

## **APPENDIX 1 : September C&F Committee –St Gregory’s Catholic Primary School**

St Gregory’s Catholic Primary school is located in Bollington near Macclesfield. It is a half form entry primary (PAN 105 when full) and is part of the Diocese of Shrewsbury group of schools.

Legislative DfE documentation:                      Schools Causing Concern guidance – October 2022  
   Opening & closing maintained schools – January 2023

### **Summary of key events leading to the current position**

- In February 2022, the School received an Ofsted Inadequate judgement – the local authority had very recently to this date issued the school with a warning notice due to growing concerns. The substantive headteacher had also recently moved from the school resulting in an interim leader being identified.
- An adequate Ofsted judgement requires the local authority to produce a ‘Statement of Action’ which was approved by Ofsted. The solution for an inadequate Ofsted judgement is a sponsored academy route and as a Diocesan school, would require alignment to Diocesan policies in seeking an appropriate trust for the school to join.
- As of March 22, the school had 72 pupils in school showing that it had vacancies of 32% across all age ranges. Forecasting data for the school showed that full/close to full year groups were to be found in Key Stage 2 classes but numbers joining the school in reception classes had struggled for many years – around 5 compared to an intake of 15. There were also places in other local schools across the Bollington planning area as well as in Macclesfield primary schools.
- A parents’ forum was established and meetings stated that the focus of the local authority support was to address those areas identified as inadequate by Ofsted – this focussed on developing a stronger curriculum offer.
- As from September 2022, a new interim leader was identified as the previous Head was required to return to her substantive post. In December 2022, an Ofsted monitoring visit took place which resulted in ‘insufficient progress’ being seen across the school – the Interim Headteacher during this visit stated that he did not want to continue to lead the school and therefore there was a requirement to source a further leader. The local authority approached a successful local trust who agreed to provide interim leadership and packages of support to accelerate progress across the school.
- Ongoing meetings were taking place between the Diocese, local authority and the Northwest Regional Commissioner’s team to seek an appropriate trust for the school to join. The local Diocesan arrangements are that there is an identified trust to join – this is the Holy Family of Nazareth which at this point has 5-6 schools, the majority of which are primary. Following extensive dialogue and this trust undertaking ‘due diligence’ on the school in terms of its long-term viability. Fundamentally, this work centred upon the financial viability of the school due to its decreasing numbers of pupils.
- During this academic year as from September 2022, pupil numbers have continued to decrease. The school has operated this year in three classes but as numbers have fallen, the structure as from September 2023 will be in two classes with an estimated school population of around 22.
- Parental feedback has been that whilst there has been significant support for the current interim leader and the curriculum work which has been undertaken, due to the falling numbers and the ability to maintain friendship groups and pastoral/peer support, parents have sourced alternative school places in other local schools.

- The local authority has sought clarity from the Regional Commissioner around the status of the current academy order and the option to revoke this order due to the view of the Secretary of State (SOS) that the school is not viable as an academy.
- The consideration and methodology for closing a school is based upon DfE guidance. Identified reasons for closing a school include:
  - a. There are surplus places elsewhere in the local area which can accommodate displaced pupils and there is no predicted demand for the school in the medium to long term.
  - b. It has been judged inadequate by Ofsted and the SOS has revoked the academy order.
  - c. It is no longer considered viable.
- There is a formal statutory process which must be followed for closing a maintained school. The key stages which need to be followed include:
  - a. Stage 1: consultation – to consult any parties the proposer thinks appropriate before publishing proposals. This consultation is to consider a range of options for the future of the school.
  - b. Stage 2: publication – a statutory proposal should be published based upon the initial consultation period.
  - c. Stage 3: representation – to consult organisations, groups and individuals – minimum 4 weeks.
  - d. Stage 4: Decision – the local authority will be the decision maker on a school closure.
  - e. Stage 5: Implementation of decision.
- The status of the school site is that the playing fields and a very small part of the school buildings are owned by the local authority which the vast majority of the buildings being under Diocesan control/ownership.