

Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College, Widnes

Sixth Form Closure Consultation Paper

Consultation on the Closure of Sixth Form Provision
with effect from September 2019

Key Information

- Existing Year 12 and 13 students to complete their qualifications
- No proposed intake of students into the Sixth Form in September 2019
- Sixth Form to fully close in August 2020

The Governors at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College have put together the following information to help parents, staff and students and other interested parties to comment on the proposed closure of the Sixth Form at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College.

There will be a public consultation evening at 6pm on Tuesday 23rd April in the Wilson Centre, Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College.

We would like to invite you to send your comments to
sixthformconsultation@saintspeterandpaul.halton.sch.uk

Please put 'Sixth Form Consultation' in the subject line and please indicate your interest, e.g. staff, parent, student, etc.

The consultation will run from 15th March 2019 until the close of business on 26th April 2019.

Thank you for your consideration.

Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College Sixth Form Closure Consultation Paper

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Vision

Our mission is simple; to secure the very best provision for our students here at Saints Peter and Paul. Ensuring high standards of academic achievement for all, underpinned by our Catholic ethos, traditional values of discipline, courtesy and good manners.

We aim to deliver an all-round education that inspires young people to achieve beyond what they believe is possible, through an academic curriculum and exciting extra-curricular programme, within a positive and caring Catholic setting. Our focus is to develop the character and academic skills that our students will need in order to compete for places at the best universities and the most sought-after apprenticeships.

We still remain committed to supporting 11-19 education and will be working closely with our 16-19 partners providing strong transition for all our students.

Proposal

To consult on the proposal not to recruit new sixth form students from September 2019 at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College. This will mean that the Sixth Form would close when the current Year 12 students complete their studies in July 2020.

Background to Closure of the Sixth Form Proposal

In recent years, a reduction in government funding for sixth form provision in schools has created a financial dilemma for governors and school leaders in setting budgets. There has been an increasing need for schools with small sixth forms to top up post-16 funding from the 11-16 budget, thus diverting funds away from other aspects of school.

In addition, schools with small sixth forms (fewer than 200 students) are particularly at risk of losing their Key Stage 5 provision due to non-viable class sizes and an inability to offer a sufficiently broad curriculum.

Having implemented a number of strategies over the last three years to improve the viability of the Sixth Form that have ultimately proved unsuccessful, it is the considered opinion of the governors at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College that removal of sixth form provision is necessary for the continued good of our students.

It is anticipated that the removal of the Sixth Form at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College will result in more resources being available to support the school's mission to be an outstanding 11-16 school. Additionally, the Sixth Form Resource centre, which includes dining facilities can be redirected to other year groups.

Context

National and Local

Funding for 16-19 provision has fallen year-on-year for the last eight years, and is currently at its lowest since 2002.

An increasing number of 11-18 schools both locally and across England have closed their sixth forms due to decreased funding and small class sizes.

Rationale for the Closure of the Sixth Form

Changing trends in Widnes

The number of students attending local colleges including Carmel Catholic College, Cronton and Riverside College has substantially increased over the past three years. Neither of the other two secondary schools in Widnes have their own sixth form provision

Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College Sixth Form currently consists of 28 A level and BTEC students, which means some classes have as few as one or two students.

This means that Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College are only able to offer only a limited number of A-level and vocational subjects.

% of year group attending Sixth Form at SSPP in previous years:

12/13 34%

13/14 33%

14/15 32%

15/16 38%

16/17 32%

17/18 27%

18/19 15%

An excess of 40% is required to be viable

Size of Sixth Form Colleges

An average sixth form college has around 1000 students, while an average school sixth form has approximately 200. As a result, economies of scale apply which means it is more expensive per student for schools to provide sixth form provision than a sixth form or further education college. More importantly, for the last few years we have been forced to run an increasing number of subjects with small class sizes of 1 or 2 which does not prove conducive to ensuring an engaging, high-quality learning experience.

Funding at 16-19

The uncertain future of school sixth forms has been highlighted in the media and particularly in the light of the budget changes to post-16 funding, which has substantially declined over the last eight years.

Analysis from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has revealed that funding per student in sixth forms has fallen by more than a fifth (21 per cent) per student since 2010-11 – and it remains lower than at any point since 2002-03.

Saints Peter and Paul recognises the value of having a sixth form, but it has to be financially viable, and not detract resources from other areas of the school.

Cost to 11-16 Schools' Budget Share in financially supporting Sixth Form

With reduced numbers, the proportion of the budget required from the 11-16 funding to maintain the sixth form is increasing to an unsustainable level.

	Academic Year 2017/18	Academic Year 2018/19
Income	£524500	£402000
Expenditure	£644840	£546527
Subsidy from Y7-11 budget	£120340	£144527

Alternative Sixth Form Provision

An increasing number of students are choosing alternative sixth form and further education colleges that are able to offer a wider variety of courses than are on offer at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College.

Over the last five years, Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College has asked students about the reasoning behind their decisions regarding 16-19 provision. Some of their responses are shown below:

- Students are seeking a broader range of courses that Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College is not able to provide.
- Students are able to access a wider range of facilities at larger institutions.
- Students seek the social aspect that can be provided by larger institutions.
- Students recognise that larger further education institutions provide an education that is more similar to higher education, and could therefore be seen as better preparation for study at university.
- Students recognise the change in trend to moving to specialist sixth form colleges i.e. more of their peers moving on to local colleges

There is excellent local 16-19 provision including:

- **Carmel Catholic College in St Helen's ensuring continuity of education in a Catholic setting and which runs buses to and from Widnes**
- **Cronton and Riverside College in Widnes**

Both have an excellent reputation for academic results, pastoral care and holistic educational experience.

What would the Sixth Form Closure mean for Students?

Current Year 13 and 12 students

Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College is committed to providing students who have already embarked on their two-year courses with high quality teaching until the end of those courses in July 2020.

Current Year 11 students

Current Year 11 students wishing to pursue A level and Level 3 courses will need to apply for places with alternative post-16 providers.

We recognise that some of our students and parents/carers may be disappointed by this decision. Fortunately, there exists a wealth of very high-quality provision in the local area. We have held meetings with the Principals of Carmel College and Cronton and Riverside College. We are hugely impressed with what is on offer at these Colleges for our young people and are excited about how we may work with them in the future. We realise that some of our Year 11 students may have missed open evenings and admission deadlines at these Colleges, however both Principals have offered their support in ensuring our young people receive the very best information, advice and guidance and have offered to work with us to ensure this happens. We have dates booked in before Easter break 2019 for Year 11 to hear what is on offer and apply (if they haven't already) to local sixth forms.

Who is being consulted regarding this change?

Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College is consulting the following groups:

- Parents/carers of students at the school
- Staff currently employed at the school and any due to take up a post in the next academic year
- Students at the school
- Feeder primaries
- Local post-16 sixth form and further education providers.
- The local authority
- The Archdiocesan of Liverpool Trustees
- The wider local community

Have your say

Before we make our final decision regarding sixth form closure we would like to hear your views. There will be a public consultation evening at 6pm on Tuesday 23rd April in the Wilson Centre at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College.

Governors are interested to know your thoughts on this important change to our status. Please take time to respond to our consultation by sending an email to

sixthformconsultation@saintspeterandpaul.halton.sch.uk putting 'Sixth Form Consultation in the subject line and indicate your interest (e.g. parent, student, staff, etc.).

The consultation will run from 15th March 2019 to 26th April 2019.

Anticipated Questions and Answers

Will all students who are already in the Sixth Form at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College be able to complete their courses?

Yes, all current sixth form students at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College will be able to complete their chosen courses.

Will students in Year 11 and below at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College who want to study 16-19 courses still be able to do so?

Yes, there is high-quality sixth form provision in Widnes, St Helen's, Liverpool and other local areas and the transport links are excellent. We will continue to offer information, advice and guidance to enable our students to make the right choices.

We want to be able to continue education in a Catholic setting.

There is excellent Catholic provision at Carmel College in St Helen's which is also part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. There are very good transport links and a number of students from Saints Peter and Paul choose this option so that they can continue in a Catholic environment but benefit from a larger provision. The Archdiocesan Trustees support this transition.

In future, will students be able to access the same courses which have previously been offered at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College?

Yes, all of the courses currently offered at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College are available elsewhere locally with the added benefit of a wider choice than an 11-18 school can offer.

How will the changes affect my child who is attending a primary school in the Widnes area?

The changes will not adversely affect primary school students that would normally choose Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College for their secondary education. The subsidy currently used to support the Sixth Form will be re-directed back into strengthening Y7-11 provision.

Why is this change being proposed?

The number of students choosing to remain in Saints Peter and Paul for their 16-19 education has been decreasing steadily over a number of years. The number has reduced to such a level that Governors now consider that it is more sensible to use resources to continually improve the quality of provision at 11-16 for the benefit of a large number of students than trying to maintain a very expensive sixth form for a small number of students. Equally, there is a wealth of very high-quality provision in the local area which with the decreasing numbers we can no longer replicate. We feel this decision is in the best interests of all our students.

Has everything possible been done to keep the Sixth Form open at Saints Peter and Paul?

Over the last two to three years, we have made every effort to increase our numbers entering the Sixth Form through a variety of marketing tools. Despite this, numbers have dropped and it is now not sustainable from either an academic or financial position.

Governors and Senior Leaders fully understand that this decision to suspend entry in September 2019 and close fully in 2020 will cause some elements of concern and uncertainty, however they wish to assure students, parents and carers that every effort will be made to ensure the best possible outcome for each student.

The very best education, care and experience for every student has always been at the heart of all decisions at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College.