



DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG

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Frequently Asked Questions Closure of Saint Columba Catholic School, Bloomsburg

Q1: How are decisions made regarding the closure of a school? Every decision regarding the closure of a school is taken very seriously by the pastor, parish councils and the Diocese. Closing a school is not a reaction to isolated factors. The process is lengthy and is prayerful. The pastor and parish advisory councils, after considering all the available options, make a determination on what course of action is best for the overall health of the parish. If the decision is to recommend closing, the pastor will officially request permission to close from the Bishop as the episcopal member of the charitable trust.

Q2: Why is St. Columba School closing? St. Columba Catholic School has been struggling financially for years. Ever increasing expenses, decreasing enrollment and economic challenges have led to an unsustainable financial situation. Since October 2020, enrollment has decreased by almost 60%. The parish subsidy to the school should be 15%, yet it is currently 42%. Finally, a good measure for all schools in the Diocese is to have tuition fully pay the salary, wages and benefits for staff. But due to low enrollment, this is not the case for St. Columba.

Q3: Is the Diocese closing our school? The role of the Diocese is to assist the pastor and parish and school councils in meeting their obligations to provide Catholic education to the children of the parish. The Diocese does not have the authority to close a school without the recommendation from the pastor, as every school and parish is a separate legal entity. The pastor, with input from his councils, ultimately make the decision. However, the school cannot be closed without the permission of the Bishop as he is the episcopal member of the charitable trust.

Q4: What steps are being taken to facilitate the transition of students and teachers into other Catholic schools? The Diocesan Education Office will work closely with families who wish to continue their child(ren)'s education at nearby St. Joseph Catholic School in Danville or at Our Lady of Lourdes in Coal Township. In addition, we will help families choosing public education to coordinate with their local school districts to ensure a smooth transition. This office is also working closely with school staff to assist in their employment needs.

Q5: What resources has the school received during these challenging times? The school has received a substantial investment of time, talent, and treasure for many years from St. Columba Parish, its parishioners and community members. However, due to the unsustainable financial situation of the school, continued operations are placing the parish in financial jeopardy.

Q6: Did poor academic performance contribute to the closing? No. Students at St. Columba have performed very well on standardized testing.

Q7: How will my child(ren) receive their religious education instruction with the school closing? St. Columba Parish has a very strong, robust religious education program that our parish families already use for catechesis. The catechists and families already enrolled look forward to welcoming your children to this program.

Q8: What has been the enrollment trend for the school? St. Columba had 84 K-8 grade students in October 2020. As of October 2023, the school is serving 34 K-4 grade students.

Q9: What will happen to the St. Columba school building? The school building is owned by St. Columba Parish and the intent is to continue using it for parish related activities.