



St Monica's Sixth Form Centre Proposal for Closure Consultation Document

Following extensive discussions, the Governing Body of St Monica's RC High School and Sixth Form Centre have reached the decision to formally consult on the closure of the Sixth Form Centre in August 2017.

Rationale for the proposal to close the Sixth form Centre

The national picture for School Sixth Forms has been highlighted in the media over many months with particular reference to the changes to post 16 funding which has declined over the past two years. Sixth form courses are now funded per student, instead of per qualification with the result being that, over the past two years, some providers have been forced to reduce courses or close completely. In a difficult economic environment schools are facing significant budget constraints and St Monica's is no different.

The average Sixth Form College has around 1700 students on roll, while the average school sixth form has 200. The Department for Education (DfE) recognises that Sixth Forms with under 200 students struggle to provide the same level of provision as it is more expensive per student to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum making courses financially unviable. Even if it were full, St Monica's Sixth Form Centre could only accommodate 175 students. The highest student roll that there has been in the 5 years it has been open was 101 in the 2014-15 academic year. The table below demonstrates how Year 12 admission numbers have declined rather than grown since opening.

Academic Year	Year 12 Admission Numbers
September 2011-12	62
September 2012-13	37
September 2013-14	47
September 2014-15	58
September 2015-16	47
September 2016-17	27

The Head and all the staff at St Monica's Sixth Form Centre have worked extremely hard to rebrand, recruit students and improve course options, working with the local community, industry providers and other Sixth Form colleges to increase the admission numbers to no avail.

St Monica's Sixth Form Centre is limited in its recruitment from the main school due to the fact the majority of the school's students wish to study A Levels or experience a new environment by studying elsewhere. We have consulted previous year 11 cohorts to try and identify the main reasons for the low intake from our own year 11 students. Some of the responses are below:

- They seek a breadth of A Levels to study. This is impossible for us to accommodate.
- The social aspect they seek at Sixth Form would not be possible at St Monica's Sixth Form.
- Larger institutions attract a wider intake with their ability to offer free gym memberships, free transport.

The Governing Body has kept the funding of the Sixth Form under close review over the past 2 years. With increasing pressures on funding and the continuing pattern of very low and falling student numbers, Governors have reluctantly concluded that it is no longer financially viable to sustain a Sixth Form at St Monica's School.

The impact on our Sixth Form Students

Our Year 13 and 14 students will complete their qualifications in August 2017 and move on to university, further education, apprenticeships or employment.

Following the announcement of its intended closure no applications have been received for possible entry to the Sixth Form in September and the school has, therefore, focused its attention on the effect on the current Year 12 students.

Because of the nature of the courses being undertaken, all current Year 12 students are expected to complete this academic year with the necessary credits to enable them to continue their studies in Year 13 to complete their vocational qualifications at an appropriate college/destination.

The Sixth Form staff have undertaken a considerable amount of work in engaging with the students and their parents/carers and in liaising with other providers of vocational courses in the local area. As a result of this extensive work reasonable options have been identified for students who intend to continue in full time education in the 2017/18 academic year. After much reflection the Governing Body has decided that to transfer to another course would be in the best interests of the students concerned rather than seeking to keep the Sixth Form at St Monica's open for a further 12 months with so small a number of students and the likelihood that some of the existing staff would seek to move to other posts during this time. Particular attention has been paid to the options for a number of students with special needs to ensure that they would have appropriate support in making the transition from St Monica's to another college and we are confident that, with close working with our partners, this can be achieved.

The Governing Body therefore proposes to close the Sixth Form with effect from the end of August 2017 and to provide full support to the current Year 12 students to transfer to other colleges.

Years 7 to 11

The closure of the Sixth Form will have no direct effect on the children in Years 7 to 11. However, the Governors intend to intensify the existing use of the Sixth Form Centre building for main school teaching and to carry out adaptations to the building to provide additional and improved teaching facilities for our Year 7 to 11 students. It is also hoped that the making available of this additional accommodation for main school use will enable St Monica's to increase its admission numbers in response to ever increasing demand for places in our Year 7 intake.

Effect on other Schools, Academies and Educational Institutions in the area

The closure of the sixth form will result in the transfer of many of the current Year 12 students to other sixth form colleges in the area. These arrangements have been made in full consultation with the colleges concerned who have confirmed that they have the capacity to accept the students and have appropriate courses that the students will be able to pursue in Year 13. Transitional arrangements are in hand as necessary to ensure that each student will be fully equipped to take up the option(s) that have been identified.

In the longer term students who might have applied for admissions St Monica's Sixth Form will need to pursue their post 16 education elsewhere. In view of the very small numbers in our current Year 12 this is unlikely to affect capacity in other colleges and is likely to support the viability of those other colleges over the longer term.

The Consultation

A four-week period of consultation will run from the 27 February to 27 March which will provide all stakeholders with the opportunity to present their opinions. Your views are important to us, please complete the attached form and return to the Chair of Governors at St Monica's Sixth Form Centre by the 27 March.

All representation received will be considered by Governors and will then be forwarded to Bury Council, which as Local Education Authority, will make the final decision as to whether or not the closure should go ahead.

