



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK

1011 FIRST AVENUE, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10022 PHONE (212)371-1000 FAX: (212) 758-3018
MR. MICHAEL J. DEEGAN, SUPERINTENDENT

March 24, 2023

The Honorable Brad Hoylman-Sigal
New York State Senate, District 47
322 Eighth Avenue, Suite 722
New York, NY 10001

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
United States Representative
201 Varick Street, Suite 669
New York, NY 10014

The Honorable Mark Levine
Manhattan Borough President
1 Centre Street, 19th Floor
New York, NY 10007

The Honorable Tony Simone
New York State Assembly
214 West 29th Street, Suite 1002
New York, NY 10001

The Honorable Erik Bottcher
New York City Council
224 West 30th Street, Suite 1206
New York, NY 10001

Dear Senator Hoylman-Sigal, Congressman Nadler, Borough President Levine,
Assemblymember Simone and Councilmember Bottcher:

Thank you for your letter of March 15, 2023, regarding Guardian Angel School. The decision to close Guardian Angel was an extremely difficult one for the Archdiocese of New York. Like you, we are aware of the significant role that it has played in educating generations of school-aged children as well as its importance in the community. We all agree it has served the Chelsea area for decades with distinction.

While the school leadership and school community has done everything it can to make this school exemplary, keeping the school open, however, had become unsustainable in many ways. Changing demographics, declining enrollments and rapidly increasing capital needs have proven to be a fatal combination of detrimental factors for many of our schools, resulting in their closure. Unfortunately, Guardian Angel is not immune from these significant issues. Specifically at Guardian Angel School, enrollment had declined 27 percent, and the school's operating deficit has soared to over \$550,000 for this school year. This is a situation that cannot be alleviated through fundraising or donations.

As you know, New York City's public school system is also facing declining enrollments, but unlike our Catholic schools, they are funded almost exclusively from public dollars generated from local, state, and federal taxes. Moreover, they enjoy a greater level of political support, as you no doubt are aware. Despite the fact that our schools benefit from several public programs, we have long sought sufficient support from our elected representatives to keep our schools financially viable. In this regard, there is no program more important than direct public assistance to tuition paying families – like those programs enacted by lawmakers in 36 other states and by Congress for the families of the District of Columbia. Not surprisingly, Catholic and other nonpublic schools in those states and DC do not suffer the closures we do here in New York. We remain profoundly disappointed at the reluctance of many elected representatives in Albany and Washington to support this vital program that is so important for the parents of our school children and the viability of our schools.

Please understand that we are committed to finding a place for all students within our Catholic school system. We have taken measures, including having a dedicated enrollment and bilingual call center staff who continue to meet and work with Guardian Angel families to ensure that they are aware of the options for continued Catholic school education for their children. We emphasize to all parents that if a student is receiving financial assistance for this current school year, we are ensuring that they will receive a financial award once they complete their application at a Catholic school for 2023-24. All families, including those not previously receiving financial assistance, will have a chance to apply for a scholarship as part of their application to a new participating school. Parents of every child attending Guardian Angel have been notified of this option, and my staff continues to provide outreach to them. To be clear, all students from Guardian Angel School will have a place at one of our many other Catholic schools.

We are also partnering with the Office of Pupil Transportation in the NYC Department of Education to provide guidance and support related to bus and other transportation options for families to facilitate access to their students' prospective new schools.

Although your letter indicates that the deadline for applying to public schools has passed, it is our understanding that the NYC public school system guarantees a seat for any child, so the option for parents to enroll their child in a public school as opposed to a Catholic school remains viable. We know there may be waiting lists and other procedures for particular parental choices in certain grades and schools, but the decisions made by the Archdiocese in relation to these schools, which were ongoing right up to the time of this announcement, cannot be governed by or confined to a public-school enrollment timeline.

I trust that the above information is of assistance and clarifies our continuing commitment to assisting our parents and the children of our schools during these difficult and challenging times.

Sincerely,



Mr. Michael J. Deegan
Superintendent of Schools
Archdiocese of New York

CC: His Eminence Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan, Archdiocese of New York
Mr. John Cahill, Chancellor, Archdiocese of New York
Mr. Joseph Zwilling, Director of Communications, Archdiocese of New York
Mr. Michael Coppotelli, Deputy Superintendent, Archdiocese of New York
Mrs. Mary Stenson, Deputy Superintendent, Archdiocese of New York
Mr. Anthony Biscione, Regional Superintendent, Archdiocese of New York
Mr. Joseph Rosenberg, Executive Director, Catholic Community Relations Council
Mr. James Cultrara, Director for Education, New York State Catholic Conference