

**Consultation on the Future of Sixth Form Provision:
Key information about the consultation process in a
question-and-answer format**

About this consultation

These question-and-answers provide further information about the consultation on the future of sixth form provision at St Mary's Catholic College.

As outlined in the Headteacher's letter from Mr Maddocks, we are extremely pleased with the examination results achieved by our students this summer. GCSE and A Level outcomes have improved, with GCSE English and Mathematics results among the strongest the College has seen for many years. This reflects the significant progress made by students, families and staff working together.

Alongside celebrating this success, we have a responsibility to continually review how our resources are used so that we can sustain and build upon this progress.

The sixth form has historically been an important part of the College's educational offer, providing pathways into higher education, employment and training. However, the sixth form is currently much smaller than it has been in previous years. The College, therefore, needs to carefully consider the future of sixth form provision and how resources can best support students across all phases.

Following careful consideration of this position, the Holy Family Catholic Multi Academy Trust Board has made a decision in principle to propose the closure of the sixth form at St Mary's Catholic College and to submit a significant change application to the Department for Education.

No final decision has been made.

1. What are we consulting on?

The Holy Family Catholic Multi Academy Trust Board has made a decision in principle to close the sixth form and submit a significant change application to the Department for Education (DfE).

This consultation gives parents and carers the opportunity to share their views on the proposed closure before a final decision is made.

We particularly want to hear your views, questions and concerns, and understand any impact or issues that you believe should be taken into account before the Trust Board reaches its final decision.

2. Why is the future of the sixth form being considered?

St Mary's Catholic College is extremely proud of the progress being made by students and of the improved examination results achieved this summer.

At the same time, we have a responsibility to regularly review how our resources are used and where they can have the greatest impact on students.

The sixth form is currently operating with much smaller cohorts than in previous years. This affects the range of subjects and class sizes that can be offered and the way staffing and other resources can be organised.

The College has, therefore, carefully considered the current position and is consulting on the future of sixth form provision.

In summary, several factors need to be considered together. These include:

- The number of students choosing to join the sixth form
- The range of courses and qualifications that can be offered
- The size of individual teaching groups
- Staffing and curriculum planning
- The long-term sustainability of the provision
- The resources available across the College
- The range of established post-16 options available locally

3. What is the current position in the sixth form?

There are currently 30 students in Year 13. There is no Year 12 cohort for 2026/27.

Demand for places has reduced, with the proportion of Year 11 students applying to the college falling year on year.

A smaller, more focused sixth form model has been in place for the current Year 13, with provision including Level 3 BTEC courses. Some current sixth form subject groups are relatively small, with class sizes in some subjects of around 5–10 students.

For September 2026, the College had planned to continue this more focused model for a new Year 12 cohort. Following careful consideration of the number of students (12 students) intending to join Year 12 and the courses and curriculum that could be provided, the College decided not to proceed with a new Year 12 cohort this academic year. The students concerned were all supported in identifying alternative post-16 provision.

4. Why do student numbers matter?

A sixth form funding model is based on the number of students; therefore, fewer students means less funding.

Also, the number of students in a sixth form has an impact on the range of subjects that can be offered and how those subjects can be staffed.

Where student numbers in individual subjects are small, it can become more difficult to provide a broad range of subjects while maintaining an appropriate and sustainable staffing structure.

Larger cohorts can also provide students with greater opportunities to learn alongside other students with similar interests and ambitions.

The College, therefore, needs to consider not simply the number of students currently attending, but what sixth form provision can realistically be provided for students in the future.

4. Is the proposal about finance?

Financial sustainability is an important consideration in reviewing the future of the sixth form.

As with all areas of the College, we have a responsibility to ensure that resources are used carefully and provide the greatest possible benefit to students.

The size of the current sixth form means that the College needs to consider how resources can best be used to provide a broad and sustainable curriculum for all students.

The consultation is, therefore, considering the educational, financial and wider implications of the future of sixth form provision. It is not simply a financial decision.

5. Could a smaller sixth form be considered?

A smaller vocational model has been considered carefully.

The College currently operates a smaller sixth form based around a focused range of Level 3 vocational qualifications.

However, the College needs to consider the longer-term demand for this type of sixth form provision, the number of students likely to enrol in future years, the breadth of courses that could realistically be offered and the resources required to sustain the provision.

This year, due to falling demand and following careful consideration of the size of the intended Year 12 cohort and the courses that could be provided, the College decided not to proceed with a new Year 12 group.

A smaller, focused model has been fully explored but is not considered to provide a sustainable long-term model for sixth form provision.

6. Why is September 2027 being proposed as the date for closure?

If closure is agreed, the proposed date of **September 2027** would allow the College to plan carefully for the future while ensuring that current students are appropriately supported.

It would also allow time for students and families to receive advice and guidance about future post-16 options and for appropriate arrangements to be put in place.

The proposed date, therefore, provides a period for careful planning and transition rather than requiring an immediate change to sixth form provision.

7. What does this mean for students currently in Year 13?

Current Year 13 students will continue with their existing sixth form studies.

The proposed closure from September 2027 would not change the arrangements for students who are currently completing Year 13.

We recognise the importance of ensuring that students are able to complete their studies with the support of the College and their teachers.

8. What does this mean for current Year 11 students who were hoping to stay for sixth form?

The College recognises that some current Year 11 students may have been planning to continue into sixth form at St Mary's.

Our immediate priority remains supporting current Year 11 students to achieve the very best possible GCSE outcomes and ensuring that they receive high-quality advice and guidance about their next steps beyond GCSEs.

If the proposal to close the sixth form is approved, students will be supported in considering the range of post-16 opportunities available to them, including sixth forms and colleges in the local area.

9. What support will Year 11 students receive when applying to an alternative post-16 provider?

The College will provide appropriate advice and guidance to students and families about alternative post-16 provision.

This will include information about local sixth forms and colleges, their courses and entry requirements, and support with transition where this is required.

Our aim will be to ensure that every student is supported to identify a suitable next step that reflects their individual needs, interests and future ambitions.

10. What post-16 alternatives are available locally?

There are established post-16 providers in the local area offering a range of academic, vocational and technical programmes.

If the sixth form were to close, the College would work with students and families to ensure that they have appropriate information about the options available and support them in making their next-step choices.

11. What about students with SEND or an Education, Health and Care Plan?

The College will consider the individual needs of students with SEND as part of any transition arrangements.

Where a student has an Education, Health and Care Plan, the College will work with the student, their family, the local authority and the receiving provider as appropriate to support continuity of provision and ensure that the student's needs continue to be properly considered.

Individual transition planning will be undertaken where required.

12. Will this proposal affect the rest of the College?

No. The consultation relates specifically to **sixth form provision**.

It is not a proposal to change the College's Year 7–11 provision.

The College remains completely committed to raising standards and to ensuring that resources are focused where they can have the greatest impact on students across the College.

The excellent results achieved this summer demonstrate what can be achieved when students, families and staff work together, and this progress will remain a key priority for St Mary's Catholic College.

13. How does this proposal fit with the Catholic mission of the College?

The Catholic character and mission of the College remain central to our work.

The College recognises the importance of providing education within its Catholic community and has considered the implications of the future of sixth form provision carefully.

The Diocese of Shrewsbury will be engaged as part of the consultation and decision-making process, and consideration will also be given to Catholic post-16 pathways where these are available.

14. What is the consultation process?

The formal consultation will run from Monday 28th September to Monday 19th October.

Parents, students, staff and other relevant stakeholders are invited to share their views.

The purpose of the consultation is to listen carefully to those affected by the proposal and to ensure that the views received are fully considered.

15. How can I share my views?

Parents and carers are encouraged to take part in the consultation and share their views. This can be done through an online survey.

Survey

Mr Maddocks will also be holding face-to-face and online sessions on Monday 5th October 2026 from 12pm to 7pm, allowing families the opportunity to ask questions, seek clarification and share their views directly.

Please book here: <https://stmaryscatholiccollege.schoolcloud.co.uk/>.

We encourage families to provide their views and any information they feel should be considered as part of the decision-making process.

All responses received through the consultation will be considered.

16. Who will make the final decision and what happens next?

Once the consultation with families, students, staff and other stakeholders has concluded, the responses received, and views shared in the face-to-face/online sessions, will be reviewed alongside the relevant educational, financial, operational and other considerations, outlined in this document.

The Holy Family Multi Academy Trust Board have already agreed, in principle, to the proposal to close the sixth form provision. The purpose of this consultation is to listen and understand any impact or issues for stakeholders before a final decision is made on whether to proceed with the proposed closure.

If the Trust Board decides to proceed, a proposal will then be submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) through the relevant significant change process.

Families, students and staff will be kept fully informed throughout this process. This will include communication about the outcome of the consultation, and the Trust Board's final decision.