

- Chief Executive
- Legal Jane Pollard / Richard Freeth
- Finance
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals Governing body, staff and parents/carers of pupils at the school
Other local schools in the area, other Catholic secondary schools in the county, Diocesan Authorities, neighbouring Education Authorities and all other stakeholders

FINAL DECISION

NO

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet 9th March 2006
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Rugby Area Committee – 6th March 2006

**Proposed Closure of Bishop Wulstan Catholic School,
Rugby**

**Report of the Strategic Director for Children,
Young People and Families**

Recommendations:

- (1) That feedback from the formal consultation concerning the proposal to cease to maintain Bishop Wulstan Catholic School be noted.
- (2) That the Area Committee considers any recommendations it wishes to make to the Cabinet on this proposal.

Background

1. At its meeting on 12th January the Cabinet agreed that the Strategic Director should conduct a formal consultation on proposals to cease to maintain Bishop Wulstan Catholic School in Rugby with effect from 31st August 2006.
2. A consultation paper was published on 20th January and comments were requested by 20th February. A report on the response to the proposal will be considered by the Cabinet on 9th March and is attached as **Annex A** to this report. The Area Committee is invited to make any recommendations on this matter for consideration by the Cabinet on that date.
3. Given the tight timescale involved any recommendations will be reported verbally at the Cabinet meeting.

MARION DAVIS
Strategic Director for Children,
Young People and Families
22 Northgate Street
Warwick

24th February 2006

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee	The Cabinet
Date of Committee	9th March 2006
Report Title	Proposed closure of Bishop Wulstan Catholic School, Rugby
Summary	This report summarises the outcome of the proposal to close (formally to cease to maintain) Bishop Wulstan School in Rugby and presents the options for the way forward.
For further information please contact:	Mark Gore Assistant County Education Officer (Strategy) Tel: 01926 412887 markgore@warwickshire.gov.uk
Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? [please identify relevant plan/budget provision]	No
Background papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draft School Organisation Framework document 2005/10 ▪ Cabinet report 12th January 2006 ▪ Consultation document, January 2006
CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-	Details to be specified
Other Committees	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rugby Area Committee, 6 th March 2006
Local Member(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cllr John Vereker – Caldecott – <i>“I hope the Cabinet will keep as open a mind as possible while the situation develops”</i> Cllr Ian Smith – Caldecott
Other Elected Members	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> O&S Spokespersons for information: Cllr Helen McCarthy Cllr Richard Grant – <i>“Pupil numbers are the vital key to the viability and sustainability of the school. I understand that there are some very positive and</i>

innovative proposals being worked on to secure Catholic provision in Rugby to which the Cabinet should give serious consideration."

Cllr Jill Dill-Russell

- Cabinet Member Cllr John Burton – *“a good comprehensive report”*
- Other Cabinet Members consulted Cllr Izzi Seccombe – *“approve for Cabinet consideration”*
Cllr Peter Fowler – *“happy for Cabinet to consider”*
- Chief Executive
- Legal Jane Pollard / Richard Freeth – *“fine”*
- Finance David Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources – no comments to make
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals Governing body, staff and parents/carers of pupils at the school
Other local schools in the area, other Catholic secondary schools in the county, Diocesan Authorities, neighbouring Education Authorities and all other stakeholders

FINAL DECISION **NO**

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

The Cabinet – 9th March 2006

Proposed closure of Bishop Wulstan Catholic School, Rugby

Report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families

Recommendations:

- (1) That feedback from the formal consultation concerning the proposal to cease to maintain Bishop Wulstan Catholic School, Rugby, with effect from 31st August 2006, be noted.
- (2) That the proposal to close Bishop Wulstan School should not be proceeded with.
or
That officers be authorised to publish statutory notices of the Authority's intention to close Bishop Wulstan School with effect from 31st August 2006.
or
That this matter be considered at the meeting of the Cabinet on 25th May 2006 with a further report on the innovative proposal being developed by the Arch-diocese of Birmingham on the future of Bishop Wulstan School.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At their meeting on 12th January, Cabinet agreed that the Strategic Director should conduct a formal consultation on proposals to cease to maintain Bishop Wulstan Catholic School in Rugby with effect from 31st August 2006.
- 1.2 A consultation paper was published on 20th January and comments were requested by 20th February. The consultation paper was sent to other local schools, Diocesan Authorities, neighbouring Education Authorities, the local Parish Councils, trade unions, other Catholic secondary schools in Warwickshire, all parents and prospective parents seeking admission in September 2006, and staff and governors of the school. A copy of the consultation document is attached as **Appendix A** to this report. During the period of the consultation a series of scheduled meetings took place with the governing body and staff of the school and a public meeting was held mainly

for parents of pupils at the school. The Rugby Area Committee will also consider the proposal at a special meeting on 6th March.

2. Background to the proposal

- 2.1 Bishop Wulstan Catholic School is an 11-16 years High School serving the Catholic community of the Rugby area. The school has been of concern to both the Authority and the Diocesan Schools Commission (DSC) for some time. In fact the school has been in the Authority's category of concern continuously for a number of years although it was not placed in a category of concern by Ofsted following the most recent inspection in 2003. Over that period the Local Authority and the DSC have provided significant levels of external support to the school, to effect changes in the leadership and management of the school, to support teaching and learning and to deal with high levels of unauthorised absence and fixed-term exclusions.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 12th January the Cabinet received a report drawing the attention of Members to two important issues:
- In the Summer of 2005 Bishop Wulstan achieved only 12% 5+ A*-C grades at GCSE, the lowest level of attainment in the county and amongst the lowest in the country.
 - For September 2006 parents of only 25 pupils had expressed a first preference for Bishop Wulstan School.
- 2.3 In the light of these ongoing concerns and the very low level of subscription for admissions for September 2006, the County Education Officer took the view that the school was no longer educationally viable and could not sustain the curriculum and the improvement necessary to achieve acceptable levels of attainment. Cabinet agreed to a recommendation that consultation should take place on a proposal to close (formally to cease to maintain the school) with effect from 31st August 2006.
- 2.4 The background to the proposal is given more fully in attached consultation document (Appendix A).

3. Response to the consultation

- 3.1 Meetings were held as part of the consultation with governors and with staff. A third meeting was held at the school for parents and other interested parties, which was attended by around 500 people.

Notes of the comments made and questions raised at these three meetings are attached as **Appendix B**.

- 3.2 A total of 255 e-mails and letters were received in response to the consultation, including:

- a response from the headteacher and governors of Bishop Wulstan School
- a response from the Archdiocese of Birmingham
- 113 letters and e-mails from parents and families of pupils currently in the school
- 21 letters from current pupils
- 15 letters from staff at the school
- 13 letters from other schools
- 91 letters from others.

A copy of the response from the headteacher and governors of the school is given as **Appendix C**.

A copy of the response from the Diocesan Schools Commission on behalf of the Archdiocese of Birmingham is given as **Appendix D**.

- 3.3 Copies of all the letters and e-mails received have been placed in folders in each of the group rooms. While a summary of the main points raised in discussion is given below, Members will find it helpful to read the responses themselves in order to be aware of the strength of feeling which has been engendered by this proposal. It is perhaps not surprising but none of the responses supports the Authority's proposal and there are many well articulated arguments given to retain the school.

4. Summary of the responses to the consultation

The main points made at the various meetings and in the responses received are summarised below under the following headings:

1. Pupil numbers
2. Standards and levels of achievement
3. Parental choice – Catholic provision
– Small school provision
4. Consultation process
5. Funding
6. Arrangements in the event of closure.

A commentary in response to the issues raised is also given.

4.1 Pupil numbers

4.1.1 *Issues raised in consultation*

The proposal is made on the basis of low pupil numbers but numbers could increase in future years.

The school has a new sports hall and has acquired specialist college status which will make the school more attractive. Insufficient time has been given for people to be aware of these developments.

The school is now able to 'market' itself to parents in the neighbouring Northamptonshire diocese, particularly in Daventry where there is no Catholic secondary provision.

New housing developments in Rugby will lead to more pupils seeking admission.

There are growing numbers of people moving to Rugby from the countries of the European Union, including Portugal and Poland, many of whom are Catholics seeking Catholic provision.

Non-Catholic parents are not aware that they could send their children to Bishop Wulstan. The Authority has not promoted the school.

The publication of the proposal has affected the numbers seeking admission in September 2006.

A number of additional pupils are admitted during the course of each academic year.

4.1.2 Commentary

- (i) The issue of pupil numbers is central to consideration of the future of Bishop Wulstan School. Falling numbers mean decreasing resources and with fewer resources it is increasingly difficult for the school to sustain any improvements already made and to raise the very low level of attainment at 16. The school is already small with a planned admission number of 83 and a capacity of 415. The numbers on roll have fallen over the last few years and currently there are 330 pupils.
- (ii) For September 2006 only 43 parents expressed any preference for Bishop Wulstan, of which only 25 gave Bishop Wulstan as a first preference. Most parents who gave Bishop Wulstan a lower preference will be offered their first preference. The school is therefore unlikely to admit more than 30 pupils in September and numbers are likely to fall to below 300 even allowing for some admissions mid year. If the trend in subscription for Year 7 continues then numbers will continue to fall, and the school could become financially and educationally unviable.
- (iii) There is general acceptance in response to the consultation that if the school admits only around one form of entry and numbers continue to fall, the school is indeed unviable. It is the view of the school however, supported by many of the respondents, that this trend can be reversed and that the school can win back the confidence of the Catholic community and parents more generally in Rugby and beyond.

- (iv) The response from the school, supported by many letters and e-mails for example, draws attention to the new sports hall (completed in November 2004) and the newly acquired Business and Enterprise Specialist College status. They point out that there has been insufficient time for people to become aware of these developments. There is no doubt that these represent significant achievements for the school but it should be noted that every other secondary school in Rugby also has specialist college status and a number have or soon will have sports halls.
- (v) The responses to consultation refer also to the agreement reached between the Archdiocese of Birmingham and the neighbouring Diocese of Northampton which allows the school to recruit from Daventry which has no Catholic secondary provision. The Head of Bishop Wulstan reports considerable interest in the Catholic parish in Daventry. This agreement does present a very good opportunity to attract Catholics from a wider area to the school. However for this to be successful the school will have to win the confidence of that Catholic community in the same way as it will need to win back the support of the Catholic community in Rugby. It should be noted also that although protocols exist between Catholic dioceses in regard to recruitment to Catholic schools across Diocesan boundaries, there is no obstacle in law to parents, who are Catholic or non-Catholic and living in Northamptonshire, seeking and being given a place at Bishop Wulstan. It should be noted too that Northamptonshire does not have a policy of providing free or subsidised transport to parents seeking denominational provision.
- (vi) Respondents to the consultation are correct to point out the significant housing developments in the town at Cawston, to the north of the town and planned on the former Alstom/Cattle Market site. These developments will increase the demand for secondary school places although offset to some extent by falling rolls in primary schools. There is also some evidence supported by a number of letters that there is a growing number of economic migrants to Rugby from elsewhere in the European Union, in particular from countries like Poland, many of whom are Catholic and seeking Catholic provision. A number of letters have been received (some in Polish) from families in this position. Again these factors are very positive in terms of potential recruitment to the school but it should be noted that over the last two or three years many new houses have already been built at the same time that levels of subscription to Bishop Wulstan have fallen.
- (vii) Some respondents have suggested that admissions to Bishop Wulstan have been undermined by the Authority by allowing other schools to admit above their planned admission number (PAN) and by allowing Avon Valley School to expand. So far as Community schools are concerned, the Authority will only allow schools to go beyond the PAN to admit children from the priority area of the school (and in some cases pupils who live outside the area but with siblings already in the school). The Authority asks Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools where the governors are responsible for admission policy to adopt a similar approach. Agreement has been given to the expansion of Avon Valley School to meet increased demand for places from the priority area of the school where there has been considerable development.

- (viii) It is clearly not in the interests of the Authority to undermine admission to Bishop Wulstan as has been suggested by one or two respondents.
- (ix) Some respondents have suggested the Authority should have done more to promote Bishop Wulstan and that non-Catholic parents were not aware that they could seek places at the school. In relation to the first point, the Authority cannot promote one school rather than another, but is required to publish information on all schools. The booklet on admission sent to parents contains information largely supplied by the schools themselves. The information on Bishop Wulstan does make clear that priority is given to Catholics but non-Catholics may seek places. Indeed many do attend the school. Nearly half the pupils currently in the school are not Catholic.
- (x) It is the case that Bishop Wulstan does admit a number of pupils during the course of the year, including people moving into the area but also pupils excluded from other schools.

Summary

Viability is a key question in the debate about the future of Bishop Wulstan School. Actual numbers on roll and the trend in admissions in Year 7 lend officers to believe that the school is not viable. The school and many respondents point to a number of factors both within the school and external which when taken together provide a good platform for the school to turn round current perceptions of the school and recruit more strongly.

4.2 Standards and levels of achievement

4.2.1 Issues raised in consultation

The school should not close because it does not meet Government standards at GCSE.

The indicator 5+ A*-C is only one indicator. There are other indicators which are more positive.

The contextual value added data at Key Stage 3 puts the school in the first percentile of schools in English and amongst the best in the county in mathematics and science.

The proposal is made on the basis of low pupil numbers but numbers could increase in future years.

The GCSE results in 2005 were disappointing but are unreliable as an indicator. The school has many pupils with special educational needs and very high pupil mobility.

4.2.2 Commentary

- (i) There is some evidence cited by the school which suggests the potential for improved results at the school. In particular this is the contextual value added date for Key Stage 3 which, taking account of prior attainment and other factors, shows good progress for pupils on average between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. However there are other statistics which are less positive and the Authority continues to have concerns about levels of attainment and achievement.
- (ii) The standards achieved by pupils by the time they leave the school are very low and declining. The Government has set a floor target of all schools nationally achieving a minimum of 30% 5+ A*-C grades. In the last two years the school has fallen increasingly below this floor target. In 2005 there were 73 pupils on roll in Year 11. Of these pupils only 8% achieved 5+ higher grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. This is one of the lowest figures for any school in the country. Too many pupils leave the school achieving no GCSE passes at all:

Key Stage 4	2003	2004	2005
5+ A-C	34	20	11
5+ A-C incl E/M		15	8
No passes	10	11	8

Pupil achievement is significantly below expectations. Even when taking into account all contextual factors the school is placed in the lowest 1% of schools for the level of pupil achievement. It is also a concern that the trend in results is declining.

- (iii) In Key Stage 3 pupil attainment has declined in mathematics and science but improved in English. The overall performance of pupils in 2005 was below that reached in the previous two years. The Government set a minimum floor target of 65% of all pupils achieving level 5+ in English, mathematics and science. In the last three years this has only been achieved in English in 2005. However, overall pupil achievement has improved in Key Stage 3 so that the school is ranked in the 13th percentile for similar schools in 2005.
- (iv) Pupils who do well in Key Stage 3 do not always continue to do so in Key Stage 4. For example, of the twelve pupils who obtained level 6+ in mathematics in 2003, only three went on to achieve a grade C in 2005 (no pupil achieved an A or B in mathematics). In other words the rate at which pupils move from average or above results in Key Stage 3 in English and mathematics to higher grades at GCSE is very low compared to other schools.

4.3 Parental choice

4.3.1 Issues raised in consultation

Government policy over many years has been to give parents choice. This is reinforced in proposals from this Government. By proposing closure of Bishop Wulstan, the Council is reducing choice.

Bishop Wulstan is the only Catholic secondary provision in the Rugby area. If closed there will be no Catholic provision available for those seeking denominational Catholic provision. Trinity School in Leamington is too far to provide an alternative.

Many parents have chosen Bishop Wulstan because it is a small school better suited to the needs of their children, and where the staff know all the pupils and all the pupils know each other.

Children currently at Bishop Wulstan and used to its small size would not be able to cope if moved to bigger schools in Rugby.

A small school can better meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and there is less bullying.

4.3.2 Commentary

- (i) This Authority is committed to the principle of parental choice and to diversity in its school provision.
- (ii) The Authority is also committed to the 'dual system' of education established by the 1944 Education Act and has a long tradition of working very closely and successfully with the church authorities to make denominational provision available.
- (iii) The Authority is statutorily required to maintain the proportion of denominational places across the county.
- (iv) It is for these reasons that, although the school has been giving concern for some years, the Authority is only now consulting on the proposal to close the school. For a number of years, the Authority, working with the DSC, has supported the school in order to sustain Catholic provision in the town. However the level of subscription for September 2006 and the unacceptable level of attainment at GCSE in 2005 led officers to conclude that the school was no longer viable and to propose closure. The principles of diversity and parental choice are important but cannot be supported if a school is unable to deliver an acceptable level of education for its pupils.
- (v) Moreover the evidence suggests that, while the Catholic community is keen to preserve denominational provision, insufficient numbers of Catholic parents are choosing Bishop Wulstan School, and that in recent years the school has lost the confidence of the Catholic community.

- (vi) In taking the decision on whether to go forward with the decision to close, Members will therefore need to recognise that closure will end Catholic secondary provision in Rugby and it is unlikely that such provision will be restored in the foreseeable future. Alternative provision in Leamington or Nuneaton is unlikely to be acceptable to Catholic parents because of the very significant distances involved.
- (vii) Members will note that if parents do choose denominational provision then under the Authority's existing policy free transport would be provided if the distance is over three miles. The distance from central Rugby to Trinity School in Leamington is around 18 miles.
- (viii) So far as the size of the school is concerned, it is clear that for many parents and pupils being a small school is attractive. There was much convincing testimony at the public meeting from parents to the way in which Bishop Wulstan had provided for their children, some of whom had special educational needs, some of whom had transferred from other larger schools, some of whom had not coped in larger schools, and one or two of whom were dual registered at Bishop Wulstan and at Brooke (Special) School. There is no doubt that the school has created a very strong caring ethos and is very inclusive and that this ethos is helped by the small size of the school. The difficulty is that the size of the school while attractive to some parents does make the school vulnerable if rolls fall as they have done in recent years and will do in September 2006.
- (ix) As has already been noted, the closure of Bishop Wulstan would reduce elements of the diversity of secondary provision – not only Catholic provision but the opportunity to attend a small school. The capacity of the high schools in Rugby is as follows:

School	Age range	PAN	Capacity
Ashlawn (bilateral)	11-18	256	1,508
Avon Valley	11-16	166 *	830
Bilton High	11-16	285	1,426
Harris (C of E)	11-16	157	750

* It has been agreed that for Avon Valley the PAN will rise to 220 and the capacity to 1,100 from 2007.

- (x) It should be noted that the size of these schools is not out of line with the situation across the country and indeed some Authorities have schools much larger than those in Warwickshire. It is important to recognise also that larger schools put in place pastoral systems which allow high levels of support and care for pupils, and that all the schools in Rugby are committed to meeting the needs of all their pupils including those with special educational needs and very successfully do so. In celebrating the success of Bishop Wulstan in providing care and support it should not be assumed that such care and support is not available in other Rugby schools.

4.4 The consultation process

4.4.1 Issues raised in consultation

The decision to close has already been made.

The period of closure is too short. The consultation and implementation period for the amalgamation of the Rokeby Schools, for example, is much longer.

4.4.2 Commentary

- (i) Officers have made clear throughout the consultation period in all written communications and orally that the only decision taken by the Council is to consult on the proposal. Any decision would only be taken following the period of consultation.
- (ii) A number of respondents were concerned about the short timescale for consultation. Members will be aware that the decision to recommend consultation on a proposal to close the school was prompted by the very low level of subscription which was only known at the end of October. Time was taken subsequently to seek validation of the view that the school could not sustain the improvements necessary and to discuss with, for example, the Archdiocese, the conclusion of officers.
- (iii) Having taken the decision to consult, the view was taken that if the school were to close it would have to be in August 2006. To prolong the period of uncertainty to August 2007, for example, would make it almost impossible to maintain the staffing and curriculum. It would be increasingly likely that over that much longer period, parents would seek places in alternative schools. As a result, the consultation period is necessarily short although within the guidelines.

4.5 Funding

4.5.1 Issues raised in consultation

The proposal is being made as a cost-cutting exercise.

The Authority should increase the level of resources available to the school.

The school has had a balanced budget for the last three years and plan to have a balanced budget in the financial year 2006/07.

4.5.2 Commentary

- (i) It has been made clear throughout the consultation period that the proposal is not borne out of a desire to reduce costs. Indeed if the school were to close,

the Authority would be faced in the short term with significant additional costs. Nevertheless the Authority does have a responsibility to ensure the effective use of resources and value for money.

- (ii) Members will be aware that schools are funded by a formula which includes a 'per school' allocation but is largely based on pupil numbers. In 2004 the Authority changed the formula to provide additional support for small schools like Bishop Wulstan School. However, any further change to the formula would be at the expense of other schools. The cost per pupil at Bishop Wulstan is already the highest in the county. Bishop Wulstan receives approximately £4,500 per pupil. The average in the county is approximately £3,500.
- (iii) It is the case that the school has not been in deficit in the last two years and will be able to balance the budget in 2006/07. This is partly the result of prudent and sound financial management and partly the school receiving over the last three years Leadership Incentive Grant (LIG) totalling over the period £385,000.
- (iv) The concern is that in future years the resources available to the school will reduce as pupil numbers fall and as the LIG funding also reduces (by £33,000 in 2006 and a further £40,000 in each of the next two years). Such significant reduction in funding could significantly impact on the viability of the school.

4.6 Arrangements in the event of closure

4.6.1 *Issues raised in consultation*

The proposal by the Authority will impact adversely on the education of the pupils currently in the school, particularly those in the middle of GCSE courses.

The current pupils will find it difficult to settle into other schools which are much larger than Bishop Wulstan. Experience elsewhere in the country suggests these pupils may be bullied.

What are the arrangements to be put in place to protect the education of the pupils currently in the school, particularly those in Year 10 moving into Year 11?

Transporting pupils to Trinity School in Leamington is not satisfactory alternative provision, and will be expensive.

Long term how will the Authority find places elsewhere to replace the provision lost if Bishop Wulstan School were to close?

What arrangements will be put in place to protect the interests of the staff of the school during the period of consultation and if the school were to close in September 2006?

4.6.2 Commentary

- (i) The consultation document sets out in broad terms the arrangements the Authority would put in place in the event of closure:
 - (1) Where parents wish to send their children to another Catholic school, e.g. Trinity School in Leamington, free transport will be provided in line with the Council's home-to-school transport policy.
 - (2) Some parents/carers may wish to seek alternative places for their children at other Rugby schools which have places. The County Council will do all it can to facilitate transfers to alternative schools for existing pupils, if the decision is taken to close the school.
 - (3) All those parents whose children are due to transfer to secondary education in September 2006 and who gave first preference to Bishop Wulstan Catholic School will be allowed to express an alternative first preference. Those new preferences will be given equal consideration with those preferences made by the Authority's deadline of 24th October 2005, in the event of closure of the school.
 - (4) In order to protect the curriculum for pupils in the older year groups, arrangements with another school or other schools will be put in place. The details of any such arrangements will only be agreed following an assessment of the individual needs of all existing pupils in the school.
- (ii) In terms of alternative provision, preliminary discussions have taken place with all of the other high schools in Rugby and with Trinity School in Leamington. All have committed to doing all they can to support the Authority in providing for the pupils currently at Bishop Wulstan School in the event of closure. All the schools have co-operated in advising parents not to seek alternative places for their children until a decision has been taken on the proposal. All are committed to providing for and welcoming any pupils who transfer to their school from Bishop Wulstan, and to minimising the disruption.
- (iii) So far as the pupils currently in the middle of GCSE courses are concerned, discussions have taken place about arrangements for these pupils to remain on the Bishop Wulstan site and the curriculum to continue but taught by teachers who would formally be on the staff of another school.
- (iv) Inevitably any process of reorganisation has the potential to disrupt the education of pupils currently in the school. The Authority is committed in the event of closure to minimising the disruption.
- (v) Responses to the consultation suggest that alternative provision short term or in the longer term on the site of Trinity School would not be acceptable to many parents solely because of the travel distances involved.
- (vi) In the longer term, the Authority may need to expand one of the existing Rugby schools by one or two forms of entry to meet the demand for secondary places

in the town in the event of closure. The Authority would, therefore, be faced with significant capital expenditure with no possibility of capital receipts since the site of Bishop Wulstan School is not in the ownership of the County Council.

- (vii) To the credit of the staff the meeting held with them focused very largely on the Authority's proposal and the impact on pupils. However arrangements for protecting the interests of staff set out in broad terms in the consultation document were discussed and further information supplied. The Authority has committed to one-to-one interviews with all staff to consider their individual circumstances, their wishes and aspirations and the support available from the Authority. Members will be aware that closure could involve significant costs if staff are made redundant.

5. Alternative proposal from the Archdiocese of Birmingham

- 5.1 At the beginning of the consultation, officers made clear that in their view the current situation of the school was untenable, the status quo could not be allowed to continue, and hence the proposal to close. Officers made clear, however, that if proposals were to come forward which presented a viable alternative to closure, the County Council would give such proposals serious consideration.
- 5.2 The Archdiocese of Birmingham have come forward, following discussion with officers of the Authority, with such a proposal. In brief they propose:
- to establish a new school for pupils aged 3-16 to replace the existing Catholic primary schools (St. Marie's Infant, St. Marie's Junior and English Martyrs Primary) and Bishop Wulstan School
 - the school would be two forms of entry in the primary phase and three forms of entry in the secondary phase giving a school of around 900 pupils, possibly operating on two or three sites
 - the school would be established as a Roman Catholic 'academy' for which the sponsor would be the Archdiocese of Birmingham who would make the capital contribution required to establish such an 'academy'. The remainder of the capital cost would be provided by the Department for Education and Skills.

The proposal is set out in full in the DSC's response to the consultation given at Appendix D.

- 5.3 All the Catholic schools concerned have expressed support for exploring this alternative proposal further.
- 5.4 The Director of Schools of the DSC with officers of the Authority has had a preliminary discussion with officials from the DfES who reacted positively to the initial proposal put forward by the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

- 5.5 There are very significant hurdles to be overcome and a great deal of detail to be worked out in this proposal is to be implemented. However the possibility of a 3-16 school has been discussed informally previously but it was felt that it would be unlikely to gain the support of the Catholic schools in Rugby. That support, at least to explore this proposal, now exists.
- 5.6 Members will appreciate the decision to close Bishop Wulstan School has major implications for the children currently in the school but also in the future pattern of secondary school provision in Rugby. If Bishop Wulstan School were to close, there would be no Catholic secondary provision in the area for the foreseeable future. The County Council is committed to considering any alternative provision which would secure viable and high quality Catholic provision in Rugby. In these circumstances, Members may wish to defer a decision on the future of the school in order to give time to investigate further this alternative proposal.
- 5.7 Such a decision to defer is not without difficulties since it would lengthen the period of uncertainty for staff, pupils, parents and prospective parents. It may be necessary, therefore, to commit to the school staying open until the end of the school year 2006/07. This would have the advantage of giving the time to the school, which they have asked for, to put in place its strategy for pupil recruitment.

6. The way forward

- 6.1 The Authority's case is founded on the actual current situation facing the school: falling numbers and a very low level of subscription for admissions in September 2006 which, in the view of officers, makes the school unviable and sustainable improvement on very low level of attainment very difficult. The school are clear in their response that they can reverse the trend in admissions and that the potential for much better results is already there.

Members will need to make a judgement as to whether that potential exists in deciding whether or not to move to the next stage of consultation on closure.

- 6.2 Members may, however, consider that the alternative proposal put forward by the Archdiocese of Birmingham is worthy of further exploration and may wish, therefore, to defer the decision to allow time to a strict and agreed timetable to explore the proposal further.
- 6.3 The Cabinet are asked to agree:
- that the proposal to close Bishop Wulstan School should not be proceeded with,
- or**
- that officers be authorised to publish statutory notices of the Authority's intention to close Bishop Wulstan School with effect from 31st August 2006

or

- that the County Council does not proceed with the proposal to close Bishop Wulstan School to allow time for the Archdiocese of Birmingham to explore further the alternative proposal they have made to secure Catholic provision in Rugby with a further report to the Cabinet on progress on the proposal to their meeting on 25th May.

MARION DAVIS
Strategic Director for Children,
Young People and Families

22 Northgate Street
Warwick

24th February 2006

Consultation

Proposal To Close
Bishop Wulstan Catholic School

January 2006

1. The Proposal

The Cabinet of the County Council has agreed to consult on a proposal to cease to maintain (to close) Bishop Wulstan Catholic School with effect from 31 August 2006.

It is important to note that at this stage no decision has been taken, except to consult on this proposal. No decision will be taken until after consultation has taken place with parents and pupils, governors, staff, the church authorities, the community and other interested parties.

The purpose of this document is to set out the background to the proposal and the arrangements to be put in place if the school were to close.

The County Council wishes to hear your views. If you have any comments on the proposals then please write to:

Mark Gore
Deputy County Education Officer
Education Department
22 Northgate Street
Warwick
CV34 4SP

Email: markgore@warwickshire.gov.uk

The closing date for comments is 20 February 2006. All comments will be made available to the Cabinet when they take their decision.

2. The Background to the Proposal

Bishop Wulstan is a Catholic 11-16 high school in Rugby where there is a selective system of education. In January 2006 there were 330 pupils on roll. This number is very low for a secondary school. 162 of these pupils attending the school are Catholics.

It is the view of the County Education Officer that Bishop Wulstan Catholic School, as a result of falling numbers on roll, is no longer financially nor educationally viable. This situation means that the school is unlikely to be able to sustain the curriculum and therefore achieve acceptable levels of attainment and consistently sustain the improvements necessary to secure the future viability of the school.

Falling pupil numbers

The school has a planned admission number of 83 giving a capacity of 415.

Table 1 shows the number on roll in each year group in January 2006.

Table 1

Numbers on roll – January 2006

Year	7	51
	8	52
	9	72
	10	79
	11	76
Total		330

The number of pupils on roll has fallen from 369 five years ago to 330 in January 2006. This means that the school has 85 empty places. Only 25 applications for admission in September 2006 have been received by the closing date. Assuming all of those pupils are admitted, numbers on roll in September 2006 will fall to around 275. If this trend continues then pupil numbers will continue to fall markedly in future years.

Levels of Attainment

There are many indications of the success of a school, for example 'value added data' which shows the progress of pupils compared with their levels of attainment when they entered the school. Such data, including the value added data at the end of Key Stage 3, is positive and suggests that Bishop Wulstan Catholic School does well by a number of its pupils and there are some signs of further improvement. However looking at one of the Government's key indicators, the percentage of pupils who achieve 5+ A* - C grades in GCSE, this figure is too low and declining. The school is not reaching its predicted targets. Table 2 shows that in September 2003 34% of pupils achieved 5+ A* - C; in September 2005 that figure fell to only 12%. This placed the school in the lowest 1% nationally.

Table 2

Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C grades at GCSE

	2003	2004	2005
5+ A*-C	34% (53%)	20% (54%)	12% (56%)

Figures in brackets are the corresponding average figures for the Local Authority.

Much has been done in an attempt to make improvements and raise standards, including recruiting and retention of appropriate staff, securing funding from the Department for Education & Skills for a Sports Hall and achieving specialist college status. Both the Authority and the Diocesan Schools Commission have over the years provided very high levels of support. The Authority is of the view that the support it has given is unsustainable in the long term.

However, on the basis of the evidence and despite the clear leadership in the school and the best efforts of the headteacher, the staff and governors, it is the view of the County Education Officer that the school will be unable to meet acceptable levels of attainment by September 2006, or in future years.

3. Arrangements for Pupils in the event of Closure

Clearly in any process of closure the highest priority is to protect the education of the pupils currently in the school. If the decision is made to close the school:

- (1) Where parents wish to send their child to another Catholic School, eg. Trinity School in Leamington, free transport will be provided in line with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.
- (2) Some parents/carers may wish to seek alternative places for their children at other Rugby schools which have places. The County Council will do all it can to facilitate transfers to alternative schools for existing pupils, if the decision is taken to close the school.

- (3) All those parents whose children are due to transfer to secondary education in September 2006 and who gave first preference to Bishop Wulstan Catholic School will be allowed to express an alternative first preference. Those new preferences will be given equal consideration with those preferences made by the Authority's deadline of 24 October 2005, in the event of closure of the school.
- (4) In order to protect the curriculum for pupils in the older year groups, arrangements with another school or other schools will be put in place. The details of any such arrangements will only be agreed following an assessment of the individual needs of all existing pupils in the school.

Parents are strongly advised not to seek alternative places for their children until the final decision has been taken on this proposal. It is unlikely to be in the best interests of children to move school in the middle of the school year.

4. Arrangements for Staff in the event of Closure

In addition to securing the education of pupils, the County Council will do all it can to protect the interests of staff by facilitating re-deployment and in some circumstances redundancy and retirement.

Detailed individual discussions will be held with all members of staff, both teaching and non-teaching and including the headteacher, to discuss their particular circumstances and wishes. A consideration in those discussions with staff would be the need to protect the curriculum for existing pupils.

In Aided schools like Bishop Wulstan Catholic School the governing body is the contractual employer and legal responsibility, therefore, rests with the governors. However, the principles and Code of Practice in the Authority's policies are equally applicable to all schools maintained by the Authority whether Foundation, Aided or Community. The Authority will therefore treat staff in Bishop Wulstan in relation to this policy in the same way as staff in Community schools.

This Policy includes a redeployment Code of Practice that states that the Authority will make every effort to redeploy staff to vacancies which arise within other Warwickshire schools. In order to do that, the Authority will make every effort to promote the redeployment prospects of staff by exploring appropriate training or retraining opportunities. This may include use of a range of the Authority's personnel, courses at local institutes of higher education, and training for application and interview skills.

The Policy also encompasses procedures and payments to be applied in the circumstance of premature retirement, voluntary redundancy or compulsory redundancy.

The Authority will undertake, in association with the governing body, regular and thorough consultation with the recognised professional associations and trade unions on all relevant staffing matters and will consider issues identified. The Authority will also ensure that the Archdiocese are party to that consultation.

The Authority will look to provide all relevant advice and support to the governing body in dealing with the staffing issues associated with a potential closure.

5. The Process

Stage 1 – Formal Consultation 20 January to 20 February 2006

This document sets out the proposal on which the County Council is seeking comments and views. No decision has been made at this stage other than to consult on the proposal.

Copies of this consultation document have been sent to:

- Parents of pupils currently attending Bishop Wulstan School
- Parents of pupils who have expressed a preference to attend Bishop Wulstan Catholic School from September 2006
- Governors and Staff
- Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham and the Catholic Diocese of Northampton
- Primary and secondary schools in the Rugby area
- Other interested parties including the Borough Councillors, all Parish Councils in East Warwickshire, all admission authorities and neighbouring Local Authorities, teacher associations and trade unions, the Learning & Skills Council.

Further copies are available from the school and from local libraries.

As well as seeking written responses a series of consultation meetings with Governors, Staff and parents have been arranged as follows:

- **Meeting for all staff of Bishop Wulstan School on 6 February at 3.30pm**
- **Meeting for the Governing Body of Bishop Wulstan School on 6 February at 5.45pm**
- **A meeting for all parents of children attending Bishop Wulstan School on 6 February at 7.30pm.**

All meetings will be held at the school.

It is important that we have your views on the proposal.

The closing date for comments is **20 February 2006**.

The proposal, together with feedback from the consultation, will be reported to the Rugby Area Committee so that its comments can be forwarded to the Cabinet of Warwickshire County Council.

Stage 2 – Decision whether or not to adopt proposal and publish notices

The outcome of consultation will be reported to the Cabinet at its meeting on 9 March 2006. The Cabinet may decide not to go forward with the proposal at this stage. If however they do decide to continue with the proposal, the Authority is required to publish statutory notices of its intentions.

Stage 3 – Publication of statutory notices

Notices would be published at the School and in the local press for a six-week period, beginning on 24 March and running to 5 May. This would give a further opportunity to interested parties to comment on or object to the proposals.

Stage 4 – Final Decision

If there were no objections the matter could be determined by the Cabinet at its meeting on 25 May, subject to confirmation by the County Council.

If there were to be objections to the closure, the matter would be considered by the Warwickshire School Organisation Committee (SOC) as soon as possible in May. The SOC is a body independent of the County Council which includes representatives of the Council, the Church Authorities, Schools and the Learning & Skills Council. Should the groups represented on the SOC be unable to reach unanimous agreement, the matter would be referred to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. He aims to give a final decision within eight working weeks.

6. SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Have alternatives to closure been considered?

Recognising the sustained commitment of the governors and headteacher the Local Authority and the Diocesan Schools Commission (DSC) have explored a number of options with a view to strengthening the position of Bishop Wulstan Catholic School. These options have included federation with other Catholic schools, formal or informal links with other high schools in Rugby with enhanced joint working, and links with a local independent Catholic school. For a variety of reasons none was felt to be genuinely viable and none was judged likely to provide a solution to the very low levels of recruitment, in particular from the Catholic community in Rugby.

Why is the proposal being made now?

The Authority and the Diocesan Schools Commission (DSC) have been concerned to maintain if at all possible Catholic secondary provision in Rugby, and have worked with the school to secure improvements and raise standards. However, numbers and levels of attainment have fallen in the last two to three years to a point at which, in the view of the County Education Officer, the school is no longer viable and an acceptable standard of education cannot be provided.

Could the Authority provide more funding?

The Authority is required to fund schools on the basis of a formula which is largely based on pupil numbers. If numbers fall then the money allocated to the school is reduced. In 2004 the Authority changed the formula to provide additional support for small schools like Bishop Wulstan Catholic School. However any further change to the formula of this sort is at the expense of other schools. The cost per pupil at Bishop Wulstan Catholic School is already much higher than the county average and will rise as pupil numbers fall. It would be inappropriate and inequitable to change the formula to provide the level of resources necessary to sustain the curriculum in this school.

What will happen to the buildings of Bishop Wulstan Catholic School?

The buildings are in the ownership of the Trustees of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. It will be for the Trustees to determine the future of the buildings.

What is the position of the Diocesan Schools Commission?

As required by law, the proposal to cease to maintain Bishop Wulstan Catholic School is being made by the Local Authority. The Diocesan Schools Commission has been kept fully informed of the proposal of the Authority, but does not have a formal role in the statutory process, except as a group represented on the School Organisation Committee.

7. Further Information

If you have any queries please contact:

- Peter Thompson – Senior Area Education Officer 01926 412888
- Phil Astle – Education Officer (School Organisation) 01926 412820

A dedicated Helpline for parents is also available on 01926 736366 accessible Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

8. Summary

The decision to consult on the closure of Bishop Wulstan Catholic School is not taken lightly. The County Education Officer believes that the proposal contained in this document is in the interests of children and young people in Rugby. We wish to test that view during consultation and would welcome any comments, observations or alternative proposals from interested parties.

PROPOSAL TO CLOSE BISHOP WULSTAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL CONSULTATION MEETINGS

Monday 6 February 2006

Comments and questions raised in the meeting with the governing body

- Will the governing body be able to see the report when it is circulated to Cabinet?
- Discussions about the school on the local BBC radio station have focussed on standards rather than viability. Why is this?
- Are there not worse schools than Bishop Wulstan in Warwickshire when measured on value-added statistics? Are not these statistics more representative of the school's achievements?
- The strength of the school is in individual children, not in general statistics. If you look at the school child-by-child, many are fulfilling their potential.
- Standards at Key Stage 4 are not adequate, however it should be noted that conversion rates from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 have been low in previous years due to the school accepting many children with challenging circumstances during Key Stage 4. Furthermore, some high achievers at Key Stage 3 left the school before completing Key Stage 4.
- There are indicators other than the percentage of children achieving 5 A*-C that shows how good a school is.
- The achievements at Key Stage 3 have been understated by the Local Authority and deserve fuller recognition.
- Small cohorts of students will inevitably lead to extreme fluctuations in results when translated into statistics. This should be taken into account.
- The make-up of each cohort does change year-on-year which is not adequately reflected in statistics.
- What would the Local Authority accept as suitable improvements to the viability of the school before the end of the consultation process?
- If the report for Cabinet is written for 2 March, then there is not adequate time for the school to provide a full response to the proposal.
- What support will the Local Authority provide to the governing body to ensure that they do not put their efforts into a response that will not be viewed favourably by the Local Authority?

- Will the report summarise all letters sent supporting education at Bishop Wulstan, or only those received by Mark Gore?
- How many second and third preferences have been indicated for Bishop Wulstan?
- Have any preferences for Bishop Wulstan been rescinded since the proposal was announced?
- There are misperceptions and misunderstandings about the admissions system at Bishop Wulstan. The school is confident that it can address these issues and consequently improve admission numbers.
- It was requested that there was clarification about the admissions system. 43 children had actually indicated a preference for Bishop Wulstan, however some of these will end up attending other schools that have been given a higher preference by parents.
- Will the report to Cabinet just be a summary of the consultation process?
- Which reports/parts of the report will the governing body be allowed to see before the decision is taken? Are we allowed to see the notes of these meetings?
- It is a duty of the Local Authority to maintain a balance of voluntary-aided schools across the county. By closing Bishop Wulstan there will be no voluntary-aided schools in the east of the county and therefore the balance will be permanently upset.
- Would free transport to other Catholic schools be provided to all students or just the Catholic students?
- Is Warwickshire County Council considering changing its denominational transport policy? If so, how will this affect students who are bussed to other schools, should Bishop Wulstan close?
- What will be the cost of providing free transport to other schools to all the pupils at Bishop Wulstan? Is this really viable? Will the Cabinet paper include these costs in a clear way?
- Many children attend Bishop Wulstan who have additional educational needs and have been rejected by other schools. What will happen to these children?
- Bishop Wulstan does not offload pupils like other schools in the area do. Bishop Wulstan takes on a higher proportion of pupils with challenging backgrounds than other schools in Rugby. What will happen to these children if the school closes?
- The proposal has had a negative impact on the morale of staff and learning of the pupils. What does the Local Authority think of this situation?
- The governing body is not making plans for closure. However, has the Local Authority devised a contingency plan should the school close?

- By law, the governing body are the employers of the staff and are therefore responsible for them, however there is very little information about how to help staff should there be a closure. If the Local Authority take on this responsibility without the full input of the governing body they will be usurping the powers of the governing body.
- If the school were to close, it is assumed that the Local Authority will wish to clawback some of the money delegated to Bishop Wulstan for the period April 2006 to March 2007. Will the Local Authority be sympathetic to extra costs incurred by the school due to closure (such as supply staff should teachers leave before the Summer Term), rather than demand back the exact proportion of the money delegated for the time that the school will not be open?
- What measures would the Local Authority take to maintain the employment of teaching and support staff?
- It would be better to spend money on encouraging staff to stay at Bishop Wulstan rather than paying for supply staff.
- Will the Local Authority be flexible with staff who wish to resign before their contractual end date, due to the extraordinary nature of the situation?
- Have the teaching unions and professional associations been advised of the proposal, and have consequences for staff been discussed?

PROPOSAL TO CLOSE BISHOP WULSTAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL CONSULTATION MEETINGS

Monday 6 February 2006

Comments and questions raised in the meeting with staff

- The current White Paper on education in schools emphasises a need for more choice for parents over where their child should be educated. This proposal will only reduce choice for parents in Rugby and specifically will eradicate the opportunity for parents to choose a Catholic education in Rugby for their children.
- It is premature to make a proposal to close the school on a low number of first preferences in one year. Recently, the school roll has consistently been at around 330. The proposal does not take into account the number of lower preferences for the school.
- There is a belief among staff that the Local Authority has engineered the position at Bishop Wulstan. Other secondary schools in the area have been allowed to exceed their authorised admission numbers causing a negative effect on Bishop Wulstan.
- The leak to the local press before Christmas concerning this proposal has caused the staff to distrust the Local Authority.
- The timescale for the whole process of discussing the proposal is far too short. The proposal for a merger of two primary schools in Rugby has been given a significantly longer timescale.
- If the school is closed, the learning of three year groups will be interrupted during a Key Stage. This will cause disruption to the pupils' learning and there is no guarantee that these children will study the same syllabuses at other schools. Consequently, their chances of achievement will diminish.
- It is perceived that only six weeks consideration was given to making this proposal (based on the time that the Admissions team received preferences from parents and the time of the press article). This is not an adequate time for consideration. We don't think you have given enough serious in-depth consideration to closing the school.
- The letters sent to prospective parents requesting further preferences to Bishop Wulstan imply that the decision about the school's future has already been made and the school will close.
- Parents who have phoned Warwickshire County Council with regard to EMAG provision have been advised to attend Ashlawn School rather than Bishop Wulstan.

- On the day a member of staff's child started their education at Bishop Wulstan the proposal to close the school was announced. Why were they not informed about this proposal before the child started?
- Bishop Wulstan is a fantastic school and one of the reasons that many of the children, staff and parents like it so much is because it is a small school.
- Are there enough places in other Rugby schools to accommodate all the children of Bishop Wulstan should the school close?
- Will the merger of the Rokeby schools and the possible sale of land for new housing developments not lead to additional secondary school pupils?
- The consultation document states that 'a number of options with a view to strengthening the position of Bishop Wulstan Catholic School' have been explored but 'for a variety of reasons' none was felt to be viable. What were the options and why are they not viable?
- Numbers at the school fluctuate year-on-year. The Year 9 cohort has increased from its original Year 7 intake. The cohort has gone from two forms to four forms. Has this potential to grow been taken into account?
- History shows that the school has cyclical success with its admission numbers. It is currently at a low figure as it is at a low point in the cycle, but this will improve again in time. Have you looked back at the school's history?
- Is there not an expected growth for all secondary school numbers in Rugby following the establishment of new housing estates?
- What is a viable Year 7 intake?
- The school has just achieved Business & Enterprise Specialist Status. This will have a positive effect on admission numbers for 2007/08.
- What would be a reasonable timescale for the school to demonstrate improvements?
- The staff feel that their future is in the school.
- The proposal has had a negative impact on standards in the school in recent weeks. What measures are the Local Authority taking to support the school to maintain 'business as usual'? Is it not their responsibility to ensure high standards of education provision to children in Rugby?
- If significant numbers of staff do leave following the announcement of this proposal, will the Local Authority close the school due to the lack of staff making it unviable?
- If staff do leave and the school continues, how will vacancies be filled?
- Why should staff have to leave the school when they are happy here?

- The Local Authority could take steps to ensure that staff stay at the school but refuse to because of costs.
- If staff do not hand in their notice and the school does close, what happens next?
- By the time a decision is made on whether the school should close, many of the teaching vacancies at other local schools will have been filled.
- Paragraph 3.5 in the consultation document refers readers to paragraph 6.10, however there is no 6.10.
- Some staff feel that they are being pushed to the door. They cannot wait for the decision to be made as vacancies in other schools will have gone by the time the decision is taken.
- The information for staff to make an informed choice about their future is not available. It has been insensitive to staff to delay the consultation process until now. Staff feel they have to secure the future for themselves and their families.
- There is no information about what steps have been taken by the Local Authority to keep the school open. All the information has been negative from the Local Authority. There is a feeling that the Local Authority is pushing the school into decline.
- How can the school be viable in September if it stays open, if most of the staff have left?
- Who represents the school when the report goes to the Cabinet of Warwickshire County Council? How will the report be prepared? What will be included? Will members of staff be able to see this report before the meeting of the Cabinet?
- The achievements in Key Stage 3 in 2004/05 have not received the recognition they deserve.
- Does the Local Authority accept that Key Stage 4 will improve very soon following the improvements at Key Stage 3?
- The school should be given the chance to show that improvements at Key Stage 3 can be converted into improvements at Key Stage 4.
- Are not all indicators at Key Stage 3 very good?
- Every time improvements in the school are spoken of it receives a negative reply from the Local Authority.
- It sounds like there is nothing that the school can do to save itself.
- Bishop Wulstan is not a normal school. It is a small school with many pupils who speak English as their second language. The statistic of the percentage of students achieving 5 A*-C does not reflect this.

- As the decision will be made before this year's GCSEs have been taken, the school has been given no time to show the improvements it has made.
- Standards can be maintained and improved despite falls in admission numbers.
- If the school were able to recruit 50 more children for Year 7 in 2006/07, could it remain open?
- If improvements are demonstrated, can the school remain open?
- Can officers of the Local Authority ignore the decision taken by the Cabinet?
- Many students at this school blossom due to better opportunities for one-to-one tuition. This will not be available at larger schools and the pupils will not do as well as a consequence.
- Results and admissions at the school goes in cycles. Looking at the figures for the last three years is not representative of this.
- Every child matters at Bishop Wulstan and the school does not feel that the Local Authority appreciates that.
- There are many new, high quality and committed teaching staff at the school who are not being given the chance to show that standards can be improved. They feel let down by the Local Authority and distanced from it.
- One staff member has never known staff morale so high at a school.
- Contextual figures should be used to judge standards at the school, not crude statistics of GCSE results.
- Quoting the figure of 12% 5 A*-C is unrepresentative of the school and insulting.
- Is the Local Authority satisfied that it is fulfilling its duties to children at Bishop Wulstan?
- Who will ensure that pupils who may be required to leave Bishop Wulstan are developed and fulfil the potential that they have?
- The Local Authority is living in the negative past, not the positive future.

PROPOSAL TO CLOSE BISHOP WULSTAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL CONSULTATION MEETINGS

Monday 6 February 2006

Comments and questions raised in the public meeting

Approximately 500 people attended this meeting. Among those in attendance were pupils, parents, staff, governors, county councillors, representatives of the Catholic diocesan authorities, members of the local Catholic community, headteachers from local primary Catholic schools, former pupils and staff, members of the local press, Jeremy Wright MP, and officers of Warwickshire County Council.

The following comments were received by those present:

- It is difficult to find a mainstream school that will admit a pupil with Downs Syndrome. For one day a week, Bishop Wulstan does. Bishop Wulstan is at the forefront of practising inclusion in schools and it is going splendidly. The school should be left to continue this pioneering practice of inclusion and nurture its pupils in the ethos of the school.
- This consultation period is the launch pad for advertising just what a good school Bishop Wulstan is and pupil numbers will rise because of it. Admissions have been low for one year only.
- There is a strong sense of community which comes from being in a small school. There are bigger issues than admission numbers.
- How can Trinity School be a viable option to those in Rugby who wish for their child to have a Catholic education? What about the children who have friends in Rugby? Are parents expected to drive to Leamington to support children with after-school activities or if their child falls ill during the day? Closing the school would be an unnecessary disruption to children's education and transporting children to Leamington would cause further disruption.
- The closure of the school will unnecessarily and undeservedly attach a stigma to pupils and staff.
- The government are actively promoting personalised learning and involving young people in a community ethos. Bishop Wulstan has these qualities. In particular, the school achieves in providing education for children without English as a first language.
- Children with learning difficulties are supported so well by staff at the school. 38% of children at this school have special educational needs. Where will these children go if the school is closed? What will happen to pupils who have already been excluded from other schools in the area?
- Schools should not be closed simply because they do not meet government standards on GCSEs.

- The PANDA results for the school are fantastic as are the achievements at Key Stage 3. Elected members should look at more than just the GCSE data, as the school offers more than just GCSE results. The number of children in the school with SEN should be noted.
- Bishop Wulstan is a very popular school with many children with SEN. Resources should not decrease simply because admission numbers decrease. Education must be child-focussed. Education is more than GCSE results.
- The staff at the school are of high quality and have many years experience. With five children educated at the school over a period of fifteen years, the school has not failed one of them. The school is a wonderful community and it would be a sin to break it up. It is not right to close a school simply because of low intake.
- How much money will the Local Authority save by closing Bishop Wulstan School? How can you put a price on a child's happiness?
- The school has improved considerably over the last seven years. My eldest two children went to a different school, but my youngest child attends this school and loves it. There should be room for a small secondary school in the Rugby community.
- What will the Local Authority do to help the school improve rather than close it?
- Why did the school community have to learn about the proposal from the Rugby Advertiser? Why did a month pass between the press story and the official proposal?
- Why were letters sent to prospective parents about their preferences?
- Factors such as the Business and Enterprise specialist status, the inclusive nature of the school, and the provision of Catholic education in Rugby should be appreciated. Further to this, the Polish and Portuguese population in Rugby is growing. This population is mainly of a Catholic faith and therefore there will soon be further demand for Catholic education in Rugby. All agencies should work together to improve the school, to build on the achievements at Key Stage 3, to inform the Polish and Portuguese community that free Catholic education is available, and create a school that all Catholic in Warwickshire can be proud of.
- The ethos of the school, the religious education and the feeling of community are all positive factors in the school. Pupils are proud of Bishop Wulstan. Allow the staff and pupils to develop the school to what it could be.
- Our child who joined the school recently integrated into the school immediately and is very happy here. However, we were not informed of the proposal despite being prospective parents. The school is fantastic.
- What does the Local Authority consider to be the qualities of a good school?

- How will children perform better in another school when the teachers are so good here? Bishop Wulstan may not play the 'numbers game' but it enhances children's chances in other ways and plays a 'real life' game.
- Headteachers of local Catholic primary schools stated that all the Catholic schools in Rugby had started working closer together and wished for the opportunity to develop this. Rugby must offer the distinctive Catholic education and the links are there to do so. It would be tragic for the Catholic community to lose its secondary school.
- Fr Marcus Stock (Director of Schools, Diocesan Schools Commission) explained that the Archdiocese had been listening carefully to views expressed in the consultation and was forming concrete ideas on a way forward, however further details cannot be released at this stage. He added that with the support of other schools in the area we could climb the mountain the Local Authority had referred to and address the issues of viability and sustainability. The diocese will contact the school soon with its proposal on the way ahead.
- Catholic education in Rugby cannot disappear. The proposal to close the school should be shelved and the partnership between Catholic schools in Rugby should be allowed to develop. This consultation process is a window of opportunity for furthering this partnership.
- Children made presentation – DVD to be circulated.
- It appears to me an impossibility to accommodate every student into another secondary school in Rugby.
- Is it any wonder parents stated other preferences if letters were issued informing them of the proposal?
- Only negative statistics are being used and statistics can be manipulated. Which schools will want to take children who will damage their statistics? Why can efforts not be put into promoting this school? By closing this school you are permanently eradicating choice in Rugby and destroying the life chances of the current pupils of Bishop Wulstan.
- The new housing estates will mean that there are more children who need to be educated in secondary schools. Where will these children go?
- The figure of 25 does not take into account those who have put down Bishop Wulstan as second or third preference.
- My son started in Year 10 at Bishop Wulstan and has really improved since attending this school.
- Many non-Catholics do not realise that they can send their child to Bishop Wulstan. Can the Local Authority not assist the school in advertising itself?
- If pupil numbers fall, resources decrease. Conversely, if you increase the resources for the school, will pupil numbers not rise?

- The school takes more than its fair share of pupils with disabilities, pupils with learning difficulties and pupils that have been excluded from other schools. This has an effect on the learning of other pupils.
- The school had low numbers in the 1960s but was successfully turned around within five years. Please give Mr Higgins the chance and the time to revitalise the school.
- The Local Authority must realise that education is about more than just academic grades. There is a great ethos in the school, please allow the children to enjoy their school experience.
- Bishop Wulstan has always been a small school. What is so different now?
- The number of ex-pupils and teachers who have attended this meeting show how strong the community in this school is. Please give Mr Higgins the chance to improve the school.
- This is Westminster not Warwickshire! Previously when it was proposed that schools were closed they were given two years. Bishop Wulstan has been given six weeks. The timescale is simply not adequate. By closing Bishop Wulstan you will destroy a community not a school and that requires more than six weeks consideration.
- Cllr Morris-Jones stated that he hoped the decision would be referred to the whole County Council as there was no representation from Rugby on the Cabinet. He stressed how important the school community was to the future of the school and commented that the school's future was in their hands. He was surprised that only 25 parents had expressed a first preference for the school when there were so many people at the meeting fighting to keep it open. He encouraged parents to go out into their local communities and encourage more parents to come to the school.
- The school exudes quality and excellence yet it must be viable. The costs of bussing children to other schools should be made clear to County Councillors.
- We wish the decision was in our hands!
- Many Eastern European families have arrived in Rugby and will continue to arrive. They will require a Catholic education.
- How can a Catholic secondary school be taken away from a town with three Catholic churches?
- A pupil came to school in 1999 and left in 2001 with 14 A*-C. She was offered a wide curriculum by the school and was able to achieve because of the school. She asked the Local Authority to allow Mr Higgins the opportunity to give other students the same chance and let the school fulfil its potential.

- The word about how good Bishop Wulstan is has already started at Hillmorton Primary. Other parents are encouraged to spread the word around other primary schools.
- My daughter was going to Ashlawn School but when she heard the proposal she said she wanted to attend Bishop Wulstan. Please let Eleanor Watson attend the school of her choice!
- I know this is a consultation but what does the Local Authority want from the school community to keep it open?



Bishop Wulstan Catholic School

Business & Enterprise College

"Growing to fullness with Christ"

Mr Mark Gore
Deputy County Education Officer
Warwickshire County Council
22 Northgate Street
WARWICK
CV34 4SP

20 February 2006

Dear Mark

Please find attached the Governors' response and formal objection to the LEA's Consultation on the proposal to close Bishop Wulstan School. This illustrates and addresses a number of key points including:

- The determination of the local and wider Catholic community, including schools and parishes, to preserve Catholic secondary provision in this town.
- The overwhelming support of parents and students of all faiths who recognise and value the distinctive faith education of our small secondary school.
- The importance of preserving **parental choice** for a Catholic option and a small secondary school option within the local community of Rugby.
- A future recruitment strategy based on a Rugby 3 – 16 partnership and a recognition of the potential of new communities in the town and Daventry.
- A need to recognise more overtly the strengths and successes of the school its improving performance at KS3, positive outcomes for KS4 students, specialist status, wider collaborative links and improved facilities.
- Concern and opposition from Councillors and political parties across the spectrum.

In addition there is supplementary data and information relating to why we believe that our school is viable set out in eight appendices as follows:

- Appendix 1 – Mission Statement - setting out our distinctive ethos
- Appendix 2 – Every Child Matters - highlighting our strengths in this area
- Appendix 3 – School Roll Data – providing a detailed 5 year pattern
- Appendix 4 - Recruitment Strategy – setting out our strategic plan for the future
- Appendix 5 – Performance, Attainment & Achievement – independent analysis
- Appendix 6 – Financial Summary – demonstrating our viability
- Appendix 7 – Curriculum Organisation – illustrating the breadth of provision
- Appendix 8 – Staffing & Resources – relating our staff expertise and commitment

As you know St Wulstan is our school patron. He was the only Anglo Saxon Bishop that resisted and survived the attempts of William the Conqueror to close down existing diocesan structures. His many qualities inspire and guide the work of this school, not least his longevity and ability to renew communities in difficult times.

Yours sincerely

Brendan Higgins

Brendan Higgins - Headteacher

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Mr Brendan Higgins BSc
Headteacher

Mrs Maria Lee B Phil(Ed)
Deputy Headteacher





Bishop Wulstan Catholic School

Business & Enterprise College

"Growing to fullness with Christ"

Mr Mark Gore
Deputy County Education Officer
Warwickshire County Council
22 Northgate Street
WARWICK
CV34 4SP

Dear Mark,

17 February 2006

Consultation on the Future of Bishop Wulstan Catholic School

We write on behalf of the Governing Body of Bishop Wulstan Catholic School in response to the Consultation document regarding the future of our School.

Firstly, we would like to thank you and your staff for attending the meetings on Monday 6 February, at which you will have gathered the feelings and views of the school, the local and the wider community with regard to your proposal. At the evening meeting attended by nearly 500 interested individuals and representatives from all political parties including Jeremy Wright MP, the former MP Andy King, County and Borough Councillors, we had the opportunity to clarify some issues regarding the school's future. We were particularly grateful for your offer to work with us and the Archdiocese to consider alternative strategies on the future of Catholic education in the Rugby area. This is particularly important given the views expressed at the consultation meeting by Headteachers of all the Rugby Catholic Schools and by the Diocesan Director, Fr Marcus Stock. They and the clergy and communities of the Catholic parishes are clearly in support of the aim to preserve Catholic secondary provision in Rugby.

Whilst we acknowledge many of the facts contained in the consultation document, we feel that these do not present a full and balanced picture, and may mean that a decision is made without all relevant facts being considered. In addition to this letter we attach a report with 8 appendices providing further details and data related to the school's current situation and our intended plans for the future.

Viability

You have stated publicly that the main concern about Bishop Wulstan School is not the results at KS4, but concerns about our future viability, given the small number of likely enrolments in September 2006. We share these concerns. Setting aside, for the moment, the fact that we see the size of our school as a great advantage, we do agree that a 1 form entry secondary school will find it very difficult, although by no means impossible, to offer a broad and balanced curriculum.

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Mr Brendan Higgins BSc
Headteacher

Mrs Maria Lee B Phil(Ed)
Deputy Headteacher



Our main concern is that the timescale imposed by the authority, giving something less than 6 weeks notice, appears designed to reduce our ability to develop sustainable alternatives to closure. As you are aware, under the guidance and sponsorship of the Archdiocese we, and other local schools, have been engaging in just this process and our intention is to present the Authority with proposals that would ensure not only our own future viability, but that of a continuous Catholic education, 3-16, in Rugby.

We would particularly draw your attention to **Appendix 4** in our attached report explaining our recruitment strategy. In our view it is imperative that the threat of irrevocable closure in September is lifted in order for these proposals to be developed and considered. Again, we are grateful for your offer of help as our proposals will need advice and guidance from the Authority but this cannot be done in a fair and open-minded way in the timescale set. Currently the school's finances are good – see **Appendix 6** – and the proposed recruitment strategy would ensure future financial viability.

Student Outcomes

We have deliberately headed this section “**Student Outcomes**” rather than “**Levels of Attainment**” (the heading used in the consultation paper) as we believe there is more to being a successful school than raw GCSE scores. We believe that greater consideration should be given to our success with students who would - and will - find it difficult to access the curriculum in larger schools. Our record for students moving into further education, training and employment opportunities is very good and is in line with the average for Warwickshire, see **Appendix 2**.

Whilst we accept that present overall standards of attainment at KS4 are unacceptable, we feel it is important that Cabinet is aware that, as a small school, each student has a disproportionate impact on the overall statistics. Thus, although in 2005 only 12% of students achieved 5 A*-C GCSE's, the total reporting cohort was made up of only 69 students each contributing 1.45 % to the final statistic. Clearly, in these circumstances, large swings are likely to occur year by year.

Further, Cabinet may not be aware of the extent to which our school is subject to student mobility. Of the 95 students registered in Year 11 at some point, only 55 are the same as those who started in year 7 (i.e. completing 5 years). This has a huge impact on our KS4 results, and also explains why, on paper, some of our students who do well at KS3 appear not to do well at KS4: in many cases they are not the same people.

Our most recent Ofsted inspection highlighted the volatility of our student roll, see **Appendix 5**. As you are aware, not only is our intake at Year 7 skewed socially and educationally (in terms of prior achievement), but our difficulties become more acute with the arrival of students excluded or in difficulty at other schools, or who arrive in the area with little or no spoken or written English, but whom we welcome and whom we register for examinations, even though it is not necessarily in our own interest. We should not be penalised for operating such an inclusive policy, which has been to the benefit of both students and the Council.

You heard from a number of current and former students about the educational transformation that we have helped them achieve not only in respect of results, but in terms of confidence, social, emotional and spiritual growth, as well as areas such as behaviour, tolerance and awareness of others. We are proud of our ethos, and believe it produces successful and well rounded individuals, whatever their faith. Sadly, we can find no mention of these aspects in the consultation paper, and would ask that you redress this perceived imbalance in the report that the Cabinet receives. We offer a distinctive faith based education which demands our attention to the whole person.

Other Considerations


As you will be aware, the DfES has stated that there should be a presumption against the closure of small schools. In our view, the proposal to close Bishop Wulstan will have a detrimental affect on choice and diversity of provision in Rugby, and will alter the proportion of Catholic Aided to non-Aided places throughout the County. With no secondary Catholic provision in Rugby, the attraction of Catholic primary education will be reduced as there will be no opportunity for continuity of Catholic education with the town. If secondary Catholic provision is lost in Rugby it will be impossible to re-instate.

We fully accept that the proposal to consult on the possible closure of Bishop Wulstan School was not made lightly. However, we feel sure that Cabinet will want to consider this matter not just as a short term solution to a perceived problem, but also taking into account longer term implications. In particular, we would ask that Cabinet is provided with the full financial implications in terms of home-school transport costs in perpetuity, and also provided with details of bus journey times in rush hour to suitable alternative Catholic Schools. In our view, committing our young people to extensive bus journeys should be avoided wherever possible. Not only will it cost the Authority money for many years to come, it will also add to pollution and congestion on the County's roads at a time when Councils are seeking to reduce these factors. It will also be detrimental to young people, excluding them from many after school clubs and activities, in contradiction to the emerging "extended schools" provision we and other schools are currently developing.

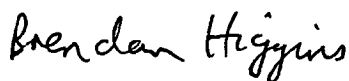
In conclusion, we feel that whilst the consultation process is not, in itself, prejudicial to the continuation of the School, the Authority has not worked with the Governing Body of Bishop Wulstan, nor the Governing Bodies of local Catholic Primary Schools, to explore in any detail all possible alternatives to ensure the continuation of Catholic provision in the area. We therefore wish to register our objection to the proposals, and ask that Cabinet does not proceed with further consultation at this stage. This will allow the Governors and the Diocese time to develop robust alternative proposals.

We ask that you make copies of this letter and the accompanying report available to all Rugby Area Committee Members for their consideration at their meeting of 6 March 2006 and Cabinet Members in advance of their meeting on 9 March 2006.

Yours sincerely



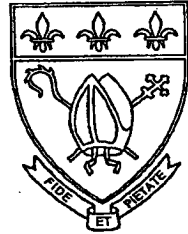
Eddie Kealey – Chair of Governors



Brendan Higgins - Headteacher

Bishop Wulstan Catholic School

Business & Enterprise College



Appendix 1 Mission Statement

This school is totally committed to an inclusive vision of a faith-based education for all students. For the past five years the school has worked hard to develop this Mission Statement and recognises that there is still much to be achieved.

Vision

Drawing its inspiration from the Scriptures and the Catholic Church's extensive experience in education, Bishop Wulstan School sets its sights on Gospel Values of love, service and truth and seeks to meet the highest expectations of parents and achieve in the school community academic excellence, social and moral maturity and spiritual wholeness.

We therefore see the mission of the school as striving to ensure that all students and staff without exception:

- Achieve their full potential – spiritually, socially and academically
- Show loving care for all God's people and for the rest of creation
- Are enabled fully to co-operate in the improvement of society and the transformation of the world

In particular, Bishop Wulstan School aims:

- to make prayer and worship authentic experiences and to contribute to the faith journey of each individual in the school;
- to provide a balanced curriculum with a Christian basis through which students can grow in understanding and acquire the skills, attitudes and values for responsible adult life;
- to ensure that students' experience of relationships throughout the whole school community and through extra-curricular activities have a positive formative influence;
- to foster links between school, parish and home and with local work and business, so as to prepare for the student's entry into the wider community;
- to provide inspiring leadership so that the whole school community is led to co-operation, high achievement and consideration for others.
- to cherish a particular regard for the least privileged and those with special needs.

Objectives

To achieve these aims Bishop Wulstan School *Business & Enterprise College* is therefore committed to the following objectives:

- developing the spiritual life of the school especially regarding the Catholic tradition;
- developing literacy, numeracy, oracy and computer skills across the curriculum;
- implementing a programme of personal and social development including citizenship and multicultural, environmental and global awareness;
- promoting high standards of behaviour and achievement, enabling students to take responsibility for their own learning and the realisation of their full potential;
- monitoring and evaluating student progress and quality of teaching;
- providing effective school management and an efficient use of resources.

Bishop Wulstan Catholic School

Business & Enterprise College



Appendix 2 Every Child Matters

This school is very proud of its inclusive approach to education. As a result of the consultation parents have overwhelmingly given testimony to the strength of this school in addressing individual needs within a community that replicates a family atmosphere and values reflected in our school mission statement. The school's work on Anti-Bullying is particularly noted by parents and students.

We would ask that Cabinet Members are made fully aware of the letters sent by current and past parents and students to evaluate this school's viability in meeting the challenges of the Every Child Matters agenda, especially in relation to the first three aspects:

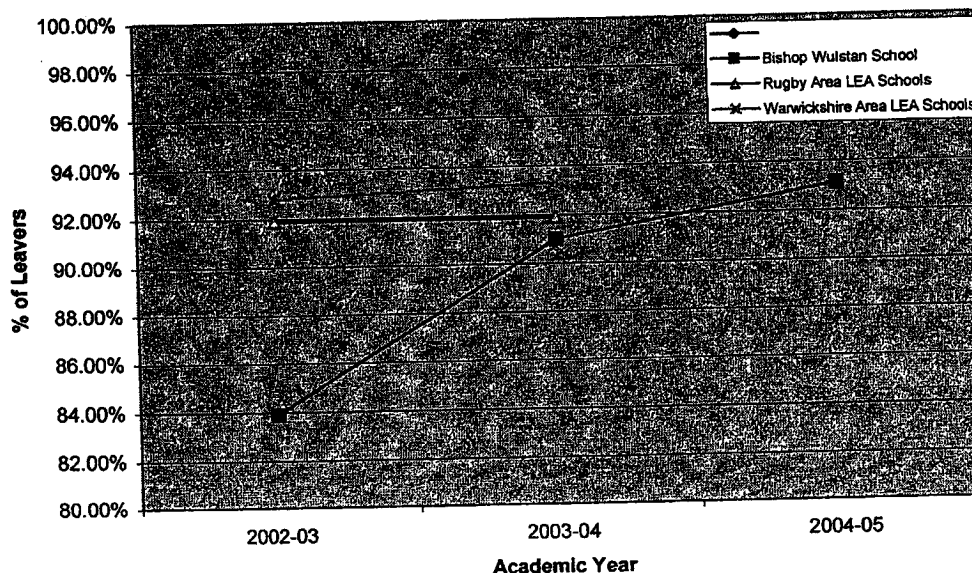
- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve

The school's choice of specialist subject, Business & Enterprise, was specifically linked to the school mission statement aspect, 'where students and staff should be enabled to co-operate in the improvement of society and the transformation of the world'. This also links to the other two aspects of Every Child Matters:

- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well being

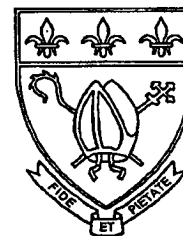
We are aware that achievement for every individual on leaving the school must be given the highest priority to ensure that students may progress to the next stage. Despite low attainment at KS4 in 2003 - 2005 student outcomes were very good and have improved year on year as shown in the following graph. This illustrates that student's aspirations and ability to move into further education, training and employment is secure and improving.

Bishop Wulstan School - 3-Year Post 16 Positive Outcomes Destination Trend



Bishop Wulstan Catholic School

Business & Enterprise College



Appendix 3 - School Roll Data and Viability

In the LEA Consultation document it states that the school roll is declining and if the trend were to continue then the roll would be 267 in September 2006 and fall further in future years. The table below details the school roll over the past 5 years indicating considerable fluctuations and that it has been between 315 and 363 students. Our prediction for September 2006 was to recruit 285 students.

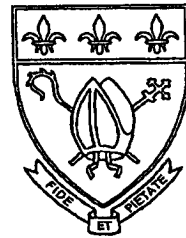
School roll statistics taken from Head's reports to Governors, Form 7, PLASC		
Date	Actual School Roll	Predicted Roll
Sept 2001	351	358
January 2002	361	
June 2002	363	
Sept 2002	359	362
January 2003	360	
June 2003	362	
Sept 2003	315	329
January 2004	317	
June 2004	330	
Sept 2004	318	304
January 2005	330	
June 2005	342	
Sept 2005	326	309
January 2006	325	
Sept 2006		285

The school recognises that there is a need to increase numbers especially at intake in Year 7. The school is fully aware of the increased stability that this will bring and its impact on standards as the level and proportion of mobility is reduced. Appendix 4 sets out some of the strategies that will be employed.

Baptismal records for the local Churches are taken to predict future demand for Catholic places. This can only give approximate figures since there is significant mobility of students in the town. Equally, not all children are baptised in their local parish. Very often parents return to previous home parishes to baptise their children for a variety of reasons. According to the local parishes there is an increase in baptisms currently, due to inward mobility of families and new immigrant communities.

Bishop Wulstan Catholic School

Business & Enterprise College



Appendix 4 - Recruitment Strategy and Viability

At the appointment of the current Head Teacher, the strategic plan for the school did not give highest priority to external marketing and the recruitment of new students, until the following issues had been addressed and resolved satisfactorily.

- Between 1999 - 2003 the school was categorised by Ofsted in Serious Weaknesses and there was a need to recruit and retain teaching staff
- Standards and performance outcomes were variable
- Accommodation and facilities for PE were almost non-existent
- The school decided that its long term strategy required Specialist Status

Over the past 5 years the strategies employed by the Head Teacher and his team have ensured the above issues have now been, or are currently being, addressed as indicated below.

- a) **Ofsted Judgements** - The school is no longer categorised by Ofsted as in Serious Weakness. Staff recruitment and retention has been very good, all subjects on the curriculum are taught by appropriately qualified teachers. Significant appointments have been made to support staff posts to enable teachers to concentrate on teaching and learning and to address all issues of the Workforce Remodelling agenda.
- b) **Performance** - Although KS4 headline statistics have been poor – and the school is committed to addressing this – significant numbers of individual achievement profiles at all levels of ability have been very good and KS3 performance indicators have improved.

The school's performance at KS3 last year for contextualised Value Added places the school in the top 4% of schools nationally and third highest in Warwickshire secondary schools. At KS4 Value Added needs to be improved with the school placed in the lowest 5% of schools nationally and fourth lowest in Warwickshire secondary schools.

- c) **Accommodation** - A new Sports Hall was opened in November 2004 and this is now raising the standards of PE in the school and the profile of Bishop Wulstan in the local community and within the Sports Co-ordination Partnership.
- d) **Specialist Status** in Business and Enterprise was granted in September 2005 despite the declining attainment at Key Stage 4 in 2004. The achievement of Specialist Status, supported at the time by the LEA, enabled the school to set out a 5-year improvement plan to address all issues of standards and performance at KS3 and KS4. This plan requires the school to have time to make the changes. More importantly the school was set to improve and increase the level of partnership with its partner feeder schools and post 16 providers in the town.

Recruitment Strategy and Viability continued....

The proposed recruitment strategy for new students will include:

- **1 - Catholic Partnership 3-16** – The Diocesan Schools Commission have instigated a discussion with all Catholic providers in Rugby as part of their strategic document 'Securing the Future', (see www.bdsc.org.uk) This discussion also involves the parishes of St Marie's, English Martyrs', Sacred Heart and the wider Catholic Community. Proposals regarding a new model of 3 – 16 provision are under discussion and will be presented by the DSC.

An initial survey of local Primary and Infant Schools in Rugby indicates that a significant number of baptised Catholics attend non-Catholic Schools. 9 local schools responded to the survey with 51 of their students identified as Catholic – we are awaiting replies from 17 other schools. A detailed survey to establish actual numbers of Catholic students attending non-Catholic Primary and Secondary schools should be undertaken to assess the future possible recruitment of students to a renewed and strengthened Catholic sector within Rugby.

- **2 - Targeting New Communities** – In addition to the influx of additional families as new housing developments occur in Rugby a number of immigrant communities are growing in the town. These include Polish, Portuguese, Mexican, African and Asian groups many of whom are from Catholic traditions. The LEA and DSC need to work with the school to establish the details of these demographic changes and potential effect on Bishop Wulstan School recruitment.

Daventry Option - Over the past two years discussions to enable the school to recruit in the Daventry area have been underway. Daventry, located in the Diocese of Northampton, does not have any Catholic secondary provision. There are already a few students from this town attending Bishop Wulstan. According to Warwickshire data significant numbers of out of county school places are being taken up at some of the Rugby secondary schools and there is scope for Bishop Wulstan to increase their numbers. It is anticipated that a further 6 and 12 places could be filled from out of county places to add to the current 7 students. Over time this would increase the school roll by between 30 and 60 students.

- **3 - Improving Communication** – As a result of the LEA consultation many parents have stated that the admissions procedure is not clear especially to non-Catholic families who assume they are not eligible to apply for Bishop Wulstan. Equally, it is apparent that the many strong features developed by the school in the past few years have not been recognised or appreciated within its own community. The 3-16 development offers opportunities to develop more robust communication within the Catholic community. The development of specialism in Business and Enterprise enables access to the wider community.

Bishop Wulstan Catholic School

Business & Enterprise College



Appendix 5 - School Performance Attainment & Achievement

An Independent Education Consultant has analysed the school's 2005 PANDA to produce a summary report for the Governing Body as given below.

A study of the 2005 PANDA and comparisons with National statistics published by OFSTED show a number of factors, which are significant to the overall performance of this school. These are summarised as follows.

In this school, attainment on entry for the GCSE cohort was below the national average. The school has a larger than average number of pupils who achieved average or below average scores at the end of Key Stage 2. In 2005, over 27% of pupils were considered to have Special Educational Needs, a further 3.4% have a statement of Special Educational Needs. The number of pupils using English not as their first language was 9.5%. The school's pupil's mobility is 25%, which is high.

These factors appear to be possible barriers to the attainment of National Standards in GCSE, particularly in English, Mathematics and Science, and necessitate some careful assessment of pupils' current levels of progress prior to planning the next steps in their learning.

Key Stage 3

Attainment on entry to the school does not follow the National pattern. The school has a **higher than average** number of students who achieve below average scores range at the end of Key Stage 2. The number of students who have average scores is lower than average, although the school follows the National pattern for above average scores. This identifies the uniqueness of the cohort.

The levels of achievement at the end of Key Stage 3 have been **RISING** since 2003. This trend is particularly evident in English. It is variable in maths and science and indicates that the teaching and learning in English is at least **GOOD**. The number of pupils who attain the higher levels is also increasing, pupils attaining level 7+ in English was 5%, level 7+ in maths was 11% and this indicates the school having appropriate levels of challenge. In science 3% attain Level 7+.

Value Added measures for Key Stage 2 – Key Stage 3 indicate that 2005 was a good year with **rising trends** in all three-core subjects. The value added figure was **significantly higher than average** in English and **higher than average** in maths. The school's position nationally (rank) has **increased substantially** when compared with other schools in 2005. This confirms an improving picture for KS3.

Key Stage 4

The prior attainment of pupils at Key Stage 4 indicates levels **below the national average** at the end of Key Stage 2. At the end of Key Stage 3 the school had taken the pupils from a points score of 25.3 at the end of Key Stage 2 to 30.4 at the end of Key Stage 3. Nationally pupils moved from 27.1 to 34.0

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is overall **significantly below National averages** and has fallen from an average position at the end of the 2003 academic year. Boys achieved **average** value added levels. However, the overall trend reflects the earlier analysis. In respect of **contextual value** boys continue to outperform girls.

When looking at the conversions of Key Stage 3 levels in to GCSE grades, English results indicate approximately 25% of pupils achieved GCSE Grades A - C with almost 100% achieved A - G. This would indicate that the more advanced students continued to progress at an appropriate rate. Mathematics shows a lower level of conversion; few pupils achieved GCSE A - C although most did achieve A - G. Science shows a similar pattern to Mathematics.

Indications and Barriers to Learning.

The school has **19.5%** of its pupils claiming Free School Meals, compared to a National average of 15.4%. The school has **27.4%** of its pupils from other ethnic groups, compared to the National average of 18.6%. The number of pupils with Special Educational Needs is **30%**, compared to a National figure of 17%. Of this Special Educational Needs group **3.4%** have Statements compared to the National average of 2.5%.

The school has a Stability figure of 75%, compared to the national figure of 89.3%. This is a difference of 14.3% and should be regarded as **significant**. The PANDA indicates a school deprivation factor of 0.2, the same as the national level in respect of housing and social economic background.

NC Year Group	FSM	Minority Ethnic Group	1st Language, not English	SEN
Year 11	20.5	24.7	8.2	31.5
Year 10	14.5	27.6	9.2	27.6
Year 9	21.9	32.8	14.1	32.8
Year 8	16.7	24.2	6.1	34.8
Year 7	24.5	18.4	6.1	26.5

(These figures relate to the 2004-2005 cohorts, source 2005 PANDA)

Conclusion

This summary is based on an evaluation of our 2005 PANDA by an independent education consultant with experience of OFSTED inspections.

As a school we make ourselves aware of all the possible challenges to learning experienced by our students. This PANDA and profile of data on cohorts of students is vital in that process, however, we pride ourselves on the individual attention we give to students. The school has recognised the need to improve its tracking and monitoring systems at the individual level.

Bishop Wulstan Catholic School

Business & Enterprise College



Appendix 6 - Financial Summary and Viability

The LEA have stated that the fall in student numbers and loss of Leadership Incentive Grant (£185,000 per annum for the last three years) will mean the school will not have the financial viability to sustain its curriculum and staffing. In addition the LEA has indicated that it supports Bishop Wulstan in terms of additional funds to support LEA staff in working within the school. It is stated that this support is not sustainable.

1. Leadership Incentive Grant – Nearly half of all secondary schools in the country have been in receipt of this grant including 7 in Warwickshire. Bishop Wulstan, along with approximately 1400 schools will lose this grant next year. However, the government intends to have transition funding (details are still to be finalised). In addition £50,000 of this grant was ring-fenced for staff development; this expenditure will not exist next year.
2. The school's student numbers in September last year were higher than anticipated and so the school will receive an additional pupil adjustment of £20,879 in this year's budget. The 2006-7 budget is based on the January 2006 PLASC (325 students) any future drop in student numbers will affect the 2007-8 budget. We are confident based on previous years calculations that the school roll would not fall to 267 in September as predicted by the LEA but will be approximately 285* and given previous mobility patterns will rise by 10-15 by January 2007. The school's recruitment and marketing will then be able to secure future numbers. (*NB It is now very difficult to calculate the impact of the Consultation and uncertainty created for prospective parents and students)
3. The additional small school's grant is payable to all secondary schools in Warwickshire with less than 601 students. This grant takes into account the difficulties in making economies of scale regarding certain staffing and premises expenditure. This is to protect the quality of curriculum provision.
4. Additional LEA support – over the years the LEA has given considerable support to the school in enabling improvement. The achievements at KS3 reflect the success that the school and LEA have made in this area. The school recognises that the level of support in the future will be reduced considerably and the school will use the improved staffing profile to ensure further progress.

The school has not had a deficit budget over the past three years. The school has reserves to be carried forward from this current year of between £50-80,000. The school has managed a 5-year plan taking into account changes of student numbers, LIG funds and the revenue from the recently acquired specialist status. The school also constantly addresses the staffing profile to ensure financial viability whilst standards are maintained. The school plans to have a balanced budget for 2006-7.

Bishop Wulstan Catholic School

Business & Enterprise College



Appendix 7 - Curriculum Organisation and Viability

As a small school we pride ourselves on the breadth and organisation of the curriculum. We are active in large number of collaborations to enrich our curriculum. These are summarised on a separate appendix to this report.

In Years 7 – 9 the full National Curriculum entitlement is delivered. In Key Stage 4 the provision of subjects in the option blocks is generous, courses include:

- Applied Business
- Asdan
- Graphics
- English Literature
- Geography
- Health & Social Care
- Leisure & Tourism
- Physical Education
- Art & Design
- Food Technology
- Resistant Materials
- French
- History
- ICT and Business Communications
- Music
- Science (Double)

We are proud of the development of the vocational GCSEs in this school and this underpins the specialist status we offer in Business & Enterprise.

Students who have other skills or aptitudes are catered for through out of school provision. GCSEs in the following subjects have been offered in the last three years.

- Drama Portuguese Polish Textiles

Student provision in other subjects is catered for by the College. Students have attended and passed courses in

- Hair & Beauty Small Animal Care Motor Vehicles Public Services

Curriculum Collaboration

On the reverse of this page are further details of our extensive collaborative partnerships to enhance and enrich the curriculum for students. These partnerships also enhance and enrich the experience of teaching and support staff and enable them to provide high quality learning experiences. As a small school we are committed to maintaining and developing these partnerships to sustain and enhance our viability.

Bishop Wulstan Catholic School - Business & Enterprise College
Curriculum Partnerships and Collaborations with other institutions and organisations

	Collaboration	Details
1	Rugby Catholic Schools	Bishop Wulstan, St Marie's Junior, St Marie's Infant, English Martyrs' and Our Lady's Princethorpe - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Termly meetings of Heads • Curriculum progression activities for Y5/6 pupils • Sports Co-ordination Project • Joint Inset Days
2	Warwickshire Leadership Incentive Collaboration	7 Warwickshire LIG Schools work collaboratively on a shared action plan to improve: 1 • leadership for learning 2 • behaviour for learning 3 • quality of teaching 4 • use of individual and collaborative data 5 • provision for children with SEN 6 • increase the capacity of Senior Leadership Teams through collaboration 7 • ways of broadening the curriculum at Key Stage 4
3	14-19 Collaborative Rugby Area	Meetings with the 7 secondary schools and 14-19 Co-ordinator to discuss and plan collaborative opportunities for staff and students. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Activities • Staff Inset
4	Specialist Schools Partnerships	a – Lawrence Sheriff - Maths and Computing College: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students supported on ECDL • ICT/Technician CPD and support • Progression opportunities -shadowing of sixth formers b – Rugby High School Science College <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maths activity days for KS3 • Support teaching by RHS teacher KS4 – targeting more able students • Science CPD • Science activities
5	North Warwickshire College	Students attend Warwickshire College for courses identified during their careers/options discussion in Year 9. In the last three years students have attended and completed courses in a number of areas including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catering • Hair and Beauty • Motor Vehicles • Small Animal Care • Public Service New Start programme offers disaffected students opportunities to engage in the curriculum
6	ISSP Independent State School Partnership	DfES funded project between BW, Rugby School and Lawrence Sheriff – and now Harris and Rugby High– several themes centre around Science, Maths, Technology and ICT including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technician support CPD • Staff CPD • Mentoring of BW students • In class support • Homework club at BW • Technology, Maths, Business and other Challenge days • Science Lectures at Rugby School
7	Bradby Club	Bradby Club located near the school and serves deprived wards – operates as an after school facility for boys and girls offering a variety of activities. Afternoon curriculum activities are targeted at disaffected Y7 & 8 students and those with attendance issues.
8	Coventry University Phoenix Partnership	Partnership established in 2005 offering at least 10 contacts/activities for students and staff at BW each year to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aid academic development • build confidence • raise aspirations • ensure potential is reached.
9	UFA - University of First Age	The school has been a part of the Warwickshire UFA group of schools developing awareness of personal learning styles and independent learning, developing peer mentoring and providing staff inset

Bishop Wulstan Catholic School

Business & Enterprise College



Appendix 8 - Staffing, Resources and Viability

Currently all teaching staff employed by the school are specialists and appropriately qualified in the subjects they teach. In many secondary schools this is not the case especially in Science and Mathematics.

A new staffing structure has been agreed to incorporate the Teaching and Learning Responsibilities (TLRs). The new structure is based on the formation of teams and addresses issues faced by small schools whereby individuals are left as single person departments. The Support Staff are organised to reflect the priority of teaching and learning. Further restructuring of support staff teams is planned to link with the new TLR structures.

The school has developed a range of resources over the past few years and through the LEA PFI project and its own funding every teaching room has an interactive facility for teaching and learning (16 tablet PCs and 7 interactive whiteboards). The ICT suite and Learning Resource Centre are fully networked and the school has invested in a set of laptops for use by the Business & Enterprise students in school.

Extended Schools

There are many possibilities to develop the Extended Schools Agenda within the 3-16 framework and the links related to our Business & Enterprise specialism. Alongside the increasing use of the school's sports hall facilities this school in partnership with the other Catholic providers is well placed to serve the community in providing extended learning opportunities and activities.

The Sports Co-ordinator Partnership links our school with the Catholic partner schools and is in its first year. This is proving to be very fruitful in terms of curriculum liaison and the opportunity it will bring to extending PE beyond the curriculum linking with community and other sports clubs. This partnership will only serve to strengthen progression and continuity between our schools if it is allowed to continue.

Our school also offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These currently include a large number of sports/PE activities, Sports Leader courses, drama, music, literacy, homework study, Interact, Fantasy Football, Duke of Edinburgh and a range of subject specific support extra lessons.

The school also organises a variety of residential and day visits to enhance the learning experiences of all students e.g. a group are visiting Italy over half term.

Charitable Works

Bishop Wulstan School has a very proud record of charitable works. Not only does the school raise money for appropriate charities but also it raises awareness of the need to support local, national and international charities. This work is not merely to treat symptoms of distress and difficulty but it part of our Mission Statement whereby we actively seek ways of improving and changing the world for the better.

ARCHDIOCESE



Director of Schools:
Rev Fr Marcus Stock M.A., S.T.L.



OF BIRMINGHAM

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Mr Mark Gore
Deputy County Education Officer
Warwickshire County Council
22 Northgate Street
WARWICK
CV34 4SP

Our Ref: 937 4720 Gore 16.02.06 MS

16 February 2006

Dear Mark

Re: Response to Warwickshire County Council's Consultation on the Proposal to Close Bishop Wulstan Catholic School, Rugby

Baroness Morris of Bolton, in a speech made in the House of Lords on 8 February 2006, spoke of "a freedom highly prized in a country where education owes much to the historic partnership between Church and state". She went on to say: "I speak of the freedom of parents to choose schools where the beliefs and values which they hold dear are well taught and permeate the very ethos of the school."

The Diocesan Schools Commission, as the agent of the Archbishop and Trustees of the Archdiocese of Birmingham, believes that if the proposal to close Bishop Wulstan School is carried through, that very freedom to choose a Catholic secondary education in Rugby will, effectively, be removed.

It is clear therefore, that to secure the future of Catholic education in Rugby, any alternative proposal to the closure of the school will need to demonstrate how future viability in terms of pupil numbers can be achieved and particularly, how any alternative provision will have the capacity to support the raising of standards at all levels, be financially viable for the foreseeable future and demonstrate a high probability of sustained improvement.

The Diocesan Schools Commission has endeavoured to explore various ways in which viability and the raising of standards can be demonstrated, and parental choice for a Catholic education maintained. One such way is through the alternative proposal enclosed. We hope that this will be examined carefully by Warwickshire County Council and regarded as an acceptable way forward.

The headteacher and governors of Bishop Wulstan have successfully obtained a new sports hall and Business and Enterprise Specialist College Status. Also, the value-added data for the end of Key Stage 3 in the school's most recent Performance and Assessment Report is very positive. Trends since 2003 are rising and suggest that many pupils do well at Bishop Wulstan and there are encouraging signs of further improvement.

As was evident from the consultation meeting held with parents on Monday 6 February and from the many letters sent by parents, powerful testimony and sound arguments have been given to the benefits of Bishop Wulstan's intimate school environment and the particular care it gives to children with special educational needs.

We believe it is important therefore that, despite the disappointing September 2005 Key Stage 4 results and low number of applications for school places in September 2006 referred to in the consultation document, every avenue be explored to sustain Bishop Wulstan until a viable alternative proposal to closure is secured.

Should the proposal enclosed be unsuccessful, alternative proposals will need to be explored. These should include the possibility of the federation of Catholic schools in Rugby or the federation of Bishop Wulstan with another Catholic secondary school in Warwickshire.

The consultation on the future of Bishop Wulstan, initiated by Warwickshire County Council, has without doubt raised the profile of the school and galvanised considerable support in the local community and beyond. We believe that, in partnership with each other, we should harness that support to secure the future of educational diversity and parental choice for Catholic secondary education in the Rugby area.

Yours sincerely

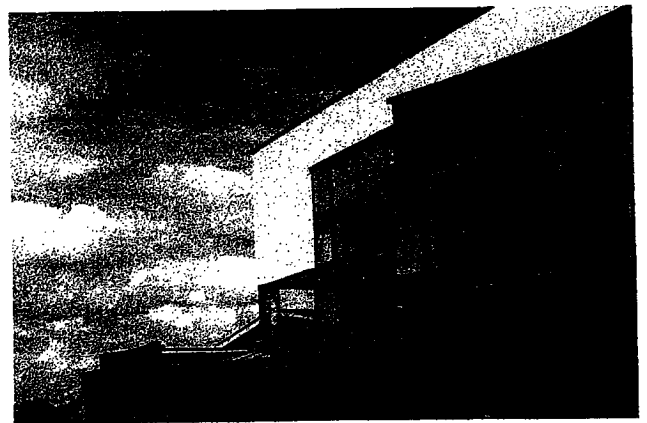
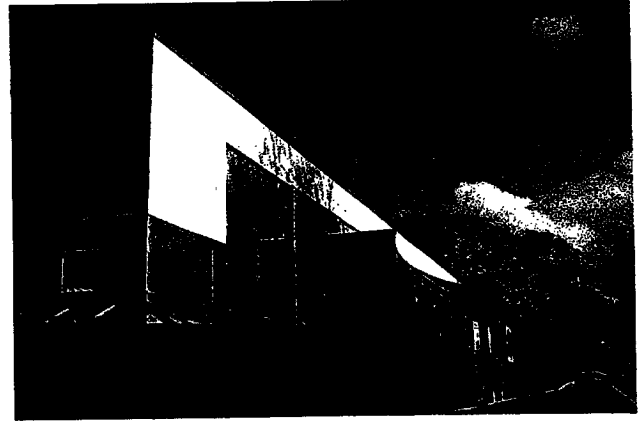
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MNR Stock', written in a cursive style.

Fr Marcus Stock
Director of Schools

Cc: Chair of Governors and Headteacher of Bishop Wulstan School

RUGBY CATHOLIC ACADEMY

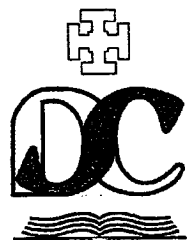
DRAFT PROPOSAL BY THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BIRMINGHAM



DIOCESAN SCHOOLS COMMISSION

Serving Schools in the Archdiocese of Birmingham

Registered Charity No 234216



DRAFT PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A RUGBY CATHOLIC ACADEMY

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DRAFT PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A RUGBY CATHOLIC ACADEMY

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Baroness Morris of Bolton, in a speech made in the House of Lords on 8 February 2006, spoke of "a freedom highly prized in a country where education owes much to the historic partnership between Church and state". She went on to say: "I speak of the freedom of parents to choose schools where the beliefs and values which they hold dear are well taught and permeate the very ethos of the school."
- 1.2 The Diocesan Schools Commission, as the agent of the Archbishop and Trustees of the Archdiocese of Birmingham, believes that if the proposal to close Bishop Wulstan School is carried through, that very freedom to choose a Catholic secondary education in Rugby will, effectively, be removed. It is essential therefore that an alternative proposal be considered and explored.
- 1.3 The consultation on the future of Bishop Wulstan, initiated by Warwickshire County Council, has without doubt raised the profile of the school and galvanised considerable support in the local community and beyond. We believe that, in partnership with each other, we should harness that support to secure the future of educational diversity and parental choice for Catholic education in the Rugby area.
- 1.4 To do this successfully, it is clear that any alternative proposal will need to demonstrate how future viability in terms of pupil numbers can be achieved and particularly, how any alternative provision will have the capacity to support the raising of standards at all levels, be financially viable for the foreseeable future and demonstrate a high probability of sustained improvement.
- 1.5 The purpose of this document is to provide information to Warwickshire County Council and Rugby's Catholic school community to demonstrate how this can be done.

2 WHAT IS THE PROPOSAL?

- 2.1 Following initial consultation with the governing bodies of the schools involved, the Diocesan Schools Commission believes that a proposal for a 3 to 16 Academy should be explored as a way of securing the future viability of Catholic education and contribute to educational diversity and parental choice in the Rugby area.
- 2.2 The Rugby Catholic Academy would cater for the age range 3 to 16, and specialise in 'Business and Enterprise'.
- 2.3 The Academy would be established preferably on a new site to be identified and secured in the eastern area of Rugby and the existing English Martyrs Primary School in the western area of Rugby. The co-location would be necessary to ensure that access to the Academy is available to younger children in distinct geographical areas of Rugby.
- 2.4 The Rugby Catholic Academy would comprise a one form entry foundation and primary phase (ages 3-11) and a three form entry secondary phase (ages 11-16) on the main eastern Academy campus and a one form entry foundation and primary phase (ages 3-11) on the western (English Martyrs) site.
- 2.5 The total number of pupil places available across the phases in the Academy would therefore be 930, thus retaining the small school experience for pupils across the phases yet creating economies of scale securing viability.
- 2.6 To create the Academy, it would be necessary for the governing bodies of the existing St Marie's Infant, St Marie's Junior, English Martyrs Primary and Bishop Wulstan Catholic Business and Enterprise College to close their schools.

3 WHAT IS THE VISION FOR THE ACADEMY?

- 3.1 The Government's vision for Academies is that they generate: "...not simply good examination results but also young people superbly equipped for active citizenship; committed to lifelong learning; and, ready for progression into further and higher education and work." Similarly, while seeking to provide a high quality education, Catholic schools hold up Christian values to children, inviting them to build their own lives on them. Teaching these values, for those who know how to accept and live them consistently, yields highly positive results - as experience confirms - at the personal, family and professional levels.
- 3.2 Our vision is then, to establish a Rugby Catholic Academy, for pupils aged 3 to 16, rooted in the ideas, beliefs and tradition of Catholic education and providing opportunities to develop strategies to raise standards, improve behaviour and attendance, and contribute to educational diversity in the Rugby area.

- 3.3 The Academy would be fully inclusive and provide for pupils of different abilities. There would be no selection, but priority would be given in the admissions policy to Catholic children followed by other children from the local community living closest to the Academy.
- 3.4 The Academy, building on the "Every Child Matters" vision, would be a place where all pupils fulfil their potential, achieve high standards of work and behaviour, and learn to contribute positively to the community in which they live.
- 3.5 Extended school facilities contributing to the provision of Children's Services in Rugby would be a key feature. Working in partnership with other local Rugby schools, the Academy would seek to deliver the core offer of extended services including high quality wraparound childcare, business and enterprise activities based around the Academy's specialist status, parenting support and learning opportunities, information and through-access to the full range of available local specialist support services, and providing wider community access to the Academy's facilities.
- 3.6 The Rugby Catholic Academy would provide a unique opportunity to establish an outstanding cross-phase educational provision with many distinctive features. It would provide a high quality education for children from 3-16 years for the Rugby community.
- 3.7 The Academy would teach the National Curriculum and ensure that all its pupils have a strong grounding in literacy, numeracy, information technology and religious education. However, it would also provide many opportunities that go beyond the National Curriculum boundaries. It would foster a broad view of achievement that would not only include the gaining of qualifications but also personal and corporate success in a variety of other fields such as sport, music and community service.
- 3.8 At post 16 it would work closely with other providers, including higher education and the world of business and enterprise. The Academy's specialist status would create opportunities to form business partnerships, programmes and initiatives that would support the delivery of vocational education within the curriculum. Key features would include, curriculum development in the areas of Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCEs), General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), increased flexibility 14 - 16 and GCSEs in vocational subjects
- 3.9 The Catholic ethos of the Academy would support the whole curriculum. This would help to prepare students to take their place in an increasingly technological world where science, mathematics, languages, the arts, sports and all other subjects of the curriculum need to be infused with a strong sense of spirituality and moral purpose. This would enable the students of the Rugby Catholic Academy both to fulfil their own potential and ambitions and also be of service to their local community and to mankind as a whole.

- 3.10 There are already strong collaborative arrangements between the Catholic partners in Rugby: regular meetings between headteachers; shared staff days for continuing professional development; specialist links; curriculum liaison projects; sports co-ordination arrangements; joint services for parents in parishes, etc. The Academy would enable this collaborative foundation to be consolidated further.
- 3.11 Building on its existing Independent-State School Partnership links, the Academy would seek to form a Learning Partnership with the independent school sector. The learning partnership would seek to promote cross sector activity to mutual advantage, sharing expertise and experience with both institutions retaining institutional integrity and co-operating with agreed frameworks of engagement. The new Rugby Catholic Academy and the Learning Partnership would provide opportunities to develop strategies to raise standards, improve behaviour and attendance, and contribute to educational diversity in the Rugby area.
- 3.12 The Rugby Catholic Academy would be designed and constructed to provide a learning environment fit for the 21st Century, encouraging innovation, effective teaching and learning and with the flexibility to meet changing curricular requirements. The building design and construction would also enable the education of primary and secondary age pupils to be in distinct areas of the Academy whilst having the benefit and use of shared specialist sports, ICT, science and drama resources and facilities.

4 WHAT IS AN ACADEMY?

- 4.1 An Academy is a new kind of school. It is a publicly funded, independent school that provides a free education for pupils of all abilities in its local and wider communities. The Government intends to open 200 Academies around the country; many of them are already operating and contributing to greater educational diversity and, consequently, greater parental choice. The education being offered includes the best features of a well-run school together with new approaches to teaching, learning and school organisation. An Academy in Rugby would also be shaped by the distinctive ethos and values of a Catholic school.
- 4.2 The Government has given strong support to establishing Academies as a key feature of its policy to raise pupils' expectations, achievements and standards of attainment. It has continued to invite expressions of interest from sponsoring bodies to establish and maintain Academies and encouraged them to work closely with Local Authorities to identify situations where such Academies represent a positive way of raising achievement.
- 4.3 The Department for Education and Skills would fund the running costs of a new Rugby Catholic Academy at a level comparable to that of specialist schools in the area. These are substantial resources that would enable the Academy to make a strong start and develop innovative ideas. The Rugby Catholic Academy would manage its own budget and be free to raise additional funds to benefit the education of its pupils and school community.

- 4.4 The Archdiocese of Birmingham would be the sponsor and will provide £2m of the initial capital cost. The Department for Education and Skills provides the balance of capital needs. A Funding Agreement would be signed between the Archdiocese/Sponsor and the Department for Education and Skills to establish the Academy; this would confirm both the capital and on-going funding costs and sources of income.
- 4.5 This proposal presents the opportunity to provide, through the Academy, access for primary age pupils to a range of specialist facilities and continuity of education within a single establishment.

5 WHAT CHARACTERISTICS AND BENEFITS WOULD THE RUGBY ACADEMY OFFER?

- 5.1 The Rugby Catholic Academy would teach the National Curriculum and ensure that all its pupils have a strong grounding in literacy, numeracy, information technology and religious education.
- 5.2 A strong Catholic ethos and leadership will provide a clear strategic direction for the Academy and maintain a vision of a thriving school, including a care for the physical, spiritual and mental well-being of all who live and work in the school.
- 5.3 Religious Education would be central to the curriculum and life of the Rugby Catholic Academy. Whilst the Christian faith would be given a high priority, the curriculum would also include learning about and encountering other world faiths and belief systems.
- 5.4 Using the significant success and experience of the Independent sector, the Learning Partnership would facilitate the potential for developing strategies to raise standards in three key curriculum areas, Mathematics, Science and Modern Foreign Languages.
- 5.5 An extended day and an open access policy would make the substantial facilities and resources of the Rugby Catholic Academy available to the wider community and better meet the demand for the extended schools core offer. This would provide opportunities for individuals and groups within the community, including the parents of young children, to continue with their own education.
- 5.6 ICT would be used as an important tool for learning, as well as a subject in its own right, to support distance learning, the on-line curriculum and "any-where-anytime" learning, making personalised and contextualised learning a core feature of the Academy.
- 5.7 The Catholic Church provides schools and educational establishments in diverse forms all over the world. Using the potential behind the Academy's ICT provision, building links with this international educational community would widen pupils' educational experiences and broaden their horizons by providing them with an opportunity to share their experience, knowledge and views on an international scale.

- 5.8 The broad curriculum would include a range of vocational opportunities, including where possible, courses that reflect the specialist focus of the Rugby Catholic Academy; for example, business studies in a foreign language.
- 5.9 Careers guidance, work experience and other services would give a special attention to local, national and international opportunities for making the world a better place through one's values, behaviour and endeavour.
- 5.10 Students would be encouraged to take an important share in the responsibility for their own learning and conduct, relate positively to others, participate in the community, including volunteer work, and develop a sound understanding of citizenship and the world of work.
- 5.11 All pupils' progress would be carefully monitored. Those pupils whose achievement is hampered by low levels of literacy and numeracy would be identified and given additional support from the earliest stage.
- 5.12 Careful attention would be given to the assessment of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. The site would be fully accessible and inclusive in accordance with national policies.

6 WHAT WOULD BE THE SPECIFIC BENEFITS OF A 3-16 ACADEMY?

- 6.1 The principle benefit of a 3-16 across-phase Academy would be an integrated single school curriculum offer with coherent teaching and learning policies. These would be delivered with the benefit of greater continuity and progression.
- 6.2 Full account would be taken of the developmental needs of nursery and primary aged pupils in relation to the national expectations for the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. However, the aim would be to exceed those expectations significantly by fully exploiting the unique opportunities and resources of the 3-16 Rugby Catholic Academy.
- 6.3 Specialist staff would be able to teach across the key stages. Strengthened specialist teaching, especially in Key Stage 2, would draw upon the knowledge and skills of subject specialists to fashion and deliver teaching programmes for all pupils.
- 6.4 Delivery of music, art and other creative and performing arts could be strengthened across all key stages. This might include opportunities to work in specialist facilities, the early introduction of a modern foreign language and creative projects in the performing and visual arts that challenge and inspire pupils of all abilities.
- 6.5 Gifted and talented pupils across-phases would receive due attention through an enriched curriculum, extra-curricular courses and opportunities for advanced studies in accelerated teaching groups.

- 6.6 The Academy would build strong links with parents to enable them to become involved more closely across the phases in supporting and contributing to their own child's learning.
- 6.7 Financially, there would be significant economies of scale in having one integrated staff structure. The duplication of support staff roles and tasks across the four existing individual schools could be minimised, allowing for more effective deployment of staff to a greater range of activities and wider support to be adopted.
- 6.8 The economies of scale for purchasing resources, facilities, contracts and services would be enhanced. KS1 and 2 would benefit from the specialist resources and funding of KS3 and 4. The secondary key stages would benefit from the continuity gained from the single institution.

7 WHO COULD GO TO THE ACADEMY?

- 7.1 The Rugby Catholic Academy will be for the benefit of the local community and will be attended by the local community; however, priority would be given to Catholic pupils from Rugby parishes.
- 7.2 The Rugby Catholic Academy would therefore be integrated into the pattern of schools already serving the local community. It is anticipated that those who attend the Academy will be committed to its aims, objectives and discipline, and its determination to promote a school of excellence for pupils of all abilities.
- 7.3 The governors would be responsible for admissions. They would agree an Admissions Policy, having regard to the Department for Education and Skills' Code of Practice (including the guidance on appeals against refusal to admit). The final admission arrangements would be subject to approval by the Secretary of State. The Policy would seek to balance a wish to serve the local and wider Catholic community as well as local Rugby pupils, irrespective of their faith.
- 7.4 In the Academy's first year (September 2007) all pupils attending the existing St Marie's Infant School, St Marie's Junior School, English Martyrs Primary School and Bishop Wulstan Catholic Business and Enterprise College would have the right to transfer to the new Academy.
- 7.5 Pupils from Our Lady's Primary School, Princethorpe, would also have priority to transfer when beginning secondary education. It is anticipated that there is also strong potential for further recruitment of Catholic children from parishes in the Daventry area; priority in the admissions arrangements would also be made for these children.

8 THE ACADEMY'S GOVERNING BODY

- 8.1 The Governing Body of an Academy has similar responsibilities to those of maintained schools, particularly voluntary aided schools. These include responsibility for the overall strategic direction of the Academy, the curriculum, appointing and employment of staff, managing the budget, admissions, reporting to parents and raising levels of achievement.

9 THE ACADEMY'S TEACHING AND SUPPORT STAFF

- 9.1 At the existing St Marie's Infant School, St Marie's Junior School, English Martyrs Primary School and Bishop Wulstan Business and Enterprise College, the governing bodies are the employers. In the new Academy, the governing body would also be the employer.
- 9.2 The transfer of undertakings (TUPE) regulations would apply to all staff between the existing school and the new Rugby Catholic Academy, so all staff would have continuing employment rights. Existing staff would be given the opportunity to take up posts in the new Academy. While conditions of service under TUPE are protected, it may be necessary to adapt responsibilities and work practices to reflect the requirements of the Academy with a focus on raising standards and securing the capacity to sustain improvement.

10 THE PROCESS FOR ESTABLISHING THE ACADEMY

- 10.1 The Archdiocese of Birmingham and Warwickshire County Council will approach the Academies Division at the Department for Education and Skills for informal discussions.
- 10.2 If the outcome is positive, the proposal for a 3-16 Rugby Catholic Academy will be tested through the statutory process.
- 10.3 The Archdiocese, in discussion with Warwickshire County Council, would need to quickly review potential sites across Rugby and prepare a formal 'Expression of Interest' to be presented to the Department for Education and Skills. The Department for Education and Skills would provide detailed criteria on the form that the Expression of Interest document should take.
- 10.4 The feasibility stage begins once the Secretary of State agrees support for an Academy project, following the submission of the Expression of Interest. It lasts for approximately 6 - 18 months, depending on the complexity of individual projects. During this stage, the project team prepares detailed plans, including an educational vision and model, and an outline building design, and formally consults with the local community. The Diocesan Schools Commission and Warwickshire County Council already have good experience in working together to develop major building projects.

- 10.5 Once detailed plans for the new Academy and core documents (e.g. Memorandum and Articles) are complete, they need to be submitted to the Department for Education and Skills. At this stage the Secretary of State must, by law, also formally consult the LA in whose area the Academy is based and any other LA if it is likely that a significant proportion of the pupils who might attend the new Academy live there.
- 10.6 Once the Secretary of State is content with the proposals, the Funding Agreement is signed by the Academy Trust and Secretary of State. This document contains all the formal information necessary for the opening and funding of the new Academy - and is a binding contract between the Secretary of State and the Academy Trust for an Academy to open on a specified date.
- 10.7 If a decision is taken to proceed, the governing bodies of St Marie's Infant School, St Marie's Junior School, English Martyrs Primary School and Bishop Wulstan Catholic Business and Enterprise College, would need to propose the closure of their Schools. They would do this with the full support and advice of the Archdiocese of Birmingham and Warwickshire County Council. The dates in the proposals would be for enactment in the year in which the Rugby Catholic Academy would open.
- 10.8 Anyone who wished to object would have two months in which to do so, and send their objection to the governing bodies and Warwickshire County Council. If there are no objections, the proposals for closure and the opening of the new Rugby Catholic Academy could be implemented.
- 10.9 If there are objections to the closures, the governing bodies would then send details of their proposals, together with the objections that have been received, to the School Organisation Committee for a decision. This Committee is independent of the Warwickshire County Council, and is made up of representatives of various groups with an interest in education in the area.
- 10.10 If the proposals to close are agreed by the School organisation Committee, then the implementation of the construction of the new Rugby Catholic Academy could begin.

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