again and have not become a good school. Given the continued financial pressure the school are not able to invest in improving standards in order to move to good at their next inspection.

In 2015 the percentage of pupils gaining 5 good GCSEs including English and Mathematics fell by 2 percentage points (49% to 47%) and is nearly 10 percentage points below the average for schools in Sefton. Expected progress in English is 53%, significantly below 2014 Sefton (79%) and national (72%) averages. Expected progress in mathematics is 46%, significantly below 2014 Sefton (58%) and national (66%) averages. (*Please note, 2014 national data used for comparison as 2015 national data is not yet validated or available.*)

Impact on parental choice

There should be minimal impact on parental choice for parents/ carers in this area. There are a number of both Catholic and Academy High Schools (non- faith) in the area. Many of the local High schools have multiple places available in all year groups. The local schools are identified in the paragraph below relating to Displaced Pupils

Displaced Pupils

There are a number of other schools in the South Sefton area. The local Catholic schools are Savio Salesian College, Holy Family Catholic High School and Maricourt Catholic High School. There are sufficient alternative places in these other Catholic schools to provide a place for all children who would be displaced by this proposal. The parishes served by St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College will be re-designated to the other local Catholic schools and this will provide priority in the allocation of school places to Catholic children living in the parishes. Subject to approval by the Trustees it is proposed that:

- a) The parish of Holy Spirit will be designated to Savio Salesian College
- b) The parish of Our Lady of Walsingham will be designated to Maricourt Catholic High School, and;
- c) The parish of St Benet will be designated to Holy Family Catholic High School

Additionally, there are also a number of non-Catholic schools in the area and the local ones are Litherland High School, Chesterfield High School, Maghull High School, St Michael's CE High School, Deyes High School, Hillside High School and the Hawthornes Free School. Parents are entitled to apply for a place at any school.

Details of all schools can be found on the Council's website at:

www.sefton.gov.uk/admissions

Details of how to apply for another school can also be found on the Council's website at: www.sefton.gov.uk/admissions

There are no interim arrangements planned.

The school does not include provision that is recognised by the local authority as reserved for children with special educational needs, and the school is not a special school.

Impact on the community

Alternative provision in other Catholic high schools will be made between 0.9 miles and 2.5 miles of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College and recipient schools will work closely to ensure that all services and curriculum routes available to children presently attending St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College are still available wherever practicable.

If the closure proposal is approved then a closure project group will be established to address the many operational issues associated with a school closure and ensure smooth pupil transitions to other schools. A key focus for this group will be to work closely with local schools and a range of local agencies to ensure that the offer to displaced pupils and their families following the closure is maintained.

The site and buildings are owned by the Archdiocese who will keep the site secure and tidy following closure.

Balance of denominational provision

There are three other Catholic schools in the local area namely: Savio Salesian College, Holy Family Catholic High School and Maricourt Catholic High School. There are sufficient places in alternative Catholic secondary school to provide a place for all children who want one if St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School closes. Based on primary school populations there will continue to be sufficient places in Catholic high schools to provide a sufficiency of places for all Catholic children living in South Sefton.

The parishes presently served by St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College will be re-designated to alternative local Catholic high schools which will give priority to Catholic children living in those parishes.

Travel

Where a secondary pupil needs to travel more than 3 miles to their nearest appropriate school, or is eligible under the low income criteria, the Local Authority has a duty to provide free transport usually by way of a travel pass which will help to work against increased car use.

Any new application for home to school transport will be assessed using the standard national home to school distance and income eligibility criteria taking into account that St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College should no longer be considered as a qualifying school for the purposes of transport. The school will still be considered as a qualifying school for those applicants remaining at the school until 2016.

Pupils with SEND who have a statement or education health and care plan will have their needs individually assessed.

Consultation

The consultation period commenced on 6 July 2015. The following parties were consulted:

- Sefton MBC, Children, Schools and Families
- Families of pupils, governors, teachers and other staff at the school
- Pupils at the school
- The Director of Children, Schools and Families
- Ward Councillors for Netherton & Orrell
- Ward Councillors for St Oswald's
- Mr Peter Dowd, MP for Bootle
- Dr J Pugh, MP for Southport
- Mr W Esterson, MP for Sefton Central
- Archdiocese of Liverpool
- Diocesan Director of Education, Liverpool Diocese
- Headteachers, staff and governors of all Sefton schools
- Parents of pupils at feeder primary schools (Holy Spirit Catholic Primary, Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Primary and St Benedict's Catholic Primary School).
- Trade unions and professional associations representing teaching and other staff at the school
- Director of Education at Liverpool LEA
- Director of Education at Lancashire LEA
- Director of Education at Knowsley LEA

A copy of the consultation document is available at www.sefton.gov.uk/stambrosebarlow

Consultation meetings were held at the school as follows:

13th July 2015 at 4.00pm for all staff at the school

13th July 2015 at 6.30pm for all parents and carers of pupils at the school and all parents and carers of pupils at feeder primary schools

16th July 2015 at 6.00pm for all members of the school governing body

23rd September 2015 at 3.30pm for all staff at the school

23rd September 2015 at 6.00pm for all parents and carers of pupils at the school and all parents and carers of pupils at feeder primary schools

The consultation ended on 13th October 2015 and a petition with 173 signatures as well as numerous letters and emails were received during the consultation period.

The following main issues were raised:

- Concern about why parents were not aware of the financial position of the school before the consultation
- Why could more money not be made available
- Concern about the timing of the consultation so close to the end of term
- Concern that their children would not cope with moving to other schools
- Concern about the support for vulnerable pupils in other schools and through transition
- Concern about additional cost of travel to other schools.
- Concern about the standards in other schools
- Why was more not done to encourage parents from feeder schools to go to St Ambrose Barlow
- What will happen to the land if the school closes
- Where there alternatives to closure
- Concern about the closure of the last secondary school in Netherton
- Concern about the disruption/impact on their children's education.

The issues raised were responded to in meetings, the consultation documentation or by written/e-mailed response.

No options which addressed the financial viability of the school were put forward during the consultation period.

The procedure for responses

A public notice was published in a local newspaper on 18 November 2015. The notice is displayed at all main entrances to the school, and in local libraries. It is also available on Sefton Council's website at: www.sefton.gov.uk/stambrosebarlow

Within four weeks from the date of publication, any person may send in a response supporting, objecting or commenting on the proposal to the School Organisation & Capital Programme Team, Sefton Council, Town Hall, Oriel Road, Bootle L20 7AE, or by emailing school.organisation@sefton.gov.uk. The final date for sending in written representations is 16 December 2015.

Annex B – Consultation Leaflet



Proposal for the closure of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School

This leaflet provides background information about the proposal for closure of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School. It also answers some of the questions that parents, carers, pupils and members of the wider community might want to know.

Background

St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School is a voluntary aided school and, as such, is managed by a Governing Body, the majority of which are appointed by the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

All schools need to set a balanced budget and St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School has been struggling to do that because of falling pupil numbers and increasing cost. At the end of June 2015 the Archdiocese of Liverpool, which is the trustee body for the school, wrote to the Council proposing a closure of the school and asking them to consult on the closure of the school by 31st August 2016.

In their letter the Archdiocese of Liverpool stated that: “...*unfortunately, as the funding of schools is now almost wholly based on the number of pupils on roll, Governors have been managing with a budget that is half the size of the average Secondary school budget at a time when the Government is insisting on the highest attainment in the broadest choice of subjects. It is simply not possible for the school to cover these increased expectations within the budget available to them. Nor are they able to set a deficit budget as the law does not allow them to do this.*” All parents and staff in the school have received a copy of this letter.

At a meeting on the 3rd July 2015 the Council’s Cabinet agreed to proceed with the request from the Archdiocese of Liverpool to commence the statutory consultation process with regards to the proposal for the closure of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School, with effect from 31st August 2016.

It is extremely important to note that at this point in time no definitive decision has been made about the future of the school.

There will be a consultation period which will run from the 6th July 2015 – 13th October 2015.

As part of the consultation process for the proposal, we will be holding meetings with staff, governors, and parents/carers of pupils at the school. It is important that we hear the views and opinions of as many people as possible.

Date and Time of Meetings:

All meetings will be held at St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School:

- 13th July, 4.00pm for all staff at the school
- 13th July, 6.30pm for all parents and carers of pupils at the school and all parents and carers of pupils at feeder primary schools
- 16th July, 6.00pm for all members of the school governing body

There will be further meetings in September for all parents, carers, pupils, staff, unions, governors and the wider community. These meetings will provide an update on the consultation process and the key emerging issues.

Further meetings will be held as follows:

- **23rd September, 3.30pm for all staff at the school**
- **23rd September, 6.00pm for all parents and carers of pupils at the school and all parents and carers of pupils at feeder primary schools**

If you are unable to attend the meeting, you may wish to comment on the proposal via an online comment form at

www.sefton.gov.uk/stambrosebarlow

This area of Sefton Council's website, where comments can be submitted, will also be used as a dedicated web page to provide details about the proposal and will be used to keep members of the public fully informed about the consultation process.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation process, the Local Authority intends to publish a statutory notice setting out the proposals for St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School. It is the Local Authority's intention to publish this notice in the local newspapers during November 2015, and this will be followed by a four-week representation period - during the period all interested parties will be invited to make their representations and comments in writing. At the end of the four-week period, the matter will be considered by the Council's Cabinet, who will make the final decision on the proposal.

Stage 1	Consultation 6th July 2015 – 13th October 2015	This is the start of the process when the Local Authority provides information about what is being proposed and gathers the views of
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		interested parties to help them develop the proposals. This period usually lasts for a minimum of six weeks.
Stage 2	Publication November 2015	A legal notice is published in the local paper (usually the Champion) and on the Council website which sets out brief details of the proposal for closure and where more information can be found. It also gives details of where objections and comments can be sent and the closing date for these. It marks the start of the representation period or formal consultation.
Stage 3	Representation 19th November – 17th December 2015	This is a four week period from the date the notice is published to allow interested parties the final opportunity to send objections and comments to be taken into consideration by the decision maker. It is classed as the formal part of the consultation process.
Stage 4	Decision Cabinet to make final decision – January 2016	All the objections and comments gathered during the representation period are provided to the decision maker to enable them to make the final decision to close or not.

[Pupils' Voice](#)

Teaching staff at St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School have already spoken to pupils about the consultation process and the Headteacher is actively encouraging all pupils to make their views known during the process as no decision has yet been made. Over the coming months the school will provide dedicated support and advice to all pupils who may feel concerned about the future. The Local Authority will also work with the pupils in the new school year to ensure we capture their voice and opinions.

[Reasons for the Proposal](#)

[Pupil Numbers](#)

- Pupil numbers in secondary schools in South Sefton have been falling over a number of years and this trend will continue for the foreseeable future. Unfortunately, as a result of falling pupil numbers, other schools have already closed.
- Pupils numbers at St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School have been falling – the school has a capacity of 600 pupils but currently only has 384 on roll (May 2015 census).

School Finances

- School finances are highly dependent on pupil numbers for their funding and as pupil numbers fall schools are unable to maintain staffing levels and the funding available to support each pupil is reduced.
- There is a projected financial deficit of £284,000 for 2016/17.
- The school governing body and leadership have worked extremely hard to reduce costs and find savings, but are now at a stage where they are unable to address the increasing deficit. As a result, the school is not financially viable for the longer term. Schools are not legally allowed to set a deficit budget.

The following questions are based on previous school closure proposals and the type of information and support that parents/carers, pupils, governors, staff, unions and the wider community might want to know.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q1

Who is responsible for the school?

St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School is a voluntary aided school which is run by a governing body, the majority of which are appointed by the Archdiocese of Liverpool. They are responsible for the overall management of the school within the statutory framework set out in current legislation.

Q2

Why is the Council involved?

Legislation sets out that local authorities are under a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area, promote high educational standards, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential. To help them meet these duties and restructure local provision they have the power to close all categories of maintained schools. This involves following a statutory process to consult on any closure proposals. Ultimately it will be the Council which takes the decision to close the school if there are no viable alternatives which can be found.

Q3

Who has proposed the closure of the school?

The Archdiocese of Liverpool proposed the closure of the school in a letter to the Council asking them to consult on the closure of the school by 31st August 2016 stating that: *"...unfortunately, as the funding of schools is now almost wholly based on the number of pupils on roll, Governors have been managing with a budget that is half the size of the average Secondary school budget at a time when the Government is insisting on the highest attainment in the broadest choice of subjects. It is simply not possible for the school to cover these increased expectations within the budget available to them. Nor are they able to set a deficit budget as the law does not allow them to do this."* All parents and staff in the school have received a copy of this letter. At a meeting on the 3rd July 2015 the Council's Cabinet agreed to proceed to commence the statutory consultation process with regards to the proposal for the closure.

Q4

Why doesn't the school have enough money?

Funding for all schools in Sefton comes from central government and must be allocated mainly on the basis of pupil numbers. Pupil numbers at St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School have reduced over a number of years and this has meant that the funding the school receives has also reduced. In addition to this central government have frozen the funding schools get since 2010 whilst costs have been increasing.

Q5

Can any more money be found for the school?

The level of funding provided by central government has been frozen since 2010 and the current government have said that there will be no increase for the remainder of the current parliament.

Q6

Will there be an increase in pupil numbers?

The number of pupils in South Sefton has been reducing for a number of years and is not expected to increase significantly for the foreseeable future. The number of pupils in St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School is likely to reduce further as parents move their children to other schools and this has already happened in some cases.

Q7

Are there any alternatives to closure?

The Governing Body has explored all the ways they can think of to reduce cost but have now come to the conclusion that it is not possible to reduce cost further and still provide the broad curriculum they are required to deliver to the standard that everyone in the school aspires to.

Q8

Can a plan be proposed to prevent the school from closing?

Yes – we are currently in consultation and any proposals can be considered. If there is a proposal that would prevent the school from closing it should be presented to the Governing Body for them to consider in the first instance. For any plan to be seriously considered it would need to establish, in a sustainable way, an approach to setting an appropriate budget.

Q9

When will the school close?

At the moment the Local Authority is only consulting on a proposal to close the school. If the proposal is agreed the school would close with effect from 31 August 2016. The closure of schools is governed by the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 and following the statutory consultation which will end on 13th October 2015 the Local Authority will publish a statutory notice setting out the proposals for the school. The notice will be published during November 2015 and there is then a four-week representation period where all interested parties are invited to make representations and comments in writing to the Local Authority. At the end of the representation period the matter will be considered by the Council's Cabinet who will make the final

decision on the proposal. This is likely to be in January 2016.

Q10

If the school does close, what are the alternative schools in the area?

There are a number of other schools in the South Sefton area, all of which have some available places. The local Catholic schools are Savio Salesian College, Holy Family Catholic High School and Maricourt Catholic High School. The Archdiocese of Liverpool has given a commitment that all pupils from St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School will be found a place in another local Catholic secondary school if St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School closes. There are also a number of non-Catholic schools in the area, namely Litherland High School, Chesterfield High School, Maghull High School, St Michael's CE High School and Deyes High School.

Details of all schools can be found on the Council's website at: www.sefton.gov.uk/admissions

Details of how to apply for another school can also be found on the Council's website at www.sefton.gov.uk/admissions

Q11

If the school closes, how will pupils get to alternative schools?

The Local Authority will apply the national home to school transport eligibility criteria to new applications for school transport. The income and distance criteria are also included in the admissions information booklet which can be viewed via the school admissions website link at -

www.sefton.gov.uk/admissions

Where the Local Authority has a duty to provide free transport, it is usually by way of a travel pass. Pupils with SEND who have a statement or education health and care plan will have their needs individually assessed.

Q12

No other schools are as good as St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School?

All schools are different and have their own culture, feel and ethos, however, the following table provides information on Ofsted grading and GCSE outcomes for other local schools.

School	Ofsted Grade	Pupils gaining 5 A*-C grades at GCSE including English and Maths in 2014
St Ambrose Barlow	Grade 3 (Requires Improvement)	49%
Savio	Grade 3 (Requires Improvement)	54%
Chesterfield	Grade 2 (Good)	57%
Holy Family	Grade 2 (Good)	56%
St Michael's	**	53%
Maricourt	Grade 2 (Good)	63%
Litherland High	**	48%
Maghull High	Grade 3 (Requires Improvement)	45%

** This school is a new sponsored academy and doesn't have a current Ofsted grade.

More detailed information on all schools can be found on the Ofsted website: <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/> and the DfE website: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/>

Q13

The school I want to apply for is full, what can I do?

If you apply for a place at an alternative high school and they are full in that year group you will be informed of that fact and offered the right to appeal. Appeals for Catholic schools must be made to the Archdiocese of Liverpool who administer appeals for these schools. More information can be found at:

http://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/221006/admis_appeals_factsheet.pdf

or from the Sefton School Admissions Team. The contact details are: Tel 0151 934 3590; e-mail admissions@sefton.gov.uk

Q14

If the school closes, how do I get help and support in finding an alternative school?

There is a lot of information relating to Sefton schools included in the 2015/16 school admissions booklet which is still available to view on the Council's website at www.sefton.gov.uk/admissions If families have any particular queries or need help with the process they can contact the School

Admissions Team (telephone: 0151 934 3590 or e-mail: iyadmissions@sefton.gov.uk)

Q15

How will you ensure the continuance of a good quality education for all pupils?

The governing body and the leadership in the school have a duty to ensure the standards of education in the school are maintained whilst it is open. Although this is also a very difficult time for school staff, they are totally committed to ensuring that all pupils receive a good quality education.

Q16

What happens if my child has already been allocated a school place to start at St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School in September 2015?

If you do want to apply for a place at an alternative High School for your child starting High School in September 2015, you should contact the Sefton School Admissions Team. They will be able to give you information relating to the availability of school places and provide you with an application form if you decide you want to apply for an alternative High School.

The contact details are: Tel 0151 934 3590

e-mail admissions@sefton.gov.uk

Q17

My child already attends St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School and I have decided that I want my child to transfer to another High School.

You can contact the Sefton School Admissions Team who will provide you with an application form to transfer to an alternative school and provide you with information relating to the availability of alternative school places.

The contact details are: Tel 0151 934 3590

e-mail iyadmissions@sefton.gov.uk

Q18

My Child has Special Educational Needs/Disability. Who should I contact for further information about choosing an alternative school?

If your child has SEN/Disability and you require support in choosing an alternative school, you can contact the Sefton Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) who will provide advice, attend meetings, school visits and support you in choosing an alternative school for your child.

The contact details are: Tel 0151 934 3334
e-mail seftonsenddiass@sefton.gov.uk

Q19

What will happen to the parishes that, for the purpose of school admissions, are presently designated to Primary Schools which feed in to St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School after 2015/16?

If the School does close, the Archdiocese of Liverpool will propose that:

- The parish of Holy Spirit will become a designated parish for Savio Salesian College
- The parish of Our Lady of Walsingham will become a designated parish for Maricourt Catholic High School
- The parish of St Benet's will become a designated parish for Holy Family Catholic High School

These proposals will be submitted to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator for approval for 2016 admissions.

Q20

If my child moves to an alternative school that is further from my home, will school transport be available?

Any new application for home to school transport will be assessed using the standard national home to school distance and income eligibility criteria taking into account that St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School should no longer be considered as a qualifying school for the purposes of transport. The school will still be considered as a qualifying school for those applicants remaining at the school until 2016.

Q21

Will I receive help with the cost of a new uniform if I have to move school?

If the decision is taken to close the school financial support will be provided to parents who have to move schools and purchase a new uniform. More details will be made available during the consultation process.

Q22

What will happen to the staff?

All staff will continue to deliver quality teaching and support to pupils. But if the decision is taken to close the school, the Local Authority and

Archdiocese of Liverpool will provide dedicated support and guidance to help them find alternative employment.

Q23

What will happen to the governing body?

The governing body will remain in place and will continue to carry out their statutory duties and responsibilities. The governing body will continue to run the school as long as it is open. If the decision is made to close the school the governing body will be disbanded on the day the school closes.

Q24

My child has Special Education Needs, (SEN) and the school is receiving extra funding from the Local Authority to support their needs. What happens to this funding if we decide to move to another school?

Any additional funding received by the school to meet the SEN of a pupil will transfer to their new setting to support their transition and help them settle into their new environment. This funding will then continue to be monitored and reviewed in the usual way.

The staff at St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School will ensure that any information regarding the SEN of pupils is shared with their potential new school so that transition planning can take place. Parents of pupils with SEN will be included in this process.

If you would like to speak to a member of the Special Education Needs and Inclusion Service, they can be contacted at:
SENIS@sefton.gov.uk or 0151 934 2347.

Q25

What will happen to the school site and premises if the school closes?

Only a small part of the school playing field is owned by Sefton Council and the remainder of the school field is owned by the Trustees of the Archdiocese; they are protected by legislation against the loss of playing areas for 10 years after any change in status. The school buildings and their footprint are also owned by the Trustees of the Archdiocese and no consideration has yet been given on their future.

For further information about the proposal, please go to www.sefton.gov.uk/stambrosebarlow

Please tell us what you think about the proposal.

You can return the form with your comments either to St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School or to the School Organisation Team, Schools Regulatory Services, Town Hall, Oriel Road, Bootle, L20 7AE.

Annex C – Sample standard letter received opposing closure

DATED - 11/8/15.

Dear Mr Colin Pettigrow / Mr Mike McSorley

REF – ST AMBROSE BARLOW CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL, NETHERTON

We the parents, hereby declare our **TOTAL OPPOSITION** to the closure of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School.

Our Children are happy in our school, they do not have to travel a distance to get to our School, they are well look after in our school, they feel Safe in our school. The Teaching is good in our School.

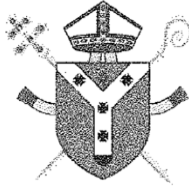
St Ambrose Barlow, Needs to be kept open.

We request that this is noted in all correspondence within the consultations.

Yours sincerely

ANNEX D Letter from the Archdiocese

ARCHDIOCESE



OF LIVERPOOL

LACE
Croxteth Drive
Sefton Park
Liverpool
L17 1AA

ARCHDIOCESAN
EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT

Tel: (0151) 522 1071
Fax: (0151) 522 1082

Email: aes@rcaol.co.uk

20 October 2015

Mike McSorley
Head of Schools and Families
Sefton Council
Merton House
Merton Road
Bootle
L20 3JA

Dear Mike,

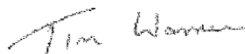
I write following the consultation period on the proposed closure of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School, Netherton, and further to my letter to Colin Pettigrew on 30 June 2015.

In considering all of the information received during the consultation period, the position of the Archdiocese remains that it is simply not financially possible for the Governing Body to continue to operate the school and provide good educational outcomes for young people in Netherton beyond August 2016. Indeed, the financial position of the school has worsened during the period of consultation following the decision by some families to seek school places elsewhere.

As I have maintained throughout the consultation period, it is of great credit to the Governors, staff and students of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic High School for the quality of education provided at the school and that this has thus far been sustained in a very challenging financial context. I should also like to acknowledge the creativity, dignity and unquestionable support for the school shown by the wider community throughout the consultation period.

The Archdiocese therefore supports a recommendation to Cabinet to approve the publication of a statutory notice for the closure of the school on 31 August 2016.

Yours sincerely



Tim Warren
Diocesan Director of Schools and Colleges