

# Final determination report from the Executive Director of Children's Services.

# I have considered the Proposal:

- To open a new 210 place Primary Voluntary Aided Catholic School (3 11 years), with 25-place maintained nursery class, in Swaffham, from 1 September 2019
- The school will be known as the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School.

### Background to the proposal

The Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia has consulted on a proposal to establish a new primary voluntary aided school on the site of the Sacred Heart School, an Independent School which is closing at the end of the summer term 2019. It is intended that the new maintained school will provide 210 places for boys and girls aged 3 - 11 years, with a 25-place maintained nursery class, in Swaffham.

The school will be based on part of the current Sacred Heart school site and will provide additional Catholic school places in the area of mid-Norfolk, which is currently too distant from existing Catholic schools to make those schools a viable choice for parents.

#### Role of the Decision-Maker

In coming to a decision on school organisation proposals, I am required to address the following factors:

- 1. Consideration of consultation and representation period
- 2. Education standards and diversity of provision
- 3. Demand/need
- 4. School size
- 5. Proposed admission arrangements
- 6. National Curriculum
- 7. Equal opportunity issues
- 8. Community cohesion
- 9. Travel and accessibility
- 10. Funding
- 11. School premises and playing fields

In addition to the above, where a proposal is for an independent school to join the maintained sector, as a new voluntary school, it is suggested that I must ensure the proposal is:

- 12. Value for money
- 13. Meets high standards expected of state funded education.

I am also expected to consider, in addition to the above:

- 14. Current and projected financial health of the proposal is strong
- 15. School building is appropriate for the delivery of a high standard of education and in good condition or can easily be improved to meet such standards
- 16. Closure of the Independent school

This report, to be read in conjunction with the prescribed information, including the report on the initial consultation, will address each factor in turn.

# 1. Consideration of consultation and representation period

I find that all statutory requirements in relation to the statutory consultation, publication and decision-making were complied with by the East Anglia Diocesan Schools' Service. See Appendix 1 for the initial consultation document, Appendix 2 for the Public Notice and Appendix 3 for the Prescribed Information.

#### Informal consultation

Copies of the consultation document were sent to all parents, the local County Councillor, the Parish Council, CE and RC Dioceses, staff, governors and other stakeholders as outlined in the school organisation guidance. Two stakeholder meetings were held, on 17<sup>th</sup> January and 19<sup>th</sup> February 2019. 21 people attended the first meeting, 12 people attended the second meeting. The analysis of the informal consultation (Annex 2 of the Prescribed Information) undertaken between 7 January 2019 and 15 February 2019 shows of the 137 responses;

- 79% (108 respondents) strongly agreed with the proposal
- 9% (12 respondents) agreed with the proposal
- 2% (3 respondents) neither agreed or disagreed with the proposal
- 1% (2 respondents) disagreed with the proposal
- 9% (12 respondents) strongly disagreed with the proposal.

#### Statutory Public Notice

Following the informal consultation period, the East Anglia Diocesan Schools' Service agreed to proceed to statutory Public Notice. This was published on 11 March 2019. The four week representation period ended on Friday 5 April 2019.

During the Public Notice period, Norfolk County Council received 19 representations – 18 were in support of the proposal and one registered concerns about the proposal.

# Summary of Representation Responses (person/identifiable information redacted)

Date Received	Representation
Recorred	Supportive responses
11.3.19	I am just emailing to express that I am very much in favour of the Sacred Heart school being saved and turned into a primary school. I had a very happy education. Whilst I wasn't the most academic pupil I always received support and came away with the necessary grades. I feel this would benefit the community as Swaffham is expanding and the school truly is an asset to Swaffham.
20.3.19	I am writing in support of Sacred Heart lower school, Swaffham, becoming a VA Catholic Primary School under the control of the East Anglian Diocese. Sacred Heart has been a central feature of Swaffham for decades now. The school's wider contribution to the local community is highly praised and appreciated within the town. There is a lack of faith schools in the west of the county and a VA Catholic primary school will offer parents' choice. The town's population is set to expand and there will be the continued need for school places. Sacred Heart's core focus of providing a nurturing and caring environment for its pupils should be cherished and is why parents choose the school for their children, I would therefore strongly urge you to fully consider the merits of this application.

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23.3.19	The ethos of the school in promoting active citizenship and social justice makes a positive contribution to the fabric of Swaffham life. Irrespective of religious faith, the need for a new primary school features in the Swaffham neighbourhood plan. Many clubs and societies in the local area have always used the buildings and facilities and this would obviously continue.
	We whole-heartedly support this process and welcome the creation of the first Catholic primary in the area that would be open to everyone, regardless of income.
24.3.19	We are writing to support the Sacred Heart School in Swaffham which, it is hoped, will become a Voluntary Aided Catholic Primary School. We feel very attached to it and continue to be very fond of the Sisters. It has always been an excellent school and we are very fortunate that it should be in our little town of Swaffham.
	We very much hope this application will be accepted. It seems that there are not sufficient Catholic families who are able to afford the fees of a private convent school and this application will give hope to the hard-working, kind Sisters who have run it for such a long time. It is a sign of its future success that there are an impressive number of young women who want to join the convent.
	This school has always been academically successful and, added to that, has given children a strong moral ethos and been inclusive of families who otherwise would not have hoped for education with the Sisters.
25.3.19	I am writing in support of the above new school proposed for Swaffham. I believe that this is much needed due to the shortage of places in this age group in this area. The existing school has an excellent history and record over the years. Therefore we do hope the new school will emerge from the existing establishment and fill the void that at present exists.
25.3.19	I am writing to ask that every consideration be given by both Norfolk County Council and the catholic Diocese of East Anglia to the establishment of a new Sacred Heart R C Primary School in Swaffham. The existing Convent school has, for over 100 years, hugely enriched its local community. Nor was it ever exclusive. My experience has led me to see how generous the Nuns were in providing both free and subsidised places for local children. Now in an area where there is no faith-based Primary education, they wish to fill that gap by fully entering the state education system. This can only be to the advantage of the wider and ever-growing Swaffham community. Such aspiration is to be applauded and will be fully in accordance with current central government policy. I wish them success and hope you will allow them to continue to serve the local community as they have done for over a century.
25.3.19	To whom it may concern - I am writing to express my support for the new VA Catholic Primary School in Swaffham. I feel that the new school will offer a choice to parents in the local community. The facilities that are available are fantastic and the ethos that the convent has developed over the 100 years of its existence is something that we should strive to maintain. The school has been a great force for good in the community and the lives of the children that have been educated there - these are firm foundations that the new school can build upon.
27.3.19	I am writing in support of the proposal of the Voluntary Aided Catholic Primary School in Swaffham. I am a beneficiary of a type of education that will be on offer at the school, that focuses on the child as a whole. This has helped me as an

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	adult to build on the values taught and to help others in need. My academic
	education was excellent but the school and the sisters taught me many more life
	lessons. I firmly believe that the school will be an asset to the Swaffham
	community and build on the relationships already there and many more to come,
	as more families will be able to use the school as it will be non fee paying.
28.3.19	We support the new VA Catholic School in Swaffham.
29.3.19	I wish to offer my support to the excellent Christian education the Sisters of
	Swaffham Sacred Heart Convent have given since the School was established
	over 100 years ago. I trust the outstanding service of the Community of
	Daughters of Divine Charity may continue, heartfelt gratitude to all who have
	ministered in Christian education. May we be assured that this beneficial work
	will continue in a Catholic V.A Primary School in Swaffham?
31.3.19	I am writing in support of the Voluntary Aided Catholic Primary School at
	Swaffham. Over many years we have held the nuns at the Sacred Heart school in
	the highest regard. They are respected across the community with great affection
	for the high standard of education they have provided. The Voluntary Aided
	Catholic Primary School would enable the expanding community of Swaffham to:
	have educational choice, enable the Christian ethos to be part of that choice and
	permit the nuns to continue the excellent educational outcomes they have
	provided for decades.
31.3.19	I think it's a fantastic scheme to open a new VA Catholic Primary School in
	Swaffham, a town whose population is growing and will continue to do so with all
	the new houses planned to be built. With the impending closure of the Sacred
	Heart School it leaves a large geographic area - the nearest I believe being
	Costessey and Kings Lynn, either of which are a very long way to go each
	morning especially for younger pupils - without a Catholic School. Swaffham of
	course has other primary schools but it is so important that parents and children
	have choice. The nuns and teachers at the Sacred Heart School were held in
	great respect and affection by their pupils and by the community as a whole - a
	respect and affection that is there to be inherited by the Catholic Primary School.
	What's more the Catholic Diocese is fully behind this, so there will be a large and
	well organised body to back it up.
31.3.19	Sister Francis has indicated that it's important to send yourselves a letter of
	support for the Sacred Heart Primary School in Swaffham .
	1. The Nuns and the Sacred Heart school and convent have achieved great
	things at the school and in the community. The teaching and results achieved
	have been excellent . I believe these skills will benefit the Junior school .
	2. The Nuns are regarded with much respect and affection in the community.
	They play a very active role including working not just with parents but local
	residents of all denominations in community and charitable works. The Junior
	school would not only keep them in Swaffham but would keep the school open.
	3. I believe the Christian Catholic ethos which is so strongly a part of them
	benefits the Community
2440	4. It will also provide parents with a choice in Junior schools .
2.4.19	We have heard about the proposal to open a Voluntary Aided Primary School on
	the site of the current Sacred Heart School. We are sending you this email to
	express our strong support of this proposal. Therefore we think that continuing
	the excellent work of the Sisters in this new school would be of great value for
2/10	many people, especially the children.
2.4.19	I am writing to strongly support the establishment of a Voluntary Aided Catholic
	Primary School in Swaffham. I believe that there would be a tremendous benefit

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	not only to the community in Swaffham but also to the surrounding areas to have
	a new school with some linkage to the tradition of a Convent school. I believe
	that there is a need to establish more schools which are founded on Christian
	beliefs and this site in Swaffham is ideal since the Sisters with be in close
	proximity and will be able to continue to provide support. If the Sisters are able to
	keep the Barn Art Centre this could function as a spiritual/well being centre to
	help the local community since it has facilities for Music, Art and the Performing
	Arts. I look forward to hearing that the Norfolk County Council agrees to support
	the establishment of the Voluntary Aided Catholic Primary School in Swaffham.
2.4.19	I write if I may in support of the proposal to create a new Catholic VA primary
2.4.19	School in Swaffham from the current independent Sacred Heart Convent. I
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	would urge Norfolk County Council to support and approve the proposal. It is my
	belief that it is of its time and is necessary.
	The past – There has been a school in continuous existence on the current site
	for over 100 years. The current Convent celebrated its centenary in 2014. So
	there is long and proud tradition. It has a well established presence in the town,
	is held in high regard and provides benefit to the community.
	The present – If the proposal does not proceed and approval is not granted by
	NCC, almost 100 young people and their families will need to find a new place of
	education. This would clearly disrupt their education and welfare and cause
	inconvenience, dismay and distress for existing pupils and parents (The
	livelihoods of staff should not be disregarded either.)
	The future –
	Capacity – Swaffham will need more school places. It does already.
	Notwithstanding current simultaneous proposals relating to other primary-phase
	schools in the town, there is still a need for this new school to cater for an
	increased, and increasing, population.
	Standards – It would introduce greater competition between local schools – thus
	contributing to yet-sharper focus and positive upward pressure upon educational
	standards and expectations and outcomes for children.
	Diversity and choice – this new school would provide families with a broader
	range of schooling choice than exists in Swaffham at present. I believe it is to
	operate an open subscription policy, so would extend its appeal to a wide cross-
	section of the community.
	Convenience for families – The site is located in an area of the town where there
	is no other state school nor one nearby. Other schools in Swaffham are at the
	other, far end of town. This new school would therefore offer greater
	convenience for those families who happen to live in that part of Swaffham and
	would make it easier and a shorter journey for them and their young children.
	Community cohesion and inclusion – Swaffham has a decades' long tradition of
	ecumenical spirit and practice between the difference churches and faiths in the
	town. Creating this Catholic school to sit alongside other Church of England
	schools, would foster those relationships and goodwill.
	Continuity and Progression – My points in 1 and 2 refer, and underline, the
	continuity and progression for children which this new school would facilitate.
3.4.19	I totally support the idea of Swaffham Convent becoming a VA School. This
0.7.13	
	School will be a great asset to the local community of Swaffham and areas
	around Swaffham not only to Catholic Children but to other Children as more
	people are moving into the area due to more homes being built around
	Swaffham. This School has good facility's and has good grounds for Children's
	exercise. As it's in the centre of Swaffham it has easy access for families to
	access. the School. I am sure by in terms of cost this will be a good asset for

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	Swaffham and Norfolk, due to the increase of population and extra places needed. In building a new school or expanding a school in the Swaffham would be far more expensive at a time when the government is giving less financial help. This is a great opportunity for Norfolk. Also a catholic school is badly needed in this area. I am sure you will agree with me, this facility should be available to all family's who wish to give their children a good education and a religious upbringing.
4.4.19	Of note, they have taken on vulnerable children in the community and offered them free school places. They have given the children support and guidance, a feeling of self worth and interest and belief in their ability to learn and thrive in their community.
	We feel that in a community like Swaffham, where there is only one primary school which is oversubscribed and a community of high deprivation and social inequality, that the need for a school such as the convent is needed now more than ever.
	I am sure that the fact that you have offered so many children free places has not been financially viable in the long term. We sincerely hope that the Sisters prayers are answered and that the school will be able to continue to have such a valuable role in the community of Swaffham.
	Registered concerns
5.4.19	Staff and Members at Norfolk County Council will be well aware of the historic challenges of providing a sustainably good education in the infant and junior schools in Swaffham. Over the last two years we have seen both schools gain the 'good' judgement from Ofsted that the pupils and community deserve. This has required much dedication and skill from those leading and working in the schools.
	Whilst I note that the proposal is aimed at the Catholic community I am concerned that this new proposal could destabilise the education provision in Swaffham. Fluctuating pupil numbers and uncertainty will not help the two existing schools to maintain the good provision they have developed in what we know is an area of significant deprivation. If the infant and junior schools see their numbers depleted this will cause budgetary pressures and additional challenges in maintaining a high quality of provision.

### 2. Education standards and diversity of provision

### Education standards

This proposal refers to a new school and therefore there has not been an Ofsted Inspection. However, the proposal outlines the way in which the East Anglia Diocesan Schools' Service enables school improvement and provides support and challenges for schools across the diocese. Currently 93% of Diocesan schools have an OFSTED rating of good or better. The proposal also sets out the interim governance arrangements already in place to support the new school and states that pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and academic development will be at the heart of the school's work.

The proposed new school will be supported by a strong school within a well established network of local Catholic schools. This gives me confidence that there will be capacity to create a successful new school, building on the existing traditions of Sacred Heart School in Swaffham.

# Diversity of provision

The nearest Catholic primary schools to the site are:

- St Martha's RC VA Primary School, Kings Lynn, 16 miles
- St Augustine's RC VA Primary School, Costessey Norwich, 24 miles.

In Swaffham there are two Church of England Schools; one maintained and one academy;

- Swaffham CofE VC Infant School

- Swaffham CofE Junior Academy (Diocese of Norwich Education Academy Trust). Both these schools have been rated Good by Ofsted and recently consulted on a proposal to re-organise to all through primary schools from 2020. This proposal is in response to the planned housing in Swaffham.

In the surrounding area, there are 6 rural primary schools, offering a mix of maintained and academy schools, although many are Church of England schools.

I am satisfied that this proposal will increase the diversity of primary education provision in the area, to meet the needs of parents in their choice of school preference.

#### 3. Demand/Need

#### <u>Growth</u>

Swaffham has several allocated housing sites with permission. Some have been built on the Brandon Road development and a large development known as Swan's Nest is now commencing its 3<sup>rd</sup> phase. Some developments, particularly on Sporle Road and over 300 dwellings in total, have had their permission lapsed. However, I note that these have recently re-applied for pre-applications.

There are still around 500 dwellings with permission to build out in Swaffham and Breckland Council are currently working on their new Local Plan which will cover the period up to 2036. It is expected that, as a good size market town, Swaffham could possibly receive a further allocation of housing, but this is not known at this time.

Norfolk County Council set out in their Local Growth & Investment Plan (March 2019), that pressure for primary places is evident due to housing growth and pupil forecasts indicate that an extra one form of entry (30 children) will be needed within the town and surrounding area, in the future. However, this does not take into account children currently attending an independent school, proposed to close as part of this proposal for a new Catholic VA Primary School.

#### Demand for Catholic primary places

There is evidence in the proposal to demonstrate the demand for Catholic places in the area of Swaffham. The nearest Catholic schools, are some distance away and at the time of writing this report, are full and more than two-thirds of pupils on roll are Catholic. However current number of pupils at primary phase at Sacred Heart, Swaffham are below capacity. I note that the new proposed primary school will not be fee paying and that this may have a bearing on the future uptake of places at the new school.

#### Pupil forecasts

Forecasts for Swaffham schools are fairly stable and sit around just over 80 children per year group. This number is above the admission number of the two schools (60 pupils). However a considerable number of children in the catchment area choose to attend other schools on the

May 2019 outskirts of Swaffham, therefore the admission number of 60 has been sufficient for the past few years.

It is forecast that 500 new dwellings will generate around 140 additional primary phase children; 60 at infant school age and 80 at junior school age. Therefore, with further housing in the future, Norfolk County Council is looking at an additional form of entry (30 pupils) to the existing 2 forms of entry (60 pupils) at the infant and junior schools, which will 'future proof' the Swaffham Town schools for the next 10 years.

Existing plans for school re-organisation of the Infant and Junior Schools to increase places to 90 pupils per year group across both schools, caters for most, not all of the pupils that are likely to live in Swaffham catchment in the future.

Swaffham Infant and Junior schools recently consulted on a proposal to re-organise to all through primary schools from 2020 to meet this demand for places. The Local Authority, as the decision maker for the Swaffham CofE VC Infant School, has agreed to the proposal to become a primary school from 1 September 2020, on the condition that DNEAT receive approval from the Regional Schools Commissioner, for Swaffham CofE Junior Academy to become a primary school, from 1 September 2020. The Determination Report is available on <u>https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/children-services/swaffham-1</u>

I understand that the Catholic VA Primary School will provide additional options for parent preference in the area.

#### Early years provision

The proposal is clear that it is looking to continue the same number (25) of 3 year old places in the new school, as currently provided at Sacred Heart. Norfolk County Council's Childcare Sufficiency Profile for the Swaffham Children's Centre area shows that as at October 2018, there were 235 three year olds living in the area. There are currently a sufficient number of funded places across the area. However there is limited choice of provider for parents and there is a higher demand for places within Swaffham town. It is also expected that an extra 81 funded places will be needed within the next 10 years, due to the planned housing growth in the area.

It is clear the early indications of housing growth and the need for additional primary education places, has not materialised as quickly as originally forecast. Norfolk County Council has recently re-assessed the rate of growth, the need for places, the cost of providing the capacity and buildings to add an extra 30 primary places per year group in Swaffham. While it is clear there will be a demand for extra primary education places in the future, it is now not expected in the short term. Norfolk County Council is confident that it can meet its legal responsibility to ensure there are sufficient places of children in the local schools when the need arises.

### 4. School size

The school will grow to a final size of 210 places across Reception (Year R) to Year 6. There will also be a 25-place maintained nursery for 3 year olds. Currently there are 62 primary phase pupils at Sacred Heart, as follows:

YR	10
Y1	7
Y2	9

Y3	6
Y4	12
Y5	6
Y6	12
TOTAL	62

The proposed size for the new Catholic VA Primary School is 210 places. In principle, Norfolk County Council's policy is for 420 place primary schools, where possible, although I recognise that this new school would be a small, but viable school size. The 210 place new primary school is a reasonable compromise, given the number of catholic children likely in a catchment area and to give a preference to parents.

### 5. Proposed admission arrangements

I am satisfied that the proposed admissions policy for the new Roman Catholic Primary Voluntary Aided School is compliant with the requirements of the School Admissions Code.

The criteria and arrangements follow those published for other Catholic schools within Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia. The proposed policy of the Governing Body is clear that the school will offer every child who applies, whether of the Roman Catholic faith, another faith, or no faith, a place if there are places available. This complies with 1.36 of the School Admissions Code.

It is noted that the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia are also proposing that the school will not take part in the Norfolk's In-year Admission co-ordination arrangements, which the Governing Body is entitled to do. In line with the Admissions Code there is the requirement that the Governing Body informs the Education Authority (NCC) of applications received and the outcome of the admissions request to allow the LA to keep up to date figures in the availability of places in the area.

The Governing Body plans to operate waiting lists for those in year admissions refused and as required has stated that Fair Access Requests made by the Local Authority will take precedence over those recorded on waiting lists.

### 6. National Curriculum

I am satisfied that the proposed new school will meet the general requirements in relation to the curriculum, contained in section 78 (National Curriculum) and section 80 (Basic Curriculum) of the Education Act 2002.

### 7. Equal Opportunity issues

I am satisfied that there are no sex, race or disability discrimination issues that arise from the proposal. Please also refer to Item 5 Proposed admission arrangements.

### 8. Community cohesion

Schools have a key part to play in providing opportunities for young people from different backgrounds to learn with, from and about each other; by encouraging through their teaching, an understanding of and respect for, other cultures, faiths and communities. The proposer has confirmed their approach to ensuring this will be embedded within the new school and their ability to support the high achievement for EAL pupils, along with other schools in Swaffham.

### 9. Travel and Accessibility

The proposer has confirmed that the travel of pupils to the school will be in accordance with Norfolk County Council's Home to School Transport Policy.

# 10. Funding

Norfolk County Council can confirm that Education & Skills Funding Agency will fund the new school in the year of opening, based on the October 2019 Census numbers, as an exception to the normal funding round. After that, the school will be funded in the same way as all growing schools, based on the October actual numbers plus an estimate for future growth. See Item 14 below; Current and projected financial health.

# 11. School premises and playing fields

The proposer has confirmed that the requirements of School Premises (England) Regulations 2012 (4) will be met and that no deficiencies have come to light from surveys undertaken. It is noted that the current site will be held leasehold and not on trust. The Interim Governing Body have confirmed that they will carry out their legal responsibility for capital expenditure on the site and buildings, under Schedule 3 to SSFA 1998.

I note that there is no requirement for Norfolk County Council to provide a playing field for the school, as a playing field is part of the land to be leased to the new school.

### 12. Value for money

Based on the proposed number of pupil places and staff structure plans that have been shared, the proposals appear to offer reasonable value for money and should be sustainable.

#### 13. Meets high standards expected of state funded education.

Please refer to Item 2 Education Standards and Item 6 National Curriculum.

# 14. Current and projected financial health of the proposer is strong

#### Current financial health

The Catholic Diocese currently support the Catholic MAT, as its only education provider in Norfolk. Based on the published audited financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2018 for the St John the Baptist Catholic Multi Academy Trust (MAT), the accounts show that in the year 17/18 the expenditure for the whole MAT exceeded income by £423k (on income of £14.3M); this was due to unplanned increases in staffing costs, mainly due to increased National Insurance and superannuation costs and the introduction of the apprenticeship levy. However, this was compensated for by a reduction in the MATs pension deficit on the balance sheet by £964k as the 3-yearly fund revaluation occurred during this period.

In terms of cash, the MAT has £1M investments and nearly £1.6M cash at bank, so they are in strong position in that regard. All except one of the schools within the MAT increased their balances during the year, despite the pressures schools are under financially. Overall, it would appear that the existing provider within the Catholic Diocese is financially healthy.

### Projected financial health

As outlined above, there is no reason to believe that this additional school would put the proposer at risk. The plans provided for the new structure appear sensible and sustainable. Senior management and administration for the school are to be shared with St Martha's Primary School, and the rest of the staffing structure appear proportionate with the planned number of pupils.

# 15. School building is appropriate for the delivery of a high standard of education and in good condition or can easily be improved to meet such standards

Please see Item 11 School Premises and Playing Fields above.

#### 16. Closure of the Independent school

The Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia and the current proprietor of Sacred Heart, have confirmed in their proposal that the Sacred Heart school, which is the site for the proposed new school, will close at the end of the summer term 2019.

### My conclusions and recommendation

As decision maker, I can decide to:

- Approve the proposal without modification
- Approve the proposal with such modifications as I think desirable, after consulting the proposer
- Approve the proposal with or without modification subject to certain conditions being met
- Refuse the proposal.

I have considered the evidence submitted by the East Anglia Diocese School's Service, as part of its proposal to become a new Primary VA Catholic School. The supporting evidence has been reviewed and approved by lead council officers with expertise in school admissions, place planning, school governance, school finance, school improvement and school premises.

I am reassured by the school improvement support arrangements the Diocese has put in place to support the new school as it establishes. Whilst an all through primary school will compliment current and future provision in the area, uncertainty regarding future parent preference patterns indicates a risk that needs to be managed by the proposer.

Taking all the evidence into account, I **approve the proposal** to open a new 210 place Primary Voluntary Aided Catholic School (3 - 11 years), with 25-place maintained nursery class, in Swaffham, from 1 September 2019, without modification.