



# DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**In a letter to his community, Reverend Scott Nolan, pastor of Saint Stephen Parish in East Grand Rapids, announced the closure of the parish school effective August 10, 2023. Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak, bishop of Grand Rapids, issues the following statement in response to Father Nolan's decision:**

I have received the decision of Father Nolan to close the parish school. Having reviewed the results of the consultative process as well as the data provided, I regretfully confirm his decision. This announcement is extremely difficult as each Catholic school is precious and plays a critical role in the formation of its students, staff, and families.

Saint Stephen School, for nearly a century, has provided an outstanding Catholic education to hundreds of students who have passed through its doors. I recognize the range of emotions that accompany the loss of something so dear. I accompany the community in prayer and offer the support of the diocese in this transition. Even in our mourning, may we celebrate the impact this school community had on the generations of children who were formed there. I extend my sincere gratitude to the many clergy, consecrated religious, administrators, teachers, staff, benefactors, and parishioners who dedicated themselves to this vital mission of the Church. Your dedication and support have had a tremendous impact on many lives.

Recognizing the critical role that Catholic schools play in carrying out the mission the Lord entrusted to the care of the Church (Mt 28:19), I have requested that the children of the parish, both now and in the future, have ready access to neighboring Catholic schools supported by available parish scholarship funds. In this way, Catholic education will continue to be an essential part of Saint Stephen's evangelization effort.

The diocesan Office of Catholic Schools is working with Ms. Elizabeth Black, school principal, and neighboring Catholic school leaders to help each student find a new Catholic school home. The neighboring schools have been generous in their offers to accommodate Saint Stephen students. The Arrowsmith Program will be relocated to Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic School on Plymouth Avenue, just two miles south of Saint Stephen. I am thankful this program will continue within a Catholic school as it expands our ability to reach all learners. Ms. Black also is proactively assisting her faculty by reaching out to neighboring school leaders to encourage possible employment for them.

Despite the closure of Saint Stephen Catholic School, enrollment within our diocesan alliance of Catholic schools is strong and indicates overall enrollment growth for the third year in a row. May the Lord lead us forward on this journey and show us the ways in which we are called to continue to spread the Good News!

*The Diocese of Grand Rapids serves more than 175,114 Catholics, 80 parishes and 31 schools in an 11-county area of West Michigan. For additional information visit our website [grdiocese.org](http://grdiocese.org). Connect with the diocese on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/DioceseofGrandRapids) (Diocese of Grand Rapids), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/GRDiocese) (@GRDiocese), and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/GRDiocese) (@GRDiocese).*

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