

# **CONSULTATION REPORT**



## **Proposal to discontinue St. Mary's Catholic Primary School Pembroke Dock**

**The Governing Body of  
St. Mary's Catholic Primary School**

**December 2018**

**Published by:**

**The Governing Body of St. Mary's  
Catholic Primary School  
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# Foreword

This Consultation Report sets out the statutory consultation undertaken regarding the proposed closure of St Mary's Catholic Primary School. In addition, all responses received during the consultation period are recorded, together with a summary of each of the issues raised by consultees. These are accompanied by a clarification or rejection (as appropriate) of any concerns.

The governing body of St Mary's Catholic Primary School will consider this Consultation Report.

**Barbara Thomas**  
**Chair of Governors**

**David Burgoyne**  
**Vice Chair of Governors**



# 1. Introduction

At its meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2018, the governing body of St Mary's Catholic Primary School resolved to consult with the Trustees of the Diocese of Menevia regarding its proposal to discontinue the school. This decision was made in light of a number of factors, notably the significant decline in pupil numbers at the school.

In accordance with the relevant regulations, consultation was undertaken with the Trustees of the Diocese of Menevia on the above proposal. This was included in a letter sent by the Chair and Vice Chair of the governing body to the Trustees on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2018. The Trustees responded to this consultation in a letter dated 13<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

The governing body of St Mary's Catholic Primary School subsequently considered the Trustees' response in a meeting held on 6 September 2018, and resolved as follows:

- (a) That the response of the Trustees of the Diocese of Menevia be noted, in particular the request to ensure continued access to catholic education provision for children in the area by consideration of catchment areas and provision of transport.***
- (b) That the Chair of the governing body be authorised to undertake general consultation on behalf of the governing body on the proposal to discontinue St Mary's Catholic School – implementation to take place in April 2019.***
- (c) To request the assistance of the Director for Children and Schools of Pembrokeshire County Council in undertaking the necessary process to discontinue the school and to ensure compliance with the relevant regulations.***

The subsequent statutory consultation was undertaken during the period 15<sup>th</sup> October 2018 to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

This document represents the governing body's responsibility as part of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to publish a Consultation Document. This document:

- Summarises each of the issues raised by consultees;
- Responds to these issues by means of clarification or rejection of the concerns with supporting reasons, and
- Sets out Estyn's view of the overall merits of the proposal.

## 2. Distribution of Consultation Report

This Consultation Report will be distributed to the following:

The Governing Bodies, Parents/Carers/Guardians and Staff of:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>St. Mary's Catholic Primary School</li> <li>St. Francis Catholic School</li> <li>St Teilo's Catholic School</li> <li>Pembroke Dock Community School</li> <li>Pennar Community School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monkton Priory CP School</li> <li>Ysgol Gelli Aur/Golden Grove CP</li> <li>Penrhyn VC School</li> <li>Ysgol Harri Tudur/Henry Tudor School</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director of Education – Diocese of Menevia</li> <li>Trustees of the Diocese of Menevia</li> </ul>	Director of Education – The Diocese of St David's
The Welsh Ministers	Estyn
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Angela Burns AM – Constituency</li> <li>Helen Mary Jones AM – Regional</li> <li>Joyce Watson AM – Regional</li> <li>Eluned Morgan AM – Regional</li> <li>Neil Hamilton AM - Regional</li> <li>Simon Hart MP</li> <li>Cllr. AW Wilcox</li> <li>Cllr. BJ Hall</li> <li>Cllr. P Dowson</li> <li>Cllr. J Beynon</li> <li>Cllr. J Harvey</li> <li>Cllr. P Llewellyn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NUT</li> <li>NASUWT</li> <li>UCAC</li> <li>ATL</li> <li>NAHT</li> <li>ASCLE</li> <li>UNISON</li> <li>GMB</li> </ul>
ERW – Regional Education Consortium	County Council transport unit
Dyfed Powys Police and Crime Commissioner	Pembroke Dock Town Council Pembroke Town Council Milford Haven Town Council
Independent nursery providers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Registered Day Nurseries/Playgroups</li> <li>Registered Childminders</li> </ul>	Childcare & Young People's Partnership – Early Years, Childcare and Learning Group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hywel Dda Health Board</li> </ul>	Pembrokeshire Communities First

In addition, this report will be distributed to all consultees who have specifically requested to be advised of its availability.

## 3. Consultation Arrangements

### 3.1 General Arrangements

The Consultation Document was published on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2018; this date also represented the beginning of the statutory consultation period. The consultation period ended on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2018. The Consultation Document was distributed / links sent to all statutory consultees listed on Page 3 of that document.

The Consultation Document was made available on the County Council's and Diocese of Menevia's websites at [www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/haveyoursay](http://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/haveyoursay) and [www.menevia.org](http://www.menevia.org).

### 3.2 Consultation with the Diocese of Menevia

In view of the status of St Mary's being a Voluntary Aided school, consultation with the Director of Education of the Diocese of Menevia and the Diocesan Trustees has taken place. This took place prior to the publication of the Consultation Document and the decision of the Governing Body of St Mary's Catholic Primary School to proceed to consultation. A 28 day consultation period was allowed for this purpose.

In his response on behalf of the Trustees of the Diocese of Menevia, the Bishop stated "*The Trustees understand that this has been a difficult decision for the Governing Body to take and are saddened by the possibility of any reduction in the provision of Catholic education within the Diocese...Having read your letter and discussed the reasons for your request...it is with the deepest regret that the Trustees agree to your request*".

## 4. Consultation Correspondence

### 4.1 Volume and Profile of Responses Received

A total of 32 responses were received during the consultation period.

The profile of respondents is given below and reflects all descriptions given. This profile indicates respondents' role as part of the consultation and may indicate multiple roles, e.g. parent, staff and local resident; as a result the total does not equal the total number of responses received.

<b>Pupils</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Local residents</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Parents</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Staff</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Former parents</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Grandparents</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Former pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pre-school parents</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Estyn</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pembrokeshire County Council</b>	<b>1</b>

### 4.2 General Responses

19 responses were received from consultees who chose to utilise the online or hard-copy form provided, they were asked to respond to one question in order to establish which of the following statements best reflected their views. The findings are as follows:

*Please indicate which of the following reflects your views on the proposal:*

	<b>Total</b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>I do not feel strongly one way or the other</b>	1	5.3
<b>I support the proposal</b>	10	52.6
<b>I do not support the proposal</b>	8	42.1

The following represents a summary of the concerns/comments/observations provided by consultees together with the Proposer's responses. All general comments received in relation to this proposal are included in **APPENDIX A**.

<b>Concerns / Comments</b>	<b>Proposer Response to Concerns Raised</b>
Concern that other local schools are already overcrowded and that the children from St Mary's should be sent to schools with smaller numbers.	There is no evidence to suggest that the largest of the alternative local schools are overcrowded. At Pembroke Dock Community School, the average class size at the beginning of the 2018/19 academic year was 27.6 with none greater than 30 pupils. In relation to Pennar School, the equivalent numbers are an average of 27.5 and one

Concerns / Comments	Proposer Response to Concerns Raised
	<p>class with more than 30 pupils. In this context, it should be noted that the above schools have single year group classes; both classes in St Mary's have multiple year groups.</p> <p>Pupils cannot be "sent" to alternative smaller schools. The choice of school is a matter of parental preference and the application of the Council's Admissions arrangements.</p>
<p>Children of Catholic families will be disadvantaged in their religious education if this school is closed. The added travel time to other Catholic schools in the diocese is costly and lengthens these children's school day.</p>	<p>The Council has made a commitment to all pupils remaining on roll at St Mary's at the date of implementation, that they can continue to receive a Catholic education and that transport will be provided to St Francis School in Milford Haven. It is acknowledged that the closure of St Mary's Catholic School would be disadvantageous to some, however, there is alternative Catholic provision only 8.5 miles away.</p>
<p>Saddened by the prospect of a local Catholic school closing</p>	<p>The governing body and Diocese are also saddened by the prospect. However, there have been repeated attempts to 'rescue' the school during the last couple of years, including significant input from the Council, both in terms of financial assistance and professional support, and the brokering of the collaboration with St Francis Catholic School in Milford Haven.</p> <p>It is unfortunate that the significant loss of pupils from the school has resulted in a budget which cannot sustain the school. Added to this is the fact that the governing body has been unable to recruit a permanent head teacher to the school.</p>

### 4.3 Pupil Voice

A total of 11 responses were received from pupils of St Mary's Catholic Primary School.

The following represents a summary of the concerns/comments/observations provided by pupils together with the Proposer's responses. All pupil voice comments are included in **APPENDIX A**.

Concerns / Comments	Proposer Response to Concerns Raised
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ St Mary's school should not close</li> </ul>	<p>Parents living in the Pembroke Dock area have a wider range of school options when</p>

Concerns / Comments	Proposer Response to Concerns Raised
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ I like the Catholic school because it teaches us about God, Mary and Jesus</li> <li>○ We could get more children to come to our school by showing the parents how good we are</li> <li>○ Other Catholic schools should make some space for children who want a religious education</li> <li>○ The school should not close because all the teachers will lose their jobs</li> <li>○ We should hold a party so people can come together and raise money. Get more money from charities and advertise the school to other children showing that it is good</li> </ul>	<p>considering where to send their children to school. It is noticeable that parents have opted for schools other than St Mary's during the last couple of years and this may be due to several reasons. This has resulted in a significant fall in pupil numbers at the school.</p> <p>There are other Catholic schools in Pembrokeshire, the closest being St Francis school in Milford Haven and St Teilo's in Tenby. Parents have every right to express a preference for either of these schools and places are available.</p> <p>The County Council will work with the governing body and with unions to minimise disruption to staff employment. It has a proven track record in supporting staff in such situations.</p> <p>Raising funds in the manner suggested can only ever be a short term solution and is not a viable proposition.</p>

#### 4.4 Response from Pembrokeshire County Council

The governing body received a response to the proposal from Cllr. David Lloyd, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning. Cllr. Lloyd acknowledged the governing body's difficult position in relation to its consideration of the future of the school, but that in view of the range of relevant factors outlined in the Consultation Document, supports the decision to consult on the school's closure.

In response to the Diocese of Menevia's request to maintain a choice for parents who wish to access a Catholic education for their children, Cllr. Lloyd stated that whilst he acknowledged the Diocese's aspiration for this, there was little evidence of demand in the area. Cllr. Lloyd confirmed that in view of there being alternative provision at St Francis Catholic Primary school in Milford Haven, transport would be provided for pupils remaining at St Mary's at the time of the implementation of the proposal if they wish to continue their education at that school.

The Council's response to the consultation is attached in **APPENDIX B**.

#### 4.5 Response from Estyn

The governing body has received a detailed response to the proposal from Estyn. Its overall conclusion of the proposal is as follows:

It is Estyn's view that this proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standards of education in the area.

The full response to the proposal from Estyn is attached in **APPENDIX C**.

Concerns / Comments	Authority Response to Concerns Raised									
<p>“The proposer sets out five expected advantages of the proposal. However it is not clear enough how the proposer deems three of these as advantages”. These are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Alternative Catholic provision available elsewhere, notably St Francis Catholic School (Milford Haven) and St Teilo's Catholic School (Tenby)</li> <li>2. Other local schools have places available to accommodate displaced pupils</li> <li>3. A strong likelihood of the school being placed in an official category if inspected with little prospect of coming out due to instable leadership.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The governing body considers it advantageous that any parent wishing for their child to continue to receive a Catholic education can still do so in schools which are within a reasonable distance to St Mary's.</li> <li>2. The governing body also considers that it is an advantage that there are other local schools with places available to accommodate displaced pupils. It is considered that the governing body's decision to consider closure would be far more difficult if parents were unable to find alternative places in schools nearby.</li> <li>3. It is acknowledged that this point should not be considered as an advantage. However, this point has been a contributory factor in the governing body's thinking regarding the future of the school.</li> </ol>									
<p>The proposer has not made clear the distance between St Mary's and St Francis Catholic schools nor the amount of time needed for travel to St Francis Catholic School. In addition, the proposer has suggested St Teilo's Catholic school as possible alternative provision but has not provided information on the distance from St Mary's. The time needed for travel nor details of any transport provision to this school.</p>	<p>Distances and times between St Mary's Catholic School and alternative schools of the same language category in the area are shown on Page 33 of the Consultation Document.</p> <p>In relation to alternative Catholic provision, the following information is relevant:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="813 1671 1390 1787"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>St Francis</th> <th>St Teilo's</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Distance</td> <td>8.5 miles</td> <td>11.4 miles</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Time</td> <td>19 mins.</td> <td>21 mins.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		St Francis	St Teilo's	Distance	8.5 miles	11.4 miles	Time	19 mins.	21 mins.
	St Francis	St Teilo's								
Distance	8.5 miles	11.4 miles								
Time	19 mins.	21 mins.								
<p>The proposer has listed numbers of surplus places in nearby schools. It has demonstrated that there are sufficient places</p>	<p>It is considered very unlikely that all pupils remaining at St Mary's will require places at alternative Catholic schools.</p>									

Concerns / Comments	Authority Response to Concerns Raised
<p>across schools to accommodate pupils from St Mary's. However St Francis Catholic School does not have sufficient places to accommodate all the displaced pupils from St Mary's. The proposer has not demonstrated clearly how it will address the issue if all the pupils from St Mary's choose to go to St Francis. In addition, St Teilo's Catholic schools only appears to have sufficient places available for nine pupils.</p>	<p>As outlined in Paragraph 3.1 of the Consultation Document, only nine baptised Catholic children were on the school's roll in January 2018.</p> <p>It should also be noted that admissions arrangements for St Francis and St Teilo's schools are the responsibility of the relevant governing bodies of those schools. The proposer has not received a response from either of those schools indicating a concern that they would be unable to admit displaced pupils from St Mary's.</p>
<p>The proposer appears to have suitably considered the impact of the proposal on Welsh medium provision. It reasonably concludes that there is no impact on Welsh medium provision. However the proposer makes no reference to the local authority's Welsh in education strategic plan.</p>	<p>The proposer has not made reference to the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan because it has reasonably concluded that the proposal has no impact on Welsh medium provision. As outlined in Para. 5.3.5 of the Consultation Document, demand for Welsh medium provision in the area is met by Ysgol Gelli Aur/Golden Grove CP School (3-11) and Ysgol Caer Elen (3-16) and/or Ysgol y Preseli (11-19).</p>
<p>The proposer does not seem to have commented directly on how any potential disruption to learners will be minimised.</p>	<p>St Mary's Catholic Primary School will continue to provide a faith-based education provision to its pupils until such time as the governing body's proposal, if determined, is implemented. The governing body acknowledges the right of parents to express a preference for alternative schools in the meantime, and if required, both pupils and parents will be assisted in this process.</p>

## APPENDIX A

Ref.	Comments
2	<p>I do support the proposal for the school to close, however, other nearby local schools are already overcrowded and my concern is that Pembroke Dock Community School will accept the St. Mary's school children (as they have done over the last 12 months) and overcrowding the classrooms, of which there are already not enough staff supervising. The children from St Mary's school should HAVE to be sent to schools with smaller numbers, i.e Lamphey, Coshleston, Gelli Aur Golden Grove, Penrhyn.</p> <p>I don't think there is any requirement for a Catholic school in this day and age.</p>
3	<p>The LA has provided support while the school has been in the red support category for 2 years yet the school has not moved forward. Unfortunately the number of Catholic children left does not justify the school remaining open.</p> <p>There are only a couple of catholic children left in the school. These children can attend St Francis or St Teilos if their parents feel strongly about a Catholic education.</p>
4	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>(comments redacted for the purposes of this document – respondent does not want their comments to be made publically available)</p>
6	<p>I feel that the children of catholic families will be disadvantaged in their religious education if this school is closed. The added travel time to other catholic schools in the diocese is costly and lengthens these children's school day</p> <p>I am concerned that catholic education will be discontinued</p> <p><i>(Suggested alternative)</i> A job share for head with another school in the diocese</p>
7	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>(comments redacted for the purposes of this document – respondent does not want their comments to be made publically available)</p>
9	<p>The dramatic fall in numbers ,I believe was rumours circulating about the school closure earlier in the year, Also because parents not liking being told about their naughty children's behaviour it would be interesting to know if their children's behaviour improved by moving schools ,parents today believe if their child is not doing well in school it's the schools fault ,they should try taking away their I</p>

Ref.	Comments
	<p>pads perhaps they would learn better, I have found the teachers in this school to be excellent ,children thrive better in smaller classes ,there has been a lot of money spend on the school lately ,has this been a waste of money ,?</p> <p>I believe their are not many catholic children in the school ,but isn't it marvellous that all faiths can work together,I am not catholic by the way ,</p> <p><i>(Suggested alternative)</i> Not sure what can be done now ,I believe most people think it will close now any way ,recruit a non-catholic head maybe ,most governors in my opinion don't seem to have their own voice ,just agree with the head, Thin out the staff and build up a great school once again Are all catholic schools going to close in wales now ? What about flying start playgroup ?we do live in a multi-cultural world</p>
11	<p>I feel it is a shame to close yet another primary school in the area but if numbers are falling to such a level that it is unsustainable then I don't see any other option.</p> <p>I can't see a viable alternative. As far as I know there isn't another Catholic primary school close enough to allow a merger / or for St Mary's Children to attend instead. In my opinion, it is too far for primary children to travel to Haverfordwest each day, even if there was room at Mary Immaculate School.</p> <p><i>(Suggested alternative)</i> It is difficult to make any suggestions without knowing all the facts and figures. I don't know at one point the numbers on the roll make continuing the school nonviable.</p>
13	<p> (comments redacted for the purposes of this document – respondent does not want their comments to be made publically available)</p>
14	<p>As the current interim Head of St Mary's School, I cannot see a solution to the school's situation, so with great sadness, support the proposal.</p> <p>I would urge PCC to support the Diocese by remaining committed to continuing access to Catholic education for any parent who desires it for their child. In difficult financial times, this MUST include a commitment to maintain school transport for children outside the prescribed maximum walking distance to school, if poorer parents are not to be denied this opportunity.</p>

Ref.	Comments
16	<p>The proposal to close the school has broken my heart. The people within the school care deeply and feel so let down by everyone outside the school including the church, education department and some parents who used Facebook to slate the school. The proposal makes the staff look so bad but in reality they worked their socks off trying to please each and every advisor that insisted their way was best - in hindsight the advice and support should have been co-ordinated and workable. IT WAS NOT and maybe lessons should be learned. Why on earth were parents allowed to move their children before during and throughout the year.</p> <p>If parents wish their children to have access to Catholic education it should be parental choice as to which school they go to. Tenby may be a little further but in bad weather not having to cross the bridge should be taken into consideration.</p> <p><i>(Suggested alternative)</i> Funding alternatives could be requested from local industry, applied for from grants and sources to help to keep the school open in order to build up their numbers. The main behaviour issues have been resolved by the children moving on to secondary school where issues are still showing. Support staff would have to be re-deployed or let go until such time numbers increase.</p>
17	<p>I feel it is a great shame to lose catholic education in Pembroke Dock. I understand there are very few baptised Catholics attending St. Mary's. However parents choose to send their children to St. Mary's regardless of whether they are catholic or not as they want an education for their children that is driven by catholic values. I understand the reason for the proposal and difficulties in recruiting a headteacher and the financial viability of the school with such few pupils.</p> <p>I feel that it is important to provide Catholic education for children in St. Mary's who want this continued, regardless of whether they are baptised Catholics or not. it is important to allow children to continue this Catholic education, if they so choose, in any catholic school within the area that the parents feels suits their child's needs best.</p>
18	<p>It is such a shame that this family school is closing. The current staff feel very let down and blamed for the shortcomings highlighted in the consultation document and in reality the staff that are there now have worked above and beyond their duties to try and improve standards and behaviour in order to save the school. Other schools and the public have not been told this - so as far as they are concerned staff are to blame for closure. It is so sad. Parents chose St Marys because of the Christian ethos and warm feeling of the school. The homely caring nature of staff is often commented on and many are worried that bigger schools may not have the same feel. It is a family that has been torn apart.</p> <p>Catholic education if wanted by parents should be provided as local as possible. I think St Francis Milford Haven was mentioned in proposal but maybe St Teilos Tenby should also be considered as this would cut out having to use cheddar bridge.</p> <p><i>(Suggested alternative)</i></p>

Ref.	Comments
	<p>one teacher and TA,s to build up numbers again might have been an alternative but now with children already having placements after Christmas this would not be viable. I do wish we could have lasted until the end of this school year as it would be 60 years of St Marys in September 2019 - we aren't going to be able to celebrate now. This would have been the ideal opportunity to showcase the good aspects instead of the press we have had. It is understandable that having such low numbers of children in school and fewer waiting to attend, with all the will in the world it could not carry on.so sad</p>
19	<p>I am saddened that the situation has come to this point and having read the proposal I understand there are many problems to overcome and why this has been proposed. However as a parent I still feel had we been more informed of the situations we could of helped turn things around.</p> <p>I would really of liked my children to carry on with their Catholic education but if the school closes I feel this will not be possible. The distance to St Francis or St Teilos will add on a considerable amount of time to their school days, making them more tired which I believe would be detrimental to their education I also feel they are far too young to go on a mini bus alone if this was provided. Thirdly if I were to drive it would be quite expensive, especially if they were to attend St Francis as there is the bridge toll to pay four times a day on top of fuel costs. If St Mary's was to close I'm afraid their Catholic education would sadly have to end.</p> <p><i>(Suggested alternative)</i></p> <p>I am wondering why a new head would have to be a Catholic, seeing as they seem to be very hard to find. Couldn't a head teacher be put in place who is willing to conform to the Catholic ideal? Obviously a lack of a consistent head teacher in the school has had a very negative effect and been a contributing factor to so many children leaving the school. Now this consultation has been proposed more children have put in transfer requests for different schools which means less pupils in St Mary's again which will, sadly and inevitably make the closure more viable.</p>
PV1	<p>It is a bad idea to close the school down because I have been in this school since I was 2 and I have learnt lots.</p> <p>I like the Catholic school because it teaches us about God, Mary and Jesus.</p> <p><i>(Suggested alternative)</i></p> <p>We could get more children to come to our school by showing the parents how good the students are. We could write to parents to say how good we are.</p>
PV2	<p>I don't want this school to shut down because I love the school with all my heart and I I don't want to leave. I will miss my teachers and I will never forget them. And I don't want to change my prayers. I don't want to leave because it's fun. And I don't want to leave my friends. I love it here.</p>

Ref.	Comments
	<p>I think that other Catholic schools should make some space for children because some schools are shutting down. And so children can carry on having a religious education</p> <p>(Suggested alternative) To have more children in this school so then I don't have to leave my teachers and MY friends and LSA.</p>
PV3	<p>I don't think the school should close because think of the nice teachers who are going to lose their jobs and the children who might lose their friends. it does not matter if people say we have a bad education because we don't or about numbers of pupils it matters about the children and the teachers so please don't close the school. I love it here and so do the teachers and other people fighting to stop you closing the school.</p> <p>There are not many Catholic schools in the area but what about the people who are catholic and want to send their children to a school to help that child become a catholic and follow in the ways of their parents. St Marys RC school would be the place for them. You see our school is very important for if you close it you're getting rid of a parent's way of implementing the catholic religion in their or your child's life.</p> <p>I think that if you want to go to a catholic school you should have the right even if you're not a catholic because catholic schools teach you about the story of Jesus and how God made the world.</p> <p>(Suggested alternative) We should hold a party so people can come together and raise money. We could walk down the street with signs and chanting save our school and other people could join our parade.</p>
PV4	<p>I don't think the school should close because all of the teachers will lose their jobs and I have been here since I was 2 I will miss it.</p> <p>I think it is important to make space in the other catholic schools for mums and dads that want to because they can do prayers and go to church.</p> <p>(Suggested alternative) Have fundraising events and share money between the school and the charity. We could dress in home cloths and pay 50p or have a bake sale.</p>
PV5	<p>I think the school closing is ok and not ok. I am going to miss my friends.</p>

Ref.	Comments
	<p>My mum is not sending me to a Catholic school and that is ok but if other children in my class want to go to a catholic school they should be allowed.</p> <p>(Suggested alternative) Raise money to help the school stay open by holding lots of events. We could sell things to raise money to keep the school open.</p>
PV6	<p>This school has been up for many years and to close a fantastic school is devastating. I have had a good four years and feel safe here. There will be a colossal gap.</p> <p>I think we should be allowed to go to Catholic schools as I there aren't any other Catholic schools close except Tenby which should make spaces.</p> <p>(Suggested alternative) Get more money from charities and advertise the school to other children showing that it is good. Telling them we have good equipment and computers and amazing teachers.</p>
PV7	<p>I don't think the school should close because we're getting a great education here. I don't care when people say we're getting a bad education because we're getting a fine education!</p> <p>I think that it should be that if we want to go to another catholic school we should be able to go.</p> <p>(Suggested alternative) If we're not talking about the school closing and staying open I think we need more equipment. I don't know how but kids just loose playground equipment for no reason It just goes like POOF it's gone. Well can we just stop this "I lost my ball karma!!"</p> <p>I think we should have ambassadors back like some ones that can look after things. Tell more people to come to our school because our school is great then, we could stay open.</p>
PV8	<p>I think it is a bad idea because I have been in this school since I was 2 years old and I would be so sad. I think everyone else would be sad. There is no bullying in this school like other in schools and there are so many lovely teachers and LSAs. We get a good education here and it does not matter about what people say there is something special about this school.</p> <p>Catholics school teach you about the story of god and non-Catholic schools teach you just about literacy and maths so I think they should let people who are in a catholic school be allowed in other catholic schools.</p>

Ref.	Comments
	<p>(Suggested alternative)  We should put up a Poster and put it out side so people can see our Poster so they know how great our school is.</p>
PV9	<p>I think the school shouldn't close down because it's a great school. It has been oipen for so long and lots of people have come to it.</p> <p>This is a catholic school and if we want to we can just move a another catholic school</p> <p>(Suggested alternative)  Ok I'm going get serious about this. Our school is great. I don't want this school to close. If there is not enough people, it is fine, soon more will come I hope. I think it should stay open in case they come.</p>
PV10	<p>I don't think the school shouldn't close because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. It is a catholic school</li> <li>. It is a good school</li> <li>. Children are happy in this school</li> <li>. People have a lot of friends</li> <li>. We have amazing teachers</li> </ul> <p>YES! Children should be allowed to go to another catholic school you won't have God without catholic schools.</p> <p>(Suggested alternative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. We could allow everyone in two classes and turn the school into a smaller school</li> <li>. We could make signs to ask people to come to our school.</li> <li>. If the school shuts down, we can knock the building down and turn it into a park</li> </ul>
PV11	<p>I don't want the school to close because it's a good school. I have lots of friends. And I don't want to leave them and I'm learning a lot.</p> <p>I think Catholic kids should be taught in a catholic school and not have to travel too far.</p> <p>(Suggested alternative)  Keep it open by getting money from the government, the bank and the lottery. Try to get more people coming. More equipment to play on.</p>

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Mrs B Thomas  
 Chair of Governors  
 St Mary's Catholic Primary School  
 Bufferland  
 Pembroke Dock  
 Pembrokeshire. SA72 6PD

Dear Mrs Thomas,

**Proposal by the governing body of St Mary's Catholic Primary School to discontinue the school**

Please accept the following as my response to your proposal.

I acknowledge the very difficult situation encountered by the governing body over the past couple of years and I admire your valiant efforts, and those of the Children & Schools Directorate and the Diocese of Menevia in seeking to address the challenges faced by the school during this time. It is perhaps inevitable that the sharp decline in pupil numbers has resulted in an unsustainable financial situation.

I acknowledge that your decision to consult on the closure of the school was taken with a heavy heart, but I feel compelled to support that decision. I am, of course, aware of the efforts made to stabilise the leadership position at St Mary's and was very pleased to read of the excellent collaboration with the governing body and Headteacher of St Francis Catholic School in Milford Haven during the last academic year. I have noted several specific factors which lead me to believe that your decision to consult on the school's closure is appropriate; these are as follows:

- Lack of sustained improvement over time
- National categorisation - Red
- Loss of leadership
- Concern that the school would be placed in an official Estyn category if inspected
- Significant decline in pupil numbers
- Loss of Catholicity
- Evidence of parental preference for other schools in the area
- Concerns regarding the financial health of the school.

I note the request made by the Diocese in relation to maintaining a choice for parents who wish to access a Catholic education for their children. I understand the Diocese's aspiration for this, but based on the information provided in the consultation document, there seems little demand for such provision in the area. There are, of course, other Catholic schools in the county; in the context of your proposal, St Teilo's in Tenby and the aforementioned St Francis' in Milford Haven being the closest. In view of the previous collaboration outlined above, I would advocate that any preference by parents for Catholic education provision is met at the latter. I do not, however, support the suggestion that the catchment area for St Mary's is added to that of St Francis' in Milford Haven for the purpose of school transport.

In the case of those pupils remaining at St Mary's Catholic Primary School, I am minded to support the provision of transport to St Francis Catholic School, so that they are able to continue in a Catholic primary environment. However, in view of the significant financial pressures encountered by the Council for the foreseeable future, I cannot support the continuation of this provision indefinitely, and it is therefore only available to pupils on roll at St Mary's at the time of the proposed closure, until such time as they reach the end of primary education. I believe the Council's school transport policy in relation to Voluntary Aided faith schools is generous and this would apply to any pupils from the Pembroke Dock area who require such provision following the school's closure.

In relation to the children who attend the Care Inspectorate Wales registered early years setting at the school (Santes Fair Playgroup), I am able to confirm that there is provision elsewhere in the area which is able to accommodate all remaining children; the Council's Family Information Service will be able to assist in this regard.

To conclude, I strongly support the governing body's proposal to discontinue the school and would offer the continued support of my officers in the Children & Schools Directorate.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr David Lloyd  
Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru  
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

## **Estyn response to the proposal from the governing body of St Mary's Catholic primary school to discontinue St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Pembroke Dock**

### **Introduction**

This report has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales.

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultation documents to Estyn. However, Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and has produced the following response to the information provided by the proposer and other additional information such as data from Welsh Government and the views of the Regional Consortia which deliver school improvement services to the schools within the proposal.

### **Summary/ Conclusion**

It is Estyn's view that this proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standards of education in the area.

### **Description and benefits**

The proposer has presented a clear rationale for closing the school. The school's pupil numbers have decreased significantly since 2016. In addition, pupil forecasts show further significant reduction in numbers over the next five years. The proposer also cites issues with recruitment of a Catholic headteacher as another of the main reasons for presenting the proposal.

The proposer sets out five expected advantages of the proposal. However, it is not clear enough how the proposer deems three of these as advantages. They appear to

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Mae Estyn yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Bydd gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn y naill iaith neu'r llall yn cael yr un flaenoriaeth. Estyn welcomes correspondence in both English and Welsh. Correspondence received in either language will be given equal priority.

be better linked to risk management. The two clearer expected advantages are as follows:

- alternative schools have stable leadership and are in categories which require little support from the school improvement service and
- improved opportunities for pupils to achieve to their potential and beyond

The only disadvantage identified is the loss of local primary school Catholic provision and further distance to access similar alternative provision.

The proposer has rightly identified the relevant risks associated with the proposal. These are the risk of failure to receive approval from the relevant bodies, failure to comply with the due process and the risk of parents transferring their children to other schools following publication of the consultation. The proposer's counter measures to address these risks seem to be reasonable.

The proposer has given suitable consideration to other options. These include continuing as a self-supporting school and maintaining informal federation arrangements. The reason for not pursuing these options appear to be clear and valid.

The proposer has considered other alternative provision. For example, it has recognised that there are two primary schools situated less than one mile away from St Mary's that have places available and which are within reasonable safe walking distance. The proposer has also asked the council for free transport to the nearest alternative Catholic school, St Francis Catholic school in Milford Haven. However, the proposer has not made clear the distance between the two schools nor the amount of time needed for travel to St Francis Catholic school. In addition, the proposer has suggested St Teilo's Catholic school as possible alternative provision but has not provided information on the distance from St Mary's, the time needed for travel nor details of any transport provision to this school.

The proposer has listed numbers of surplus places in nearby schools. It has demonstrated that there are sufficient places across schools to accommodate pupils from St Mary's. However, St Francis Catholic school does not have sufficient places to accommodate all the displaced pupils from St Mary's. The proposer has not demonstrated clearly how it will address the issue if all the pupils from St Mary's choose to go to St Francis. In addition, St Teilo's Catholic school only appears to have sufficient places available for nine pupils.

The proposer appears to have suitably considered the impact of the proposal on Welsh medium provision. It reasonably concludes that there is no impact on Welsh medium provision. However, the proposer makes no reference to the local authority's Welsh in education strategic plan.

### **Educational aspects of the proposal**

The proposer has appropriately considered the impact of the proposals on the quality of outcomes, provision and leadership and management. It has taken into account the performance of St Mary's school, the regional school improvement consortium views and the school's most recent inspection report. It has concluded that outcomes in other schools in most indicators are consistently stronger than in St Mary's. In addition, it recognises that the quality of teaching in schools across the cluster is stronger and the breadth and quality of the curriculum offered is more varied. It also recognises that other schools in the cluster and St Francis Catholic school are able to provide the full extent of provision as part of their delivery of the curriculum. The proposer identifies the shortcomings in leadership at St Mary's and states that there is established, strong leadership at most alternative schools in the area.

The proposer appears to have sufficiently considered the impact of the proposal on pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). It states that the quality of support for ALN, behavioural and emotional support is good or better in all cluster schools.

A satisfactory equality impact assessment explores the impact of the proposal on pupils with protected characteristics and concludes there is no impact on many of these protected characteristics. It does however recognise that there is a negative impact on religion and belief.

The proposer does not seem to have commented directly on how any potential disruption to learners will be minimised.