

Title: St Michaels Catholic Secondary School
Author: Department for Education

Impact Assessment – Section 9 Academies Act Duty

1. Section 9 of the Academies Act 2010 places a duty upon the Secretary of State to take into account what the impact of establishing the additional school would be likely to be on maintained schools, academies, institutions within the further education sector and alternative provision in the area in which the additional school is (or is proposed to be) situated.

2. This assessment fulfils that duty by considering the possible impact of the proposed St Michael's Catholic Secondary School on the viability of other near-by secondary schools. It also considers in broad terms the potential impact on other educational institutes in the area.

Background

3. The core proposer group contains two ex-head teachers from the current school, and some of the governors and individuals involved with the current school – a small independent school of around 30 pupils based in Truro that will close when the Free School opens in September 2012. The new school will be a small co-educational secondary school for 11-16 year olds and will have Catholic faith status. When it opens, St Michael's will have a total of 110 pupils in Years 7 to 11. In subsequent years, the intake will be up to 60 pupils in Year 7. Its full capacity will be 300 pupils. The school will be located at Trevu Road, Camborne, TR14 7AG.

Local context

4. With a population of 40,000, the Cambourne-Redruth area is the largest urban conurbation in Cornwall. The area is not affluent and the school is within walking distance of one the most deprived areas of Cornwall. Although Cornwall has a small number of faith primary schools, St Michael's will be the only state funded faith secondary school in the county.

5. Secondary schools in the area, like many across Cornwall, are significantly undersubscribed and, over the next few years, the county will see this problem increase as the number of secondary school pupils declines. We estimate that, by 2015, around a quarter of all secondary school places in the county will not be filled.

Admissions

6. To date, the school has received around 150 expressions of interest in the 107 places that will be available in September 2012. Parents will be made formal offers of places for their children once the funding agreement has been signed.

7. St Michael's oversubscription criteria, follow two strands as follows:

Strand A - if there are more than 30 applications in this Strand, applications will be prioritised in the following order:

A1. A child in public care/looked-after child and previously looked-after children.

A2. A child who will have a sibling in the school at the time of their admission.

A3. All other baptised Catholic applicants prioritised by distance from the school.

A4. A child who is a member of another recognised Christian denomination.

A5. A child who is a member of a faith community other than Christian.

Strand B - applications under Strand B do not need to demonstrate membership of any denomination, church or faith group. If there are more than 30 applications in this Strand, applications will be prioritised, in the following order:

B1. A child in public care/looked-after child and previously looked-after children.

B2. A child who will have a sibling in the school at the time of their admission.

B3. All other applicants who are not baptised Catholics prioritised by distance from the school.

8. Where two or more children are ranked equally within their Strand, priority will be determined on the basis of distance between home and school. Measurements are taken by a straight line on a map using the Council's electronic mapping system – the shorter the distance the higher the priority. Measurement points will be from an internal point of the building concerned (usually the visual centre of the building). Flats are therefore taken to be the same measurement point regardless of floor or location. If necessary, the flat with the lowest building number will have priority.

Representations

9. No direct representations about the potential impact of the school have been received by the Department, but a month long public consultation has been carried out by the proposer group. The consultation asked for views on the school's vision and ethos, admissions arrangements and whether the Trust should enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State.

10. The Trust used various methods to carry out their consultation. This included: distributing consultation pamphlets both door-to-door and by email,

publishing information on the school's website and providing an email account to receive feedback. They also held an open consultation public meeting on a local estate, and two drop-in sessions, which were advertised through the consultation pamphlet, website and local newspaper.

11. A total of 133 written responses were received from the public. 113 of the respondents were in favour of the proposal for the Free School, the main rationale being that the new school would increase parental choice. 14 of the respondents were not in favour of all or some of the proposals for the school, the reasons stated being that: they were not in favour of faith schools receiving public money; the school would not cater fairly to Catholics given the 50 per cent restriction on admittance by faith should the school be oversubscribed; and that pupil numbers were too high for the area

Local authority view

12. In general, Cornwall Council is supportive of Free Schools and has no specific objection to St Michael's, although the Council is not convinced that there is demand for additional secondary places in Camborne. The pupil number forecast figures that the Council provided suggest a demand for places in the short term which dips in the medium term, although they are currently seeing a rise in reception admissions to primary schools which they anticipate could result in a rise in secondary school numbers in several years' time.

Impact on other secondary schools

13. St Michael's does not have a self-defined catchment area. For the purposes of the impact assessment, we have, therefore, created a proxy catchment area. The average journey for a Cornish secondary school pupil is 2.4 miles and 80% of pupils have a journey of 4.5 miles or less. We have applied the latter figure and assessed the impact on the viability of the three secondary schools falling within a 4.5 mile radius of St Michael's.

Camborne Science and International Academy (CSIA)

14. CSIA is a large 11-18 co-educational school located a mile from St Michael's. It became an academy in April 2011 and was rated as good overall by Ofsted in February 2012. The majority of pupils have below average prior attainment on entry, but achieve broadly average standards by the end of Y11. CSIA is currently undersubscribed by around 8% (capacity is 1,428 pupils, but there are 1,312 on roll).

15. It is possible that St Michael's will attract some pupils who might otherwise have attended CSIA. However, given that CSIA is a successful school on a trajectory to reach outstanding and parents are "overwhelmingly positive" about the school, then we envisage that St Michael's will have no more than minimal impact on CSIA's viability either now or in the longer term.

Pool Academy

16. Pool Academy is a smaller-than-average 11-16 co-educational school located between Camborne and Redruth and is 1.75 miles from St Michael's. It converted to an academy in April 2011. In May 2010, Ofsted rated the school as outstanding. In 2011, 57% of Y11s achieved 5 or more A*-Cs at GCSE, including English and Maths. Pool Academy is currently undersubscribed by 20% (capacity is 1,058 pupils, but there are 880 on roll).

17. As with CSIA, it might be that some potential Pool Academy pupils will opt for St Michael's instead. But, again, given that Pool Academy is highly successful and valued by pupils and parents, it seems unlikely that St Michael's will have any more than minimal impact on the school's viability.

Redruth School

18. Redruth School is a large 11-18 co-educational maintained secondary school situated three miles from St Michael's. In January 2012, Ofsted rated the school as satisfactory overall, though recognised that the school is improving under the relatively new head teacher. Attainment in key subjects, including English and Maths, is broadly in line with national averages. Redruth School is undersubscribed by 23.5% (capacity is 1,416 pupils, but there are 1,084 on roll).

19. As a satisfactory school, Redruth is vulnerable to losing pupils to near-by schools, including St Michael's. However, we believe that it is much more likely a parent would send their child to Pool Academy, which has an outstanding record and is closer to Redruth than St Michael's. The latter is, therefore, unlikely to have more than a minimal impact on Redruth School's viability.

Impact on primary schools, special schools, alternative provision and FE institutions

20. As it will be a relatively small 11-16 school, we do not anticipate that St Michael's will have any discernible impact on other education providers in the area.

Conclusion

21. St Michael's will be a small secondary school whose attraction will be relatively niche. In addition, the near-by schools are successful or improving and popular with parents – they are more likely face competition from each other than from St Michael's. Our assessment is, therefore, that the establishment of St Michael's will have little or no impact on the viability of other secondary schools in the area and that it is appropriate for the Secretary of State to enter into a Funding Agreement with the Academy Trust.