



## REPORT TO BOARD OF TRUSTEES

### May 28, 2019

**Deb Crawford, Director of Education**

**SUBJECT:**                    **Closing of St. Joseph (Chatham) and Consolidation with St. Ursula, Effective September 2019**

**PREPARED BY:**            Deb Crawford, Director of Education

#### **BACKGROUND:**

In March 2017 the Board of Trustees approved a recommendation by the Pupil Accommodation Review Committee that St. Joseph, St. Ursula and Georges P. Vanier Catholic schools be closed and consolidated in a new Catholic school to be located in south Chatham; and Our Lady of Fatima, St. Vincent and St. Agnes would be closed and consolidated in a new school in north Chatham. In June 2017, the Ministry of Education approved the plan and \$26.7 million in funding. Although construction is underway on the north Chatham school, challenges in locating suitable property in south Chatham have delayed that project.

In the meantime enrolment at St. Joseph continues to decline to the point that would require the organization of two triple grade classrooms for September 2019. This does not meet the standard of excellence in Catholic education which our students and families have come to expect.

I have therefore decided to begin moving forward now with the school consolidation plan approved by the Board of Trustees two years ago – that is, St. Joseph Catholic School will close at the end of this school year and all students and staff will be relocated to St. Ursula Catholic School, effective September 2019. All families will be contacted early in June regarding transportation.

This decision has been communicated to all of our stakeholders – students, staff and parents at St. Joseph; the St. Ursula and Georges P. Vanier Catholic school communities; our parish partners and the Office of the Bishop; the Ministry of Education; the Municipality of Chatham-Kent; St. Clair College; MPP Rick Nicholls; and the media. A public meeting for parents was held on Monday, May 13 at the school. In addition to Superintendent Laura Callaghan, CLASS Manager Kent or was in attendance to answer questions about transportation and Liz Gibson, who has been named principal of the consolidated St. Ursula next September, was also there.

I know this is the right decision for our students, our staff and our families. The school building at St. Ursula is large enough to easily accommodate students from St. Joseph. In the meantime, we continue our search for property and hope to move forward with the second phase of the school consolidation, when all of the south Chatham elementary schools will finally come together in a new state-of-the-art school building.

We will begin activities over the next couple of months that will bring St. Joseph and St. Ursula together as a brand new school community for September 2019 and ensure that St. Joseph students arrive in their new school feeling welcomed and ‘at home’ among new friends.

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We will also begin planning for ways to celebrate the many contributions St. Joseph Catholic School has made to the community throughout its long and important history, including an Open House at the school to be held on Sunday, June 9, 2019 immediately following a special Mass at St. Joseph Catholic Church.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the St. Clair Catholic District School Board receive the report: *Closing of St. Joseph (Chatham) and Consolidation with St. Ursula, Effective September 2019*, for information.**