# Community fights to save St Joseph’s primary amid falling pupil numbers



The potential closure of St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School in Hollingdean has sparked significant concern and outcry from the local community. Despite a strong campaign against the move, a report scheduled for discussion at the upcoming council meeting indicates that the proposal is supported by the Roman Catholic diocese of Arundel and Brighton. This development comes amidst alarming trends in pupil enrolment numbers, which have fallen sharply in Brighton and Hove, placing considerable financial strain on educational institutions throughout the area.

Data reveal that St Joseph's currently operates with 149 pupils against a capacity of 210, which translates to a surplus of 61 places. The situation reflects a broader issue within Brighton and Hove’s educational landscape, where the number of children starting school has plummeted from 2,838 in 2014 to just 2,114. This decline, identified by local authorities as a critical factor, necessitates reducing published admission numbers at larger schools and has already prompted the closure of two primary schools in the previous year.

Parents' responses to the consultation—held from mid-November 2024 to mid-January 2025—underscore the school’s integral role in the community. Of the 98 responses received, nearly all opposed the closure. One parent highlighted challenges securing places in other Catholic schools, stating her daughter was prepared to transition to Cardinal Newman secondary school, but was now forced to consider non-Catholic alternatives due to geographical and logistical barriers. Another respondent voiced disbelief regarding the closure of a school that, while struggling with numbers, reportedly manages its budget effectively and provides crucial support to children with special educational needs.

Community sentiment has manifested through a petition that recently amassed over 400 signatures within just a few days, reflecting the high level of public engagement and insistence on preserving St Joseph’s. Advocates for the school emphasise not only its academic merits but also its role in nurturing vulnerable families and fostering a sense of belonging among students. Roopal Patel, director of the school’s pre-school playgroup, remarked on the critical support St Joseph’s provides, particularly in a disadvantaged area, noting that the closure would sever ties for many children and families essential for their social and academic development.

The local Diocese has acknowledged the emotional toll and community impact of such a decision, yet insists that the financial realities necessitate the proposal. An equalities impact assessment prepared for the council acknowledges the significant implications of closure, particularly for families who rely on Catholic schooling and children with special needs. While seven schools within a mile of St Joseph’s do have available places, the details provided in the report reveal a challenging enrolment landscape, with many families facing potential disruption and distress.

Moreover, the proposed closure reflects a trend. The council has been grappling with declining pupil numbers for some time, prompting it to adapt its school infrastructure. The implications go beyond mere statistics; the loss of a local institution like St Joseph’s could reverberate through the community, impacting social cohesion and increasing the burden on families who will have to navigate complicated logistics to secure appropriate schooling for their children.

A final decision regarding St Joseph’s fate is expected at the annual council meeting at Hove Town Hall, scheduled for May 22, 2025. As the community holds its breath, the emotional and educational stakes involved in this potential closure cannot be overstated, leaving many wondering what the future holds for a school steeped in over sixty years of history within the Hollingdean community.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.
2. Paragraphs 2, 4, 5.
3. Paragraph 2.
4. Paragraph 2.
5. Paragraph 4.
6. Paragraphs 3, 4, 5.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/25167551.st-josephs-catholic-primary-school-close-august/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/24719354.brighton-st-josephs-catholic-school-consults-closure/> - St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Hollingdean, Brighton, has initiated a consultation on its potential closure due to declining pupil numbers. The Diocese of Arundel and Brighton cited challenges in maintaining sufficient enrollment to ensure financial sustainability. The consultation period runs until January 17, 2025, with the final decision pending. Local councillors express concern over the impact on the community and are seeking ways to reverse the trend of falling pupil numbers. The school has been serving the community for over 60 years.
3. <https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/24723771.brighton-hundreds-rally-bid-save-st-josephs-catholic-school/> - In response to the proposed closure of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Hollingdean, Brighton, a petition has garnered over 400 signatures within two days. The Diocese of Arundel and Brighton cited declining pupil numbers as the primary reason for the consultation on closure. Parents and community members are actively campaigning to save the school, emphasizing its importance to the local community and the quality of education it provides.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c07gvxdlry2o> - St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Hollingdean, Brighton, is facing potential closure due to declining pupil numbers, with 29% surplus places. The Diocese of Arundel and Brighton has initiated a consultation on the school's future, with a decision expected in the spring. The school's headteacher, Gill Foan, expressed concern over the emotional impact on the school community and highlighted the uncertainty surrounding the school's future.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cly251grm1jo> - A consultation has begun on plans to close St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Brighton due to falling pupil numbers. The Diocese of Arundel and Brighton launched the consultation on November 14, 2024, proposing closure in August 2025. The school has 29% surplus places, with this figure forecast to increase, adding further financial pressure. The consultation period ends on January 17, 2025, with the final decision pending.
6. <https://www.change.org/p/save-our-school-st-joseph-s-brighton> - A petition titled 'Save our school! St Joseph's (Brighton)' has been launched in response to the proposed closure of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Hollingdean, Brighton. The petition emphasizes the school's vital role in fostering the academic, emotional, and social development of its students, especially those with Special Educational Needs (SEN). It has garnered over 1,200 signatures, reflecting strong community support to keep the school open.
7. <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2024/decision-close-2-city-primary-schools> - Brighton & Hove City Council has made the difficult decision to close two primary schools, St Bartholomew’s Church of England Primary School and St Peter’s Community Primary and Nursery School, from August 31, 2024. The closures are part of measures to address falling pupil numbers and budget deficits in the city's primary schools. The council is working closely with headteachers and governing boards to manage the process and support affected pupils and families.