

# St Mary Magdalen Catholic Primary School

## Outline proposal prepared by the Governing Body for Lewisham Mayor and Cabinet

February 2021



Author	Intended Recipients
Governing Body	Lewisham Mayor & Cabinet Executive Director for Children and Young People Director of Education Education Commission, Archdiocese of Southwark

## **Governing Body recommendations**

In collaboration with the Archdiocese of Southwark and Lewisham Education the governing body have reached the conclusion that in the present climate and taking account of the local demographic data and financial position of the school, they are unable to sustain the continuation of St Mary Magdalen Catholic Primary School. The Governing Body therefore call for the closure of St Mary Magdalen school at the earliest opportunity but no later than December 2021.

The Governing Body will continue in place until the proposed closure of the school and will assist the Senior Management Team, Lewisham Education, and the Archdiocese of Southwark in securing alternative provision for those children still on the roll at the school.

## **Context**

St Mary Magdalen Catholic Primary School is a one-form primary school situated in Howson Road Brockley. The school has been central to the Catholic community within the local area for many years, it is adjacent to the Parish Church of St Mary Magdalen.

Over the recent past the school has experienced some turbulent times, the latest of which was in 2018 when the key stage 2 maths results were disapplied by the DfE, the allegation being the children being overly assisted by adults.

Parental support diminished due to lack of leadership and management in the school.

In April 2018 the school had been confirmed as 'Good' by Ofsted, and was categorised as a Green school by the LA, which meant there was little LA Officer support.

In May 2019 the then Headteacher and Chair of Governors resigned their positions.

In Summer term 2019 it was re-categorised as Red, triggering high level support with teaching and learning, HR issues and finance.

All teaching staff bar one fulltime and one part time resigned their positions at the school.

There was no permanent Premises Officer and the vacant School Business Manager Post had not been recruited to.

The Archdiocese identified a National Leader of Governance to be appointed to the Board; she was immediately appointed as Chair.

With the support of the Archdiocese an Interim Headteacher from outside Lewisham was secured and a Head of School was seconded from another school within Lewisham.

By hand over in July 2019 the new Leadership team had secured staff to all the vacant positions in the school.

Once the new Leadership team were allowed full access to the school it was apparent that the school was in disarray. There was no up to date budget information available on the system, no internal school data recorded for the children's progress over time and generally the school buildings were in a poor condition.

There were 168 children on roll September 2019.

Supported by Lewisham Education Finance team, the latest predicted figures for the school is that the budget will close at April 2021 with a deficit balance of £42,000, which includes a carry forward deficit of from the previous financial year.

## Rationale

The school is currently significantly below PAN (147 pupils on roll). The data across both the local authority and the Archdiocese indicates that there is little evidence of the downward trend changing. For academic year 2020-21 the school received 7 first preferences, reinforced by 12 first preferences for 2021-22. At the end of 2020/21 to compound this there are 22 pupils who will be leaving Year 6. Within a 1 mile radius of St Mary Magdalen there are currently 777 spare places available across all primary year groups in Lewisham schools

## Local capacity for displacement

The Baptism numbers in the Lewisham deanery show that there has been around a 10% reduction in baptisms for children aged 1 – 7 from 2018 to 2019. (The latest figures available). The PAN of Catholic places across Lewisham is 390. In 2016 there were 535 applications, the most recent data puts that number at 330. Early evidence would suggest that the current situation is less favourable, based on baptism numbers and birth rate. There are currently 139 places available in the nearest four Catholic primary schools, across all year groups. (All within 1 mile) There are a further five Catholic schools, slighter more distant but still within Lewisham.

## Travel implications

		Places	Route	Time (Mins)	Distance (Miles)
SMM	SMA	94	Bus (122)	28	2.5
SMM	St Saviour's	11	Bus (122)	17	2.7
SMM	St William of York	12	Bus (122)	14	1.3
SMM	St Winifred's	22	Bus (122)	35	2.9

## Alternative options

Options regarding staffing are limited. There is potential to restructure the senior leadership team. The possibility to merge year groups has been explored. Given current numbers in each year group, this does not appear to be viable. The statutory limit on class sizes in KS1 prevents this. In KS2, where classes are fuller, the result of merging year groups would result in class sizes in excess of 40 pupils.

## Timeline

Date	Action
10 March 2021	Report to Mayor & Cabinet
16 March	Potential Scrutiny
24 March	Potential Referral back to Mayor & Cabinet
19 April	Stage 1 – Consultation commences
28 May	Close of Stage 1 consultation
10 June	Deadline for consideration of changes to proposal following Stage 1 Consultation
11 June	Stage 2 - Publication of proposal
11 June	Stage 3 – Representation period commences
9 July	Period of representation closes
w/c 12 July	Responses to be shared with Council
Late July	Stage 4 Decision report to Mayor & Cabinet
Autumn term	Bespoke admissions round for those pupils still at the school
31 December	Stage 5 – Proposed Implementation of School Closure