Board of Management Statement 27th August 2025 The Board of Management (BOM) of St. Louis NS, Rathkenny have met over recent days to discuss the situation we find the school in for the academic year 2025/2026. As of this date, there are no pupils enrolled in the school for 2025/2026. The BOM has taken the decision to inform the school Patron, Bishop Thomas Deenihan, the Department of Education and Youth (DoEY) and the local community that its considered view is the school is no longer viable. The BOM has requested the consent of the Patron and the DoEY to formally close the school, as soon as it is feasible to do so. The exact date will be agreed upon in due course between the Board of Management, Patron and the DoEY. The BOM greatly appreciates the sterling efforts of the staff, parent body and local community over recent years to support a variety of initiatives to promote the school and attract additional enrolments. It is important to acknowledge the rich history of St Louis NS, which stretches back over 120 years. The school has made an enormous contribution to the educational, religious, sporting and cultural tapestry of the community it serves. We thank the Lord for these blessings. It is hoped to organise an event in coming months to mark and to celebrate this precious legacy and heritage.

The staff of the school will be engaged in coming weeks to make appropriate arrangements for the orderly closure of the school. Our primary obligation is to ensure that both teaching and non-teaching staff are looked after. Other work will include tasks such as collating documents and creating a stock inventory of resources and equipment in the school. The BOM hopes to facilitate the distribution of some of the furniture, equipment and resources for the benefit of children in neighbouring schools.

A steep decline in primary school pupil numbers across the country, has been evident over recent years. On July 11th 2024, Minister Norma Foley told the Dáil that primary pupil numbers peaked in 2018 at 567,772 pupils. In 2022 the number was 558,143. In 2026 it is predicated to be 533,000 with a projected enrolment of 499,000 pupils expected in 2030. There will be 5000 fewer children in Junior Infants in 2026 than there were in 2022. The sharp decline in enrolment in St. Louis NS, Rathkenny is testament to this decline, which is particularly impactful on small rural parish communities, such as ours.

It is a matter for the Patron’s Office and DoEY to liaise over the coming months in relation to how this valued educational asset can best be used in these changed circumstances. The members of the BOM will remain in place to support the staff through the transition to the final closure of the school.

The BOM would like to acknowledge the support, advice and assistance it has been receiving

over recent days from officials at the Department of Education and Youth, the Diocesan office and other education partners. Beannacht Dé orainn go léir ag an am deacair seo.