

Education

Director: Dr. E. Oram

Parent/Guardian of children living in the catchment
area of St Mary's of Hope CE Primary School

Your Ref:

Our Ref: EO/DLL

Please ask for: Dr Eddie Oram

Direct Line/Extension: (01432) 260801

Fax: (01432) 260808

E-mail: eoram@herefordshire.gov.uk

22nd October, 2004

Dear Parent/Guardian,

PROPOSED CLOSURE OF ST MARY'S OF HOPE CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The parents of children attending St Mary's of Hope CE Primary School have this week received a letter from Mr N Ramsay, Chair of Governors, and Mrs G Richards, the Headteacher. In their letter, they made clear to parents that the Governing Body have concluded that, despite the school's very good work over several years, it would now be in the best interests of the children for the school to close permanently as soon as possible. In coming to their difficult decision, the Governors took into account the fact that there are currently just 12 children at the school.

In these circumstances, therefore, I need to let all local parents of primary aged children know that, in response to the school's assessment of the position, the Council will go forward with the formal processes for permanent closure of St Mary's CE Primary School within the current school year.

We are planning for the proposal to be published in the Hereford Times on Thursday, 4th November. From the same day, the public notice will be displayed at the school, on Parish Council noticeboards, and at Bodenham, St Michael's Primary School which is proposed as the designated alternative school for the St Mary's catchment area. St Michael's Primary School is proposed as the designated alternative school because it has sufficient places and has the same links as St Mary's with the Minster College. It is also proposed that, for families living in Hope-under-Dinmore catchment area, free transport would be available for any local children enrolled at Bodenham, St Michael's if they live more than 2 miles (children under 8) or 3 miles (children aged 8 and over) from that school.

You now have the opportunity to comment on, or object to, any aspect of the proposal. You should write to me by 30th December 2004, so that any representations, together with my comments, can be considered by the Herefordshire School Organisation Committee (SOC) during January 2005. The SOC is an independent body made up of six separate groups, including the Council and the Diocesan Education Board. The SOC has the power to decide whether or not the school should close. If the SOC is unable to reach agreement, then the decision would have to be taken by the Office of the National Adjudicator later in the summer term, after the adjudicator has considered the evidence.

This is clearly a sad occasion for everyone connected with the school, and the governors have reached their judgement reluctantly. The continuing problem for the school has always been its low numbers. The current level of 12 pupils, with no sign of recovery, is too low for the school to continue for long.

I hope this letter explains the position clearly, but please let me know if you need any further explanation or wish to comment.

Yours sincerely,