



# Sacred Heart School

Service Before Self

9<sup>th</sup> November 2018

Dear Parents,

You will be aware that the Sisters of Sacred Heart School in Swaffham had intended to submit a Free School application to allow the school to becoming a non-fee paying school. However, the Government announced earlier this term that Independent Schools could not apply to become free schools, and since that time the Sisters have been considering the future of Sacred Heart School.

Today, the Sisters of Sacred Heart, with the support of the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia, are announcing that they intend to make a proposal to the Local Authority (Norfolk County Council) to become a primary voluntary-aided (VA) school with a nursery from 1 September 2019. This means that if the proposal is agreed, Sacred Heart will no longer be a fee-paying school. Instead it will be a maintained state school with no fees, serving nursery to Year 6 pupils.

Unfortunately, the Senior School has too few pupils to be considered viable to be a maintained secondary school as there is already a large secondary school in the town with many places available. This means we will no longer be able to provide education for secondary-aged pupils (Year 7 to Year 11) after 1 September 2019, unless a wealthy sponsor is found. This is deeply upsetting and it is most regrettable that our passion for secondary education is unlikely to continue. For pupils who will need a secondary school place in September 2019, we will let their parents know next steps in early December, following further discussion with the Local Authority, which is responsible for co-ordinating school admissions and offering school places.

The Sisters have had detailed discussions with their Advisory Governing Board over recent months, with advice from the Diocese, about what options are available to the School to ensure a strong and vibrant future. An assessment of the current and expected pupil numbers in Swaffham and the surrounding areas, together with the number of places expected to be available in local schools, has shown that there is an immediate and longer-term need for more primary places in the area, but not for more secondary places.

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It must be stressed that there is no guarantee that the Local Authority will agree to the proposal for Sacred Heart to become a VA primary school, but there is a right of appeal.

It is recognised that this decision will be of great concern to all pupils, parents and staff. However, we also believe it represents the next stage in the long life of Sacred Heart School and presents many exciting opportunities for the pupils and staff of the School and the local community.

If Sacred Heart School becomes a primary school, it will remain a Catholic school and will offer 30 places in each year group and 24 places in the nursery. The School will be supported by a wide-range of experienced and skilled education leaders from schools within the Diocese of East Anglia. The Diocese will also provide professional support to Sacred Heart School as it makes this transition to a maintained school and moves forward to become a thriving and popular primary school for the local area. It is envisaged that the school will become a beacon Catholic primary school in this area of West Norfolk, particularly given the facilities it can offer to other local schools and the community alike, for example, a swimming pool, a theatre and fantastic sports facilities.

There are a number of practical issues and legal processes that still need to be addressed, and we are working closely with the Diocese on these. We will continue to make representations to the local authority on these matters and expect greater clarity about the detailed process for moving our proposal forward in early December. We will keep parents informed on progress through letters home and via the School's web-site at <http://sacredheartschool.co.uk/>

Yours most sincerely,

Sr M Thomas More, FDC  
Provincial Superior, Trustee

Sr M Francis Ridler, FDC  
Headteacher, Trustee