

**Key information regarding the
closure of Saint Stephen Catholic School**

Updated July 12, 2023

Why is the closure of the school being proposed now?

Recently, we lost six more students, and four staff members, leaving only 21 K-8 students, with no second graders. In a school our size, when even one person leaves it has a significant impact on the overall experience.

We wanted to give the launch of our new educational vision every possible chance to take off, but recent enrollment and staffing losses seem to indicate, for whatever reason, that this is not happening at this time. There is never a good time to close a school, but school leadership felt it important to wait through the spring enrollment season as we were hoping to see growth.

When will the school close?

The school will cease its operations on August 10, 2023 at the conclusion of summer camp.

What will happen to students who were enrolled for next school year?

The school's principal, Elizabeth Black, is reaching out to each family directly and working with them through this transition. She has been in touch with leaders at neighboring Catholic schools to seek placement for any student who wishes to continue their Catholic school education.

As is usual in our Diocese, Saint Stephen will offer parish support to parishioners to attend a Catholic school. This allows families to receive the parishioner tuition rate at a neighboring Catholic school. In addition, Saint Stephen has endowed parish scholarship funds that can be used to help bridge the tuition gap between what families anticipated paying at Saint Stephen next year and the cost of tuition at another school.

What will happen to the Arrowsmith program?

The Arrowsmith program will move to Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) Catholic School on Plymouth Avenue, just two miles south of Saint Stephen. We are grateful that IHM will be welcoming the Arrowsmith program into its building as this program is a vital educational piece for many families in West Michigan.

How are current staff members being assisted?

It is important to us that current employees are treated with justice and dignity through this process. Salary and employee benefits will be extended for a period of time to support staff members as they move on to new opportunities. Ms. Black is proactively assisting her faculty by reaching out to neighboring school leaders to encourage possible employment.

What will happen with the school building?

Parish leadership will continue to discern additional ways the building can be used for the ministries of the parish and to benefit the community.

Will there be an opportunity to celebrate the legacy of Saint Stephen Catholic School?



During these coming weeks, we will be planning a private opportunity for families who would have been enrolled in the school to come together. There will also be another opportunity for the broader community to grieve the school's closing.