



DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

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Monday 12 February 2020

Dear Alan

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SUNDERLAND - NOTIFICATION OF STATUTORY PROPOSAL FOR THE ENLARGEMENT OF PREMISES AT WILLOW FIELDS PRIMARY SCHOOL

I am writing in response to the consultation by the City of Sunderland Council to enlarge the premises which will increase the capacity of Willow Fields Primary School, Winslow Close, Sunderland SR5 5RZ from 140 places to 315 places with effect from 1st September 2021.

I acknowledge that the Council has identified a need in the local area for more school places. However, the Diocesan view is that this expansion of Willow Fields Primary School could negatively impact on English Martyrs School. The schools are located one mile apart. If there is a need for more school places, capacity already exists in English Martyrs. English Martyrs is a two form entry build and therefore has capacity for expansion without the requirement for a new build. Expanding English Martyrs would save a significant capital expenditure as the school is a two form entry build with a current role of 175. Willow Fields School was judged as Requires Improvement in June 2019. I would question the decision to expand a school that is requiring improvement. The significant change from 140 to 315 pupils will need to be managed without detriment to the educational provision and at a time when the focus will also be of moving the school from RI to Good. English Martyrs was judged as a Good school in September 2012 and this was again verified in November 2017. This is another reason for the council to consider expanding English Martyrs rather than Willow Fields. Another point to note is that location of the new Willow Fields building would cause a significant increase in traffic congestion.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Kind regards

Deborah Fox
Director of Education

