



**Hands Off
Our Schools**

Director of Education
Diocesan House
Kenwyn
Truro
TR1 1JQ

30 October 2009

Dear Ms Green,

You are no doubt aware about the level of concern being expressed by the villages of St. Mabyn and St. Tudy over the proposals to close the existing schools and merge them into a single new school.

We believe this concern is in no small part generated by the absence of concrete information relating to this proposal. This is despite two public meetings at which employees of Cornwall Council and the Diocese being present to answer questions.

In the interests of providing complete clarity and clear up any misunderstandings, we would be grateful if you could answer the following questions in order that they may become matters of fact:

- 1) Could the Diocese please explain exactly how the proposed project will be funded with key dates and events relating to this funding? If the Diocese is unable to comment on behalf of the LEA then please explain the implications for the Diocese.
- 2) Could the Diocese please comment on its exact remit and relative degree of influence in this process?
- 3) If any alternatives to the current proposals are suggested by a third party, to what extent is the Diocese prepared to review them and formally advise Cornwall Council of their opinion of such alternative proposals?
- 4) We understand that current government policy places a statutory duty on a local authority to provide "diversity, choice and a system shaped by parents". We would ask the Diocese, in their opinion, to elaborate on what is meant by a "system shaped by parents"?
- 5) We understand that the Diocese has access to studies that suggest both St.Mabyn and St.Tudy schools are currently deficient when measured against National Curriculum requirements. Could the Diocese please elaborate on these studies and the extent to which they are quantified?
- 6) Could the Diocese please forward the information that has been provided to both sets of school Governors enabling them to make their decisions? This should include related data and it's sources.
- 7) The Diocese seems to be working on the assumption that birth rates are continuing to fall and that urban/rural migration is not significant in this area. We understand that National Statistics seems to contradict this view, particularly in the report published 22/10/2009 suggesting the UK's population growth will increase by 10m in 10 years. Could the Diocese please explain this discrepancy?

St.Tudy and St.Mabyn Community Action Group

Chair: Matthew Slater; Vice-chair: Chris Mugford; Sec: Lisa Menhenitt

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- 8) Could the Diocese please explain how the proposed project would impact economically on the communities of St. Mabyn and St. Tudy and the methodology employed to analyse this formally.
- 9) Is the Diocese aware of the Price/Waterhouse/Coopers study conducted for DCSF in 2003 giving clear evidence on a building's impact on pupil achievement? If so, could they please comment on their opinions of this report?
- 10) What consideration has the Diocese given to possible changes in Central Government by June 2010? We understand that Conservative Party policies already published would substantially alter the context of the proposed project.
- 11) We understand from information given that St. Tudy school's pupil numbers are in growth and St. Mabyn's are in decline. If St. Tudy were turning parents away the newly federated Governing Body would surely have a duty to ensure that St. Mabyn should benefit from re-directed parent traffic. Would the Diocese agree with this view?
- 12) We understand that the Bishop has a specific responsibility for the pastoral care of all communities within the Diocese. Can the Diocese confirm how social issues caused by potential school closures are being considered?
- 13) What system to check and assess the fallibility of forward planning does the Diocese employ? We are all too aware of what seems a good idea now in time turns into the exact opposite.
- 14) In the September 2009 DCSF "Better Together" report there are quotes from the Director of Education from the Diocese of Truro stating that parent governors often need to be "convinced" of a federated system and that communities oppose these changes but tend to move on quickly after their initial concern. It does appear that the Diocese has a very clear agenda here. How is the Diocese planning to work with local people to come up with a mutually agreeable solution to the issue of amalgamation when it's fully aware of the opposition it will receive?

As you are also aware there is the general opinion that this has all been handled very badly, a view supported by some CC cabinet members. We do want to move forward constructively and whilst you stated at the St. Mabyn PCC meeting that it's not the Diocese that make decisions it is indeed not unnoticed that the Diocese does have influence over those making the decisions.

Would the Diocese be willing to participate in a face-to-face meeting with members from our group along with Governor representation, Councillors and representation for the National Association of Small Schools to discuss the detailed issues associated with the proposed project?

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Slater
Chair, St. Tudy & St Mabyn Community Action Group

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