

Committee:	<b>Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness</b>
Date:	<b>21 February 2012</b>
Title of Report:	<b>To report the outcome of the public consultation on a proposal to enlarge St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School</b>
By:	<b>Director of Children's Services</b>
Purpose of Report:	<b>To seek Lead Member approval to publish statutory notices in respect of a proposal to enlarge St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School from September 2013, increasing its capacity from 210 places to 315 places.</b>

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**Recommendation:**

**The Lead Member is recommended to:**

- i) Authorise the publication of statutory notices in respect of a proposal to enlarge St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School from September 2013, increasing its capacity from 210 places to 315 places; and**
  - ii) Delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services to amend the proposals prior to their publication if required.**
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**1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 Revenue: this proposal will not affect the Schools Formula, although it will affect the school's budget position of St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School, which will increase in accordance with rising pupil numbers, following the census count in January 2004.

1.2 Capital: capital investment will be required to provide additional places at the school and this will be funded from the Children's Services Capital Programme which was approved by full Council on 7 February 2012. Detailed design work will be undertaken to determine the level of capital funding required to deliver the additional places.

**2. Supporting information**

2.1 On the 8 November 2011, the Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness approved a public consultation on a proposal to enlarge St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School from September 2013, increasing its capacity from 210 places to 315 places. The proposal is in response to an increase in demand for reception places as a result of a rising birth rate in Bexhill. The number of Catholic baptisms in Bexhill has increased over the last few years and the number of Catholic applications for places at St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School is expected to exceed the number of places it is currently able to offer in future years.

2.2 This report details the responses received during the consultation period and seeks approval from Lead Member for the publication of statutory notices.

2.3 Proposed changes to the organisation of schools have to follow a prescribed process established by the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006) and The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended by The School Organisation and Governance (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2007 which came into force on 21 January 2008 and The School Organisation and Governance (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2009 which came into force on 1 September 2009). This process complies with these requirements.

2.4 Consultation took place over a 7 week period between 5 December 2011 and 20 January 2012. Approximately 1,200 consultation documents were distributed to interested parties in accordance with The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended). The full distribution list can be found as part of **Annex 1**. The consultation document was also made available on the County Council's website. A number of consultation events were held during the consultation period, including parent drop-in sessions and a public meeting.

2.5 By the close of the consultation period, 67 replies had been received. This equates to a response rate of only 5.6%. Of the responses:

- 31 (46.3%) supported the proposal
- 4 (6%) neither agreed or disagreed with the proposal
- 32 (47.7%) did not support the proposal.

2.6 44 of the 67 respondents (65.7%) were either pupils or parents/carers of a child at St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School and/or members of staff at the school. Of which:

- 19 (43.2%) supported the proposal
- 1 (2.3%) neither agreed or disagreed with the proposal
- 24 (54.5%) did not support the proposal

2.7 Of those parents/carers who disagreed with the proposal, 45.8% did so because they did not wish to see larger class sizes. This is a misunderstanding as the proposal is about providing extra classrooms to accommodate the additional pupils, not about increasing class sizes which at Key Stage 1 are limited by legislation.

2.8 A further 8.3% of parents/carers disagreed because of traffic congestion and parking. In addition, 5 of the 16 respondents from the local community (31.3%) also disagreed for these reasons. While these are valid concerns, respondents would have an opportunity to comment formally on these particular issues during the statutory planning process which would follow for the enlargement of the school building.

2.9 **Annex 1** provides detailed analysis of the consultation process and responses received.

2.10 Governors of St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School considered the consultation responses at a meeting on 30 January 2012. Based on the feedback received, the governors confirmed their support for the publication of statutory notices. The Governing Body is currently consulting on its admission arrangements which would see its Published Admission Number increase from 30 to 45 from 2013/14. The Governing Body has to determine its admission arrangements by 15 April 2012.

2.11 The publication of statutory notices would trigger a further 4 week period of consultation, known as the representation period. Within two months of the end of the representation period, Lead Member must decide the proposal taking into account the views of all those affected by the proposal or who have an interest in it, including for example: pupils; parents and carers; staff; other schools; local residents; diocesan bodies and other providers. It is envisaged that a decision would be made at the Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness meeting on 17 April 2012.

### **3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendations**

3.1 The Council has a statutory duty to ensure there is a pattern of school provision across Bexhill which meets current and future demand for places, driven by a rising birth rate and planned housing development. Early indications are that St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School will be over-subscribed for September 2012. This, together with the very low response rate (5.6%), the fact that a significant number of respondents who objected did so on the misunderstanding that class sizes would increase, and that governors of the school re-confirmed their support for the proposal, lead us to recommend that Lead Member:

- Authorises the publication of statutory notices in respect of a proposal to enlarge St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School from September 2013, increasing its capacity from 210 places to 315 places.
- Delegates authority to The Director of Children's Services to amend the proposals prior to their publication if required.

MATT DUNKLEY  
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Penny Gaunt, Deputy Director of Children's Services

Tel: 01273 481660

Local Members: Councillor M Kenward

Background Documents: None

## ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

### 1. Background:

1.1 East Sussex County Council undertook a consultation between 5 November 2011 and 20 January 2012 on a proposal to enlarge St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School from September 2013, increasing its capacity from 210 places to 315 places.

### 2. Purpose of report:

- 2.1 This report is in two parts:
- Part 1: the consultation process
  - Part 2: analysis of consultation responses

### 3. Part 1: the consultation process:

3.1 Approximately one thousand two hundred (1,200) consultation documents were distributed in accordance with The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended). Consultees included for example; pupils; parents and carers; staff; other schools in Bexhill; the local MP; the District Council; diocesan bodies and local early years providers. The full distribution list is provided in Table 1 below. The consultation document explained the proposal and provided a range of means to respond. These included: by freepost reply, online questionnaire or by emailing East Sussex County Council. The consultation document was also made available on the County Council's website.

**Table 1: Consultation distribution list**

Organisation	No. of copies
St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School – pupils and parents/carers	210
St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School – staff	45
St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School – governors	20
St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School – spares for reception/neighbours etc	30
All Bexhill primary schools	15 copies each
All Bexhill secondary schools	15 copies each
All Bexhill special schools	15 copies each
Local Catholic schools	15 copies each
Bexhill College	5
ESCC Councillors	50
ESCC Chief Officers Management Team	7
ESCC Children's Services Senior Management Team	7
Gregory Barker MP	5
DFE	1
Rother District Councillors	45
Diocese of Chichester (Church of England)	5
Diocese of Arundel and Brighton (Catholic)	5
Collington Surgery	30
Little Common Surgery	30
Old Town Surgery	30
Pebsham Surgery	30
The Surgery	30

Cont...	
Sidley Surgery	30
Albert Road Surgery	30
Sussex Voluntary and Community Learning Consortium	10
Bexhill Library	30
Unions: Association of Teachers & Lecturers/NASUWT/NHT/NUT/Voice of the Union of Education Professionals/GMB/UNISON	1 copy each
Sidley Children's Centre	30
Pebsham Children's Centre	30
Egerton Park Children's Centre	30
Amberley Nursery	30
Birkdale Hall Day Nursery	30
Charters Ancaster Nursery School	30
Early Years - Glyne Gap	30
1st Friends Day Nursery	30
Bexhill Parish	5
Hastings Parish	5
St Leonard's Parish	5
Spares used for consultation events	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,200</b>

3.2 A number of consultation events were held to provide staff, governors and public with further information and evidence of the benefits of enlargement of the school, and to discuss and answer any questions raised. Below is a brief synopsis of each event.

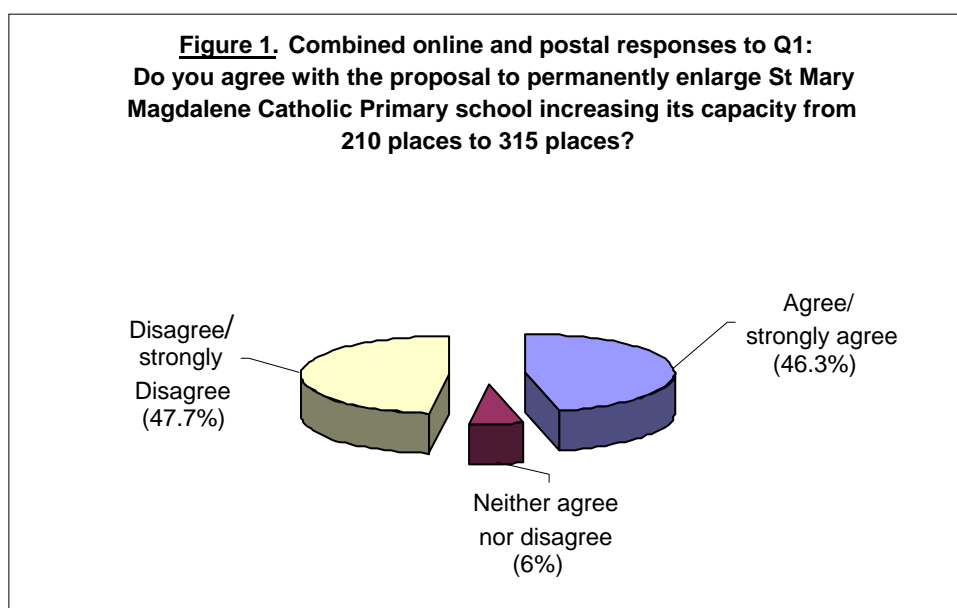
- A public meeting held at St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School on Monday 12 December 2011 and attended by 16 people. The event was attended by 2 officers from ESCC and 1 from the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. People who attended the meeting were keen to seek clarity on issues such as traffic and parking, mixed age teaching, budget implications and potential disruption during building works.
- A playground 'drop-in' session held at St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School on Tuesday 13 December 2011. The session was attended by 2 officers from ESCC and 1 from the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. Generally people were keen to learn more about class sizes and how the school would organise its year groups, and the potential loss of outside space.

#### 4. Part 2: analysis of consultation responses:

4.1 Question 1 on the questionnaire asked people to indicate whether they agreed with the proposal to permanently enlarge St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School from September 2013, increasing its capacity from 210 places to 315 places. 67 people responded to this question, of which:

- 31 (46.3%) supported the proposal
- 4 (6%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal
- 32 (47.7%) did not support the proposal

4.2 Figure 1 below shows the breakdown of responses as a pie chart.



4.3 Of the 1,200 consultation documents distributed, 59 (4.9%) responded using the paper questionnaire and 8 (0.7%) responded online. This equates to an overall response rate of only 5.6%.

4.4 44 of the 67 respondents (65.7%) were either pupils or parents/carers of a child at St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School and/or members of staff at the school. Of which:

- 19 (43.2%) supported the proposal
- 1 (2.3%) neither agreed or disagreed with the proposal
- 24 (54.5%) did not support the proposal

4.5 Of those parents/carers who disagreed with the proposal, 45.8% did so because they did not wish to see larger class sizes. This is a misunderstanding as the proposal is about providing extra classrooms to accommodate the additional pupils, not about increasing class sizes which at Key Stage 1 are limited by legislation.

4.6 A further 8.3% of parents/carers disagreed because of traffic congestion and parking. In addition, 5 of the 16 respondents from the local community (31.3%) also disagreed for these reasons. While these are valid concerns, respondents would have an opportunity to comment formally on these particular issues during the statutory planning process which would follow for the enlargement of the school building.

4.7 Question 2 asked people to give reasons for their answers to question 1 above. The main areas of concern were: class sizes, traffic congestion and parking problems, disruption during building works, loss of outside space. Comments from people who supported the proposal included: more school places are needed in Bexhill and St Mary Magdalene is a good school, the school is short of space – having extra space is vital, it is a lovely nurturing school.

4.8 Table 2 below summarises the comments received. A full list of responses is available for inspection.

**Table 2: Summary of main comments**

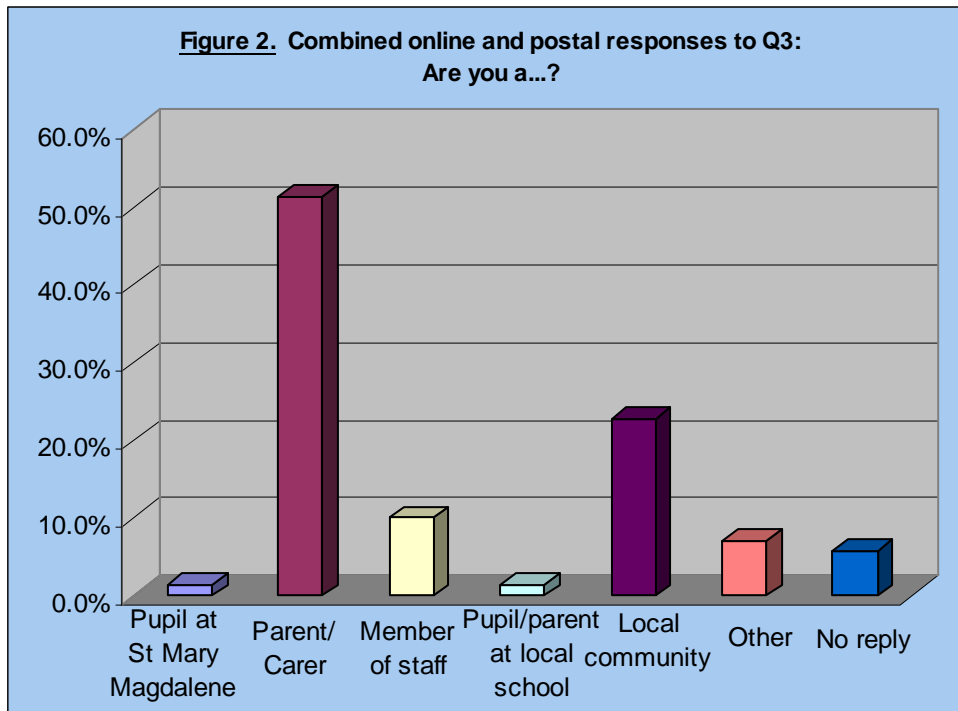
Comment summary	
1	Strongly agree. It's a great opportunity for the school community to be able to provide more places to Catholic children in Bexhill. The school is a credit to its community and it will be great to share this within the parish. It's a great family that is willing to extend and reach out to others.
2	Strongly agree. Catholic schools give an excellent education.
3	Strongly disagree. Class size of 45 is too large. No doubt Children's play areas will be lost to make way for the building works. Staff will be overshadowed.
4	Strongly disagree. Parking problems and emergency vehicle access. Yellow lines please.

5	Agree. Education is important to every child. It is hoped the increase in numbers does not mean an increase in class size.
6	Strongly disagree. Far too many children for one teacher.
7	Strongly disagree. Transport and parking is already a problem.
8	Agree. It is a lovely nurturing school. I hope it can maintain this if it grows larger.
9	Strongly disagree. Although we are a Catholic family one of the main reasons for choosing St Mary Magdalene's was the smaller class sizes and individual attention.
10	Agree. The school is short of space - having extra space is vital. Having extra classes of children would give a level of opportunity to develop shared planning and ideas.
11	Disagree. The local infrastructure is not built or designed to accommodate traffic that is created from the current school run. Increasing this will only increase the nuisance factor of parents who have little regard or respect for those living close by as in the case now.
12	Agree. I would not want other catholic parents to be worried they could not secure a catholic education for their child due to the proposal being cancelled. As Catholics it is vitally important that children can access a catholic education. St Mary Magdalene is a fantastic school and needs to grow.
13	Strongly disagree. St Mary Magdalene's is on a too small plot to enlarge by just over 50% pupil intake. The play areas are not big enough. The parents now cause a problem with parking in St James Heights. The school should only take in pupils from the near area then there wouldn't be a problem with numbers.
14	Strongly disagree. Wholly impractical on the current school site. Larger numbers would compromise the close knit feel of the school, academic performance and the pastoral ethos which is centrally felt to be excellent.
15	Disagree. I feel that the classes are already too large. Children that require extra attention aren't always having their needs met. If you have classes of 45 how can the teacher meet their needs when their needs aren't being met a present.
16	Strongly disagree. Very concerned about the impact on the pupils learning due to large class sizes. We chose St Mary Magdalene's because it was the smaller more friendly school in the area. Concerns regarding legalities of over 30 in a class.
17	Agree. Better facilities. More children can get a place at their first choice school. Teachers have other colleagues in their year group to plan with.
18	Agree. More school places are needed in Bexhill and St Mary Magdalene's is a good school. However, I do not welcome disruption by building works and have already suffered some when the current was developed.
19	Strongly agree. I support the reasoning behind the proposal as outlined by ESCC and the Governing Body.
20	Agree. It will give Catholic children a start in their school of choice being the only one in Bexhill and one of the best schools.

4.9 In answer to question 3, respondents classified themselves as:

- 1 (1.5%) was a pupil at St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School
- 36 (53.7%) were parents/carers of children at St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School
- 7 (10.4%) were members of staff at St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School
- 1 (1.5%) was a pupil or parents/carers of a child at a local school
- 16 (23.9%) were members of the local community
- 5 (7.5%) were classed as other
- 4 (6%) did not classify themselves

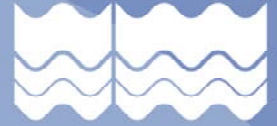
4.10 The responses to question 3 totalled 70. This is because some respondents ticked more than one box. Figure 2 below shows the breakdown as a bar chart.



4.11 'About you' questions. We collect this information to ensure that we are seeking the views of everyone in our community and to demonstrate that we are complying with relevant diversity and equalities legislation. The responses to the 'About you' questions are available for inspection.

4.12 A copy of the consultation document is provided below.





December 2011

## **Have your say on a joint proposal by East Sussex County Council and the Governing Body to increase the size of St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School**

**The consultation runs from 5 December 2011 to 20 January 2012.**

Due to a rising birth rate in Bexhill, there is an increase in demand for reception places. St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School is popular and regularly over-subscribed. The Council and the Governing Body propose to permanently enlarge the school with effect from September 2013, increasing its capacity from 210 places to 315 places. We are consulting with a wide range of people, and welcome your views on this proposal.





## What is the proposal?

The proposal is to permanently enlarge St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School from September 2013, increasing its capacity from 210 places to 315 places. This would increase its Published Admission Number (the number of places the school can offer in each year group) from 30 places to 45, that's 1.5 classes per year group rather than 1.

This consultation document is for pupils, parents and carers, staff, the local community and other interested parties. The Council and the Governing Body will consider all the views put forward before we decide whether to continue with the proposal to enlarge. We welcome your views on this proposal.

## What is the background to this proposal?

Due to a rising birth rate in Bexhill, there is an increased demand for reception places. Births in Bexhill have risen from 289 in 2004/05 to 368 in 2008/09, an increase of 27% in 4 years. This trend is similar to what is happening in other areas of the country. The number of Catholics applying to the Deanery schools has increased steadily over the last four years and several Catholic families have been unable to secure a place in a Catholic school. The number of Catholic baptisms in Bexhill has increased over the last few years and the number of Catholic applications for places at St Mary Magdalene's is expected to exceed the number of places it is currently able to offer in future years.

The Council has a duty to ensure there are sufficient school places available for all children. We must also ensure that the number, location and organisation of pupil places offers the best value to the taxpayer.

In response to a rising demand for places, St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School would admit up to 45 reception aged children in September 2012. This proposal is about putting arrangements in place for September 2013 to ensure the school can continue admitting up to 45 children each year in the future.

St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School is popular and is regularly over-subscribed. Total preferences have risen from 41 for September 2008 to 60 for September 2011, an increase of 46% in 3 years.

## What size would the enlarged school be?

The Council and the Governing Body propose to increase the size of the school to accommodate up to 45 pupils in each year group. The school's capacity would increase from 210 pupils in 7 classes to 315 in 11 classes.

The school would grow gradually as each larger year group moves through the school. It is anticipated that the increased capacity of 315 could be reached in the 2018/19 academic year, as illustrated in the table below.

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Maximum reception year intake	30	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
Approximate number on roll	210	225	240	255	270	285	300	315

## Who would fund the enlargement of the school building?

It is the intention of the Council to fund the permanent enlargement of the school's premises.

## When would building work start and finish?

It is anticipated that building work would begin in summer 2012 and would be completed in summer 2013. The exact programme has yet to be determined, but building work will be planned in order to minimise disruption to the school during this time.

## Who makes the final decision and when?

We wish to enlarge the school with effect from September 2013. In order to achieve this, a number of statutory procedures have to be followed. These are:

The Council and the Governing Body will consider all the views expressed during the consultation, which closes on 20 January 2012. We then have several choices and the next steps would depend on what decision was taken. Following consideration of the consultation responses we could choose to:

- stop the process - in this case the enlargement of the school would not proceed;
- change the proposal - in this case the next steps would depend on what the changed proposal was; or
- continue with the proposal - the Council would publish a Statutory Notice for the enlargement of the school in the local paper, probably in March 2012, after which would follow a 4-week consultation period (known as the representation period).

The Council is the final decision maker for this proposal. We have a duty to make a final decision on the proposal within two months of the end of the representation period. This decision would probably be taken in April 2012. In considering its decision the Council could:

- reject the proposal;
- approve the proposal;
- conditionally approve the proposal; or
- approve the proposal with a modification

Alongside this process the Governing Body of St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School will separately consult during January and February 2012 on increasing its Published Admission Number from 30 to 45 from September 2013. The Governing Body has to determine its admission arrangements for the school by 15 April 2012.

## Who is being consulted?

We are consulting with pupils, parents and carers, staff, other local schools and trade unions. We are also consulting with a wide range of other groups including the Borough Council, the local MP, and the Church of England and Catholic Dioceses.

## How do I have my say?

This consultation runs until **20 January 2012**.

You can give your views by:

- Completing the attached questionnaire
- Completing the online questionnaire at: [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/yourcouncil/consultation](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/yourcouncil/consultation)
- Emailing the County Council at [schoolsamp@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:schoolsamp@eastsussex.gov.uk)
- Attending a public meeting at **St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School** on **Monday 12 December 2011** between **6 and 7.30pm**
- Attending a playground 'drop-in' session at **St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School** on **Tuesday 13 December 2011** from **2.45pm**





# Consultation – Response Form

Our proposal is to permanently enlarge St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School from September 2013, increasing its capacity from 210 places to 315 places. This would increase its Published Admission Number (the number of places the school can offer in each year group) from 30 places to 45, that’s 1.5 classes per year group rather than 1.

The Council and the Governing Body would welcome your views on the proposal. Please complete this response form and return it to the address at the bottom of the page no later than 20 January 2012.

**Q1. Do you agree with the proposal to permanently enlarge St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School, increasing its capacity from 210 places to 315 places?**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Q2. If you wish, please give your main reasons for your answer to Q1 above, and/or any other options you think the Council and Governors should consider:**

**Q3. Are you a...?**

- Pupil at St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School
- Parent/carer of a child at St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School
- Member of staff at St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School
- Pupil or parent/carer of a child at a local school
- Member of the local community
- Other (please say) \_\_\_\_\_

Once completed, please tear off this page along the perforation, fold and return it in the window envelope provided by **20 January 2012** to the address below.

Please ensure that the address is clearly visible in the window of the envelope.

**You don’t need a stamp.**

**St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School Consultation**  
**FREEPOST BR157**  
**County Hall**  
**St Anne’s Crescent**  
**Lewes BN7 1SG**

