

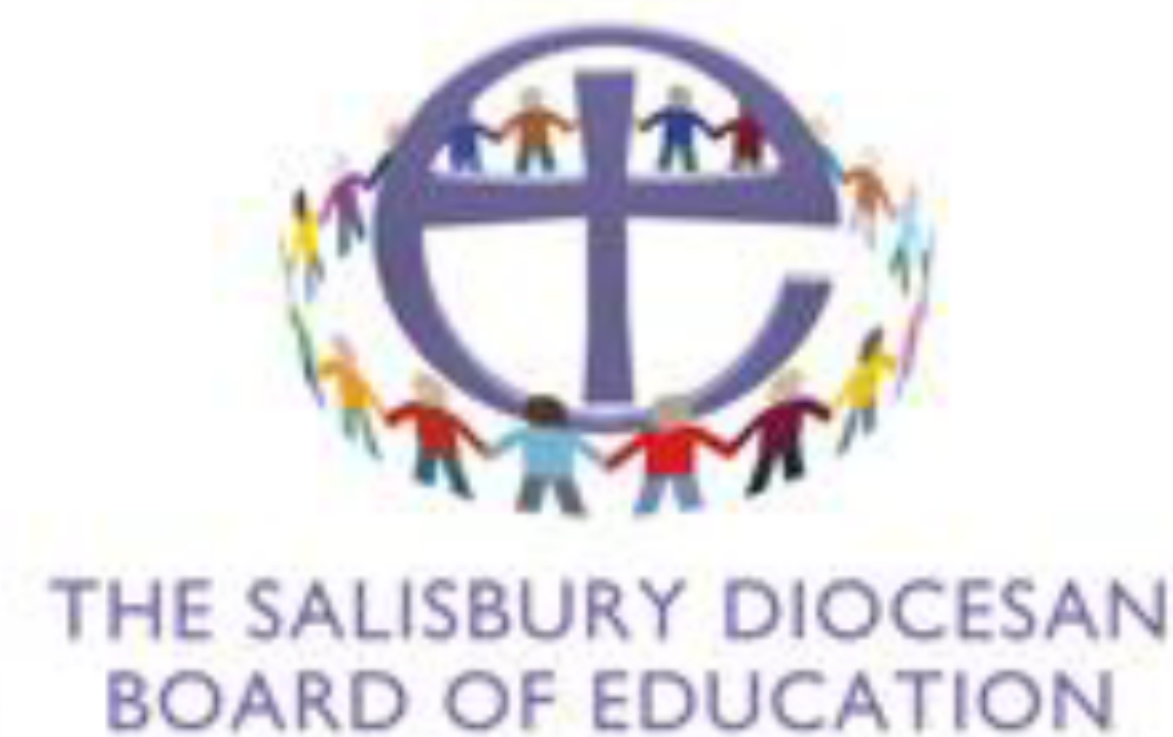


Coastal Learning Partnership



Proposal to secure a high-quality primary education experience for the children of Langton Matravers, Herston, Swanage and surrounding areas for years to come.

Public consultation



What is the issue?

National context

- 15% reduction in birth rate has led to falling pupil numbers across the country
- National forecasts show 300,000 fewer children needing a primary school place by Sept 2030
- 12% of primary school places in England are already empty.

What is the issue?

Local context

- National picture is now being felt in Dorset generally.
- Reception offers in Swanage area on National Offer Day, April 16th 2026:
 - St. George's CE Primary and Pre-School: 11 (73% of PAN) *(10 in current Year R)*
 - St. Mark's CE Primary: 4 (27%) *(9 in current Year R)*
 - Swanage Primary: 24 (80%) *(29 in current Year R)*
 - St. Mary's Catholic Primary: 27 (90%) *(25 in current Year R)*
- Overall: 66 offers against a combined PAN of 90 (73%).
- No school is filling easily; every school will feel this impact to some extent so the removal of some Reception places will help every school.

What is the issue?

Why does this matter?



There is a risk to the quality of educational experience for local children.

- Less income, so fewer classes
- Fewer classes increases mixed age teaching
- Very broad mixed age teaching is not ideal
- Recruitment and retention can be difficult

What are the options?

Option A	Continue as two separate schools, with increasingly fewer staff and children as pupil numbers continue to get lower.
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We don't think that is the best solution for the education of pupils from our local areas.
It will quickly lead to those educational risks.

What are the options?

Option B	Merge the two schools together to form a single primary school and pre-school with a Published Admission Number of 15 (105 pupils)
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- The proximity of these two schools provides an opportunity to create a single school serving both community areas with greater stability in pupil numbers, class organisation and school finances.
- We already see some natural mixing between these two schools:
 - 12% of St. Mark's pupils are from St. George's catchment;
 - 28% of St. George's pupils are from St. Mark's catchment;
 - Both have pupils from neither catchment (St. Mark's, 34%; St. George's 22%)

What are the options?

Option B

Merge the two schools together to form a single primary school and pre-school with a Published Admission Number of 15 (105 pupils)

Forecast pupil numbers appear to support the long-term viability of a single school serving both communities.

St. Mark's	Sep-26	Sep-27	Sep-28	Sep-29	Sep-30	Sep-31	Sep-32	Sep-33	Sep-34
R	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
1	9	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
2	7	9	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
3	11	7	9	6	6	6	6	6	6
4	16	11	7	9	6	6	6	6	6
5	12	16	11	7	9	6	6	6	6
6	16	12	16	11	7	9	6	6	6
Total	77	67	61	51	46	45	42	42	42

St. George's	Sep-26	Sep-27	Sep-28	Sep-29	Sep-30	Sep-31	Sep-32	Sep-33	Sep-34
R	11	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
1	10	11	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
2	12	10	11	9	9	9	9	9	9
3	8	12	10	11	9	9	9	9	9
4	8	8	12	10	11	9	9	9	9
5	16	8	8	12	10	11	9	9	9
6	11	16	8	8	12	10	11	9	9
Total	76	74	67	68	69	66	65	63	63

Combined	153	141	128	119	115	111	107	105	105
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What are the options?
If we merge the schools, which site would provide for the best educational experience?

Option B2	Merge the two schools together to form a single primary school and pre-school with a Published Admission Number of 15 (105 pupils) situated <u>on the existing St. George's site</u>
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We think the St. George's site is too restricting:

- The classrooms are smaller
- There are fewer classrooms so there would be no space to expand in the future
- It would take longer before all pupils could fit on one site
- Other limitations: Less outdoor space; indirect field access; no parking;

What are the options?

If we merge the schools, which site would provide for the best educational experience?

Option B1	Merge the two schools together to form a single primary school and pre-school with a Published Admission Number of 15 (105 pupils) situated <u>on the existing St. Mark's site</u>
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We think the St. Mark's site will better enable a good quality education because:

- The classrooms are more spacious and there are more of them
- The grounds are more extensive and varied, including on-site field access
- There is space for the pre-school to be made available to all families
- There is on All pupils would be guaranteed a place from day one.
- The school could open more classes if needed
- There is also on-site parking

Images showing the St. Mark's site



Open space to rear of school



Forest school area



On site playing fields



Playground space



Typical classroom

What are the disadvantages of our proposal?

- The key issue with the proposal is that we would no longer require use of the site at George's in Langton Matravers.
- Children in Langton Matravers would have access to a good primary school although it would be just outside of the village.
- We recognise that this would have an impact on the village community overall.

What are the disadvantages of our proposal?

What would happen to the St. George's building?

It is not in CLP's gift to influence this as much as it would like as the building is owned by the Salisbury Diocese Board of Education (SDBE). The SDBE has confirmed that:

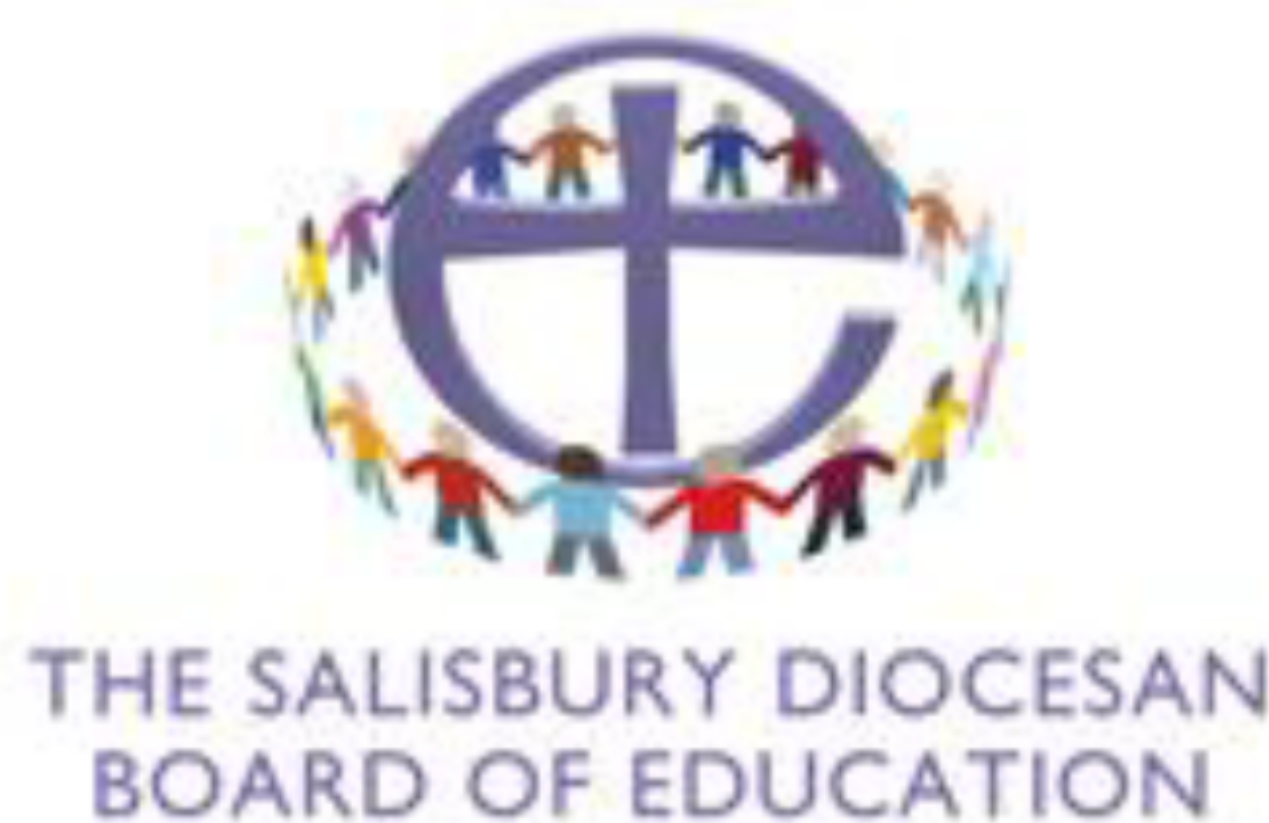
- The building would be returned to them.
- Under charity law (since use of the site will no longer be as a church school), the SDBE must achieve the building's current market value - it cannot gift the site to another organisation.
- The SDBE would:
 - Invite the local community, via the parish council, to consider purchasing the site at market value.
 - If no such purchase occurs, sells the site via public auction.
 - Net proceeds reinvested by the Diocese into other Church of England schools.

What are the disadvantages of our proposal?

What would happen to the field?

- The field is owned by Dorset Council and leased to CLP for the school's use.
- Langton Matravers Parish Council has previously secured an Asset of Community Value registration on the playing field.
- The Parish Council secured this registration as they are seeking to preserve the field for the local community.
- Dorset Council would therefore determine the future of the playing field in discussions with the Parish Council.

What is the position of our formal partners?



Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education is supportive of this proposal. The Diocese recognises the demographic pressures in the Swanage area, also seeing these elsewhere across the diocese. It fully supports the efforts of Coastal Learning Partnership to secure the best possible quality of education for the pupils in the Swanage community. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



What is the position of our formal partners?



Department
for Education

This proposal represents a 'Significant Change' at Tier 3 of its current guidance.

The DfE is aware of this proposal and this community consultation. The DfE has said that, subject to following the required processes as laid out in its guidance, it is content for this proposal to progress to the application stage.

As part of any application, CLP would be required to demonstrate a joined-up approach with Dorset Council and Salisbury Diocese.

It would also have to demonstrate how the character of both schools is demonstrated through the single merged school.

What do we expect to see if we take this proposal forwards?



- A single, thriving primary school would be on the site of the current St. Mark's from September 2027: **St. George's & St. Mark's CE Primary School & Pre-School.**
- With a PAN of 15, there would be plenty of space for every child from both schools to be admitted from the outset, and for future expansion if required.
- The single primary would reflect the combined values and character of both existing schools, with the same leadership team and teaching team.
- All families would have access to the school's pre-school.
- There would be a minimum of four classes (Reception, Y1/2, Y3/4, Y4/5) – more classes if they were needed – with mixed-age teaching only across two (or fewer) year group boundaries.
- All Swanage primary schools would benefit from having fewer pupil vacancies.
- The school would continue to enjoy successful recruitment and retention of high-quality staff.
- The school would be financially viable with any ongoing deficit within acceptable limits

What happens now?

- Consultation period: **date** to **date**: hear community views, comments and queries
- CLP's Trust Board considers consultation output and considers whether to make a significant change application to the DfE
- If an application is made, that will be next autumn term
- If approved, we would expect to be operating as a single school from September 2027.

Responding to the consultation

- Online survey response form will allow for detailed analysis of responses.
- Also respond via email: swanageconsult@coastalpartnership.co.uk
- Or post: Coastal Learning Partnership
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