

Statutory proposal for school closure – St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School

In accordance with section 15(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the Diocese of Arundel & Brighton proposes to close St Joseph’s Primary School with effect from 31 August 2025.

Contact details

The name and contact address of the diocese publishing the proposals:

Education Service
Diocese of Arundel and Brighton
St Philip Howard Centre,
4, Southgate Drive,
Crawley,
West Sussex
RH10 6RP

stjosephsstatutorynotice@abdiocese.org.uk

The name, address and category of the school it is proposed that should be discontinued:

St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School
Davey Drive
Hollingdean
Brighton
BN1 7BF

Implementation

It is proposed that the school will be closed on 31 August 2025. It is not intended to implement this proposal in stages.

Reason for closure

The city is seeing a significant decline in the number of children seeking a school place.

School funding is primarily determined by the number of children on roll, and falling rolls equate to reduced funding to deliver education. While primary schools’ rolls are falling but the number of schools remains unchanged, there is effectively less financial resource across all schools. This is because many costs are driven by the number of classes in a school, whereas funding levels are driven by the number of pupils.

In the Census 2021 it was revealed that Brighton & Hove’s population profile had fewer children & young people aged 0 to 19 (20.5%) compared to the South East (23.1%) and England (23.1%). There was a 22% drop in children aged 0-4 living in the city in the 2021 census compared to the 2011 census.

The Council’s own projection of pupil numbers starting Reception in the coming years forecasts that there will be 482 surplus places in 2026 and 638 surplus places in 2027. The earliest indication for 2028 suggests that number will rise to 573 unfilled places.

Therefore, with 2460 starting school places the city will have over 20% surplus capacity from September 2026

School Year	Pupil Forecast	Unfilled places	Surplus Capacity
September 2025	2021	439	18%
September 2026	1978	482	20%
September 2027	1823	638	26%
September 2028	1887	573	23%

The proposals put forward in the consultation responses, to assist the school to remain open were about mitigating the low pupil numbers, through collapsing classes, increasing numbers in the nursery, greater collaboration with parishes and other Catholic schools in the city and funded SEN support provision being made available. Proposals did not specifically address how the school could seek to improve levels of parental preference sufficient to fill to the school's capacity of 210 pupils. The diocese's view is that a medium to long term strategy to maintain the school with a reduced number of pupils onsite is not a viable approach particularly as pupil numbers are still expected to fall in future years and parental preference being a mainstay of government policy.

Pupil numbers and admissions

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is a one form entry co-educational primary school catering for children aged 4-11. Pupils are able to start school before they reach compulsory school age if their parents choose to send them to school at the start of the academic year rather than at the start of the term they would become 5. All pupils are day pupils.

The Department for Education (DfE) recommends, for viability purposes, that new primary schools are at least of two-form entry size i.e. admitting 60 children each year with capacity for 420. Against this context, St Joseph's has a published admission number of 30 and capacity for 210 pupils.

The school has been consistently under-subscribed in recent years. Preferences for the school have fallen in the last few years. The school has been under subscribed in each of the last seven years with pupil numbers falling short of the school's published admission number each year. This means it will become increasingly difficult for the school to remain financially viable and to provide good outcomes for pupils.

As of the end of October 2024, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School had 149 pupils on roll against a capacity of 210 places. There were 61 (29%) surplus places.

On 11 February 2025, there were 96 pupils on roll, equating to 51.4% surplus places.

45 of these (in YR- Y5) are pupil premium pupils.

2024-25 pupil numbers and surplus places	PAN	Capacity									Surplus places	% surplus places
			Year R	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total		
St Joseph's School Oct 2024	30	210	15	22	17	24	22	27	22	149	61	29%
St Joseph's School Feb 2025	30	210	13	12	5	15	6	22	23	96	114	54.2%

The school is in the Central City planning area. Nominally the postcode BN1 7 is assigned to the school, but it is recognised that the school will admit pupils from outside that area. The planning area is expected to have 107 surplus places in 2026, 99 surplus places 2027 and 86 in 2028.

As of the end of January 2025, there were 7 pupils with EHCPs at St Joseph's. According to the October 2024 School census, there were 38 pupils recorded as being on SEN Support, and in January 2025 there were 30 pupils.

In the October 2024 census, 23% of the school population had English as an additional language and 53% of pupils where the parent/carer/self-identified ethnic group is other than White British, Refused or Not Known.

Displaced pupils

It is expected that pupils in Year 6 will continue to attend the school until its proposed closure at the end of the academic year 2024-2025.

The table below shows the number of pupils likely to be displaced. However, a further 20 pupils have offers of places for after February half term / Easter.

School	Yr R	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	13	12	5	15	6	22

There are 7 schools within 1.0 mile of the school. Spaces in other schools (accurate as of the end of January 2025) are shown in the table below.

School	Distance from St Joseph's (Miles)	R	1	2	3	4	5
Downs Junior School	0.51	~	~	~	7	0	1
Hertford Primary School	0.54	0	2	1	1	0	0
Downs Infant School	0.56	0	2	1	~	~	~
St Martin's CE Primary School	0.8	4	14	6	0	7	7
Fairlight Primary School	0.81	4	3	10	7	6	0
Coombe Road Primary School	0.93	4	11	1	6	7	2
Balfour Primary School	0.97	0	7	0	13	5	8

The Council maintains that there is sufficient capacity to accommodate displaced pupils at a reasonable distance if the school is to close, even when taking into account sibling links of children in primary school classes.

It is recognised that parent/carers may choose to send their child to another Catholic school in the city. There are places at Catholic schools (accurate as of the end of January 2025). There are not sufficient places if all pupils wanted to move to these schools.

School	Distance from St Joseph's (Miles)	R	1	2	3	4	5
St Mary Magdalen's RC School	1.92	6	9	0	7	5	7
St John the Baptist RC Primary School	2.27	0	5	0	1	0	0
St Mary's Catholic School Portslade	4.45	6	0	0	1	0	0
Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School	5.08	0	0	0	0	0	3

Where possible the Council will place a child at the school preferred by the parents/carers and support will be provided to find and apply for new schools.

No interim arrangements are required for pupils.

Impact on the community

The Diocese does not underestimate the potential impact of this proposed change on the pupils at the school, whose circumstances may already make them vulnerable. We recognise the school serves some disadvantaged families and therefore professional support, from the support services such as Inclusion Support Service, Schools Mental Health Service and Ethnic Minority Achievement Service, will be put in place to facilitate the movement of those students to local schools and minimise the impact of change upon them.

The Diocese recognises that the school's community stretches beyond the area the school sits within, and consideration has been made to how pupils and families can be supported in that transition so that the sense of community can be given the chance to be maintained. The diocese would be seeking a variation to the admission arrangements to Cardinal Newman Catholic School so that pupils who have attended St Joseph's up to the point of closure, in any year group, will be listed in the admissions criteria and be able to transition there for their secondary education.

Through the consultation process, concerns have been expressed about the potential harm a school closure would have on families and children who have special educational needs, have life experiences that have caused trauma and created disadvantage. It is reported that these are families who have experienced multiple intersectional vulnerabilities but who have found a welcome and supportive environment in the school that has led to a build-up of community support and resilience that would be lost if the school were to close. Whilst it is clear that any change of school will have an impact on a family and child, all parties are committed to minimising the harmful impact of that, in conjunction with both St Joseph's Catholic Primary School and the receiving school.

The closure of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School would reduce the number of surplus primary school places in the city.

Allowing surplus places to remain at current levels through inaction would directly and negatively impact the financial viability of many local schools, including other Catholic schools, which in turn will have an impact on the quality and breadth of the education offered at those schools.

Balance of denominational provision

The proposal is about closing a Catholic Voluntarily Aided school.

St Joseph's has the highest number of surplus places, the lowest numbers of first preference and the lowest numbers of Catholic pupils of the 7 Catholic primary schools in the city.

In October 2024, the 7 Catholic Primary schools had 1586 pupils on roll for a combined PAN of 1680, a surplus of 94 places = 5.6%

The 7 Catholic Primary Schools had 650 Catholic pupils on roll totalling 37.5%, indicating a sufficiency of places across the city for Catholic families seeking an education in a Catholic school.

As of the end of October 2024, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School had 149 pupils on roll against a capacity of 210 places. There were 61 (29%) surplus places.

The Central City planning area is estimated to have approximately 100 unfilled places in the coming years. As a church school it is accepted that the school will not simply draw pupils from the BN1 7 postcode but the localised picture in the planning area, of there being surplus places, is replicated in other adjoining planning areas.

The Council will request that church schools who are their own admission authority give due consideration to any applications they receive, in line with their own admission arrangements, including where there is provision to prioritise children with additional needs and vulnerabilities. The submission outlines the commitment of the Diocese to work as partners in exploring places in alternative schools for children with identified, documented, additional needs within an EHCP and children with high level needs but without an EHCP are determined.

The Diocese considers that should the proposed closure be implemented, the impact on the balance of denominational provision in the city and the impact on parental choice for Catholic parents not be unduly significant over time.

It is expected that some families, whilst currently at a Catholic school, will not specifically be seeking a Catholic school alternative.

Maintained nursery schools

Not applicable.

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is not a maintained nursery school. It has a privately run pre-school on site, catering for up to 20 children aged 2-4. This provision is relocating to Coldean Primary, where there is a nursery class, for under 3's (subject to contracts) and as numbers are not yet confirmed, the staffing arrangements cannot be clarified.

Special educational needs provision

At St Joseph's Catholic School, no specialist places are specifically reserved for pupils with special educational needs.

The numbers of children with EHCPs and on SEN Support are provided above.

During the consultation we heard concerns raised about the intersectionality of needs at the school e.g. vulnerable pupils, those having SEN or being from a Black or Racially Minoritised community.

The Diocese understands that a change of setting for pupils with SEN (or for those with a range of additional needs or vulnerabilities) can often be challenging and require additional support to ensure a successful transition. Officers from the Council are making arrangements for all children including those with EHCPs and on SEN support, to ensure that they are appropriately placed. If the decision is taken to proceed as proposed, parents will be supported from the second half of the Spring term to help them understand their options and find out their preferences for alternative schools for their children. Families with children who have an EHCP impacted by this proposal will be directly supported by the SEN team to explain the process of how their children will transfer to other schools.

The Council will use funding allocations to support children and families in their transition to new schools. This process will be overseen by the Director of Education and Learning

The Diocese acknowledges the support provided by the school to children with a range and intersectionality of additional needs and vulnerabilities. Unfortunately, the level of support currently provided will become increasingly difficult to sustain for schools like St Joseph's which have falling rolls. The financial impact of low pupil numbers is cumulative and therefore this support cannot continue to be provided and will lead to school deficits.

As a result of these proposals, outcomes for pupils with SEND may improve as they would move to a more financially viable and therefore long-term sustainable school. This means that the new school would be able to provide the additional necessary support and resources required to support children with EHCPs and those on the SEN register.

The Council's Social Communication Resource supports children with social communication difficulties to attend school.

Travel

Information is provided above to demonstrate that alternative school places can be provided within a reasonable distance. The Council therefore considers it will be possible to re-allocate pupils to alternative school places within a reasonable distance of St Joseph's should the school close.

It is recognised that longer journeys to school may occur for some families if they take a place at a school further from their home address. This applies to children where their family may wish for them to attend a Catholic School which is further away from their home address than St Joseph's.

Assessment for home to school transport assistance needs to consider if the child is eligible under distance or the above SEN criteria including, are the child's learning difficulties or disabilities such that it could not be reasonably expected that the child could walk to school.

The Council will work with schools who receive pupils from St Joseph's to develop their school travel plans to seek to mitigate against increased car use.

The Diocese has committed to look at financial transport support for Catholic families wishing to move their child / children to another Catholic school in the city.

Sixth form provision

Not applicable to this proposal

Rural primary schools

Not applicable this school is not a designated rural primary school.

Ownership of the site

The site is owned by The Arundel and Brighton Diocesan Trust, Charity Number 252878

Consultation

All applicable consultation was carried out prior to publishing this full proposal.

Initially meetings were held between the Diocese, the Headteacher and the governing board.

A consultation document was prepared and issued on 13 November 2024. It was published online on the school's website and was circulated to the parents, staff and governors of St Joseph's Primary School and to Headteachers of all schools in the city via the Council's weekly Schools Bulletin. It was also circulated to local Councillors, local Members of Parliament, neighbouring Local Authorities and the other diocese responsible for schools in the city.

The document contained details of how comments on the proposal could be made and the closing date of the consultation, 17 January 2025. The duration of this period of consultation was 7 weeks and 4 days.

During this consultation stage, meetings were held – 1 in person public meeting at the school, (a second would have been offered if there had been additional demand) an in-person meeting with staff and their union representatives, with Heads of the Catholic schools in the city, and a further meeting with a small group of parents, at their request. A copy of the questions and answers from the public meeting is available on the school website [St Joseph's Catholic Primary, Brighton - Consultation Documents](#). A presentation was given at this meeting by the Diocesan Director of Education. A copy of the presentation is available upon request by emailing stjosephsbrightonconsultation@abdiocese.org.uk

The results of this consultation and the decision of the diocesan Trustees were reported to the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors on 24 January 2025. At that meeting the decision was communicated to proceed to the publication of the statutory notice and full proposal.

Where and when the Statutory Notice and Full Proposal Information will be available

The Diocese of Arundel and Brighton will publish the statutory notice for this proposal on Monday 24 February 2025. The notice will remain in force for a period of 4 weeks i.e. until Monday 24 March 2025. A copy of the statutory notice is provided alongside this document.

On 24 February 2025 the full proposal information will be sent to the following recipients:

The Governing Board of the school
The Diocese of Chichester
Leader of the Council
Local Ward Councillors
The Member of Parliament for Brighton Pavilion
The Secretary of State (schoolorganisation.notifications@education.gov.uk)

It will also be published on the Diocesan website [Education Service](#) and the school website [St Joseph's Catholic Primary, Brighton - Home](#)

Any person may request a copy of the full proposal information either by writing to Director of Education, St Philip Howard Centre, 4 Southgate Drive, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 6RP or by contacting the Education Service on 01293 651144 or via email on stjosephsstatutorynotice@abdiocese.org.uk

How to make representation or comment on the proposal

Any person may object or make a representation or comment on the proposal either by responding by writing to Director of Education, St Philip Howard Centre, 4 Southgate Drive, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 6RP before the closing date of 24 March 2025 or via email to stjosephsstatutorynotice@abdiocese.org.uk

Following the closing date for representations, comments and objections, a report will be prepared for the Full Council to consider and determine the proposal the proposal within 2 months i.e. no later than 24 May 2025. At the present time it is anticipated that the Full Council will make a decision on the proposal on 22 May 2025.

Support and translations

If you need us to write down your response to this proposal because you cannot complete it yourself, please call the Education Service on phone 01293 651144 between 9:30am and 1:00pm, and we will take down your response.

If you require us to provide any translated copies of this or the statutory notice, please contact by email stjosephsstatutorynotice@abdiocese.org.uk or phone 01293 651144