

St. Ambrose Catholic School closing, merging with Holy Angels

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St. Ambrose Catholic School in Park Heights is closing at the end of the school year and will merge with Holy Angels Catholic School, the Archdiocese of Baltimore announced March 14.

St. Ambrose students will be bused to Holy Angels, which is about six miles away.

Capuchin Franciscan Father Paul Zaborowski, pastor of St. Ambrose, said in a letter to the St. Ambrose community that the school is closing because of “the lack of adequate enrollment and mounting debt.”

The school, which opened in 1926, has seen declining enrollment for the past six years, according to an archdiocesan statement.

Nineteen schools in the Archdiocese of Baltimore have closed since June 2009. St. Ambrose was named a receiving school when 13 schools were closed in 2010. Months later, the school was chosen to pilot a New American Academy Model, which included team teaching and teachers rising in grades with their students.

St. Ambrose’s currently has 118 students, which is 20 to 30 fewer students than last year, Father Zaborowski said in the letter. In 2002 the school had about 220 students. Park Heights has seen a 32 percent decline in households with school-aged children, ages 5 to 17, from 2000 to 2010 and 41 percent since 1990, according to U.S. Census data.

“For the school to be financially sound we need an enrollment of 150 children or more,” Father Zaborowski said in the letter.

Only 65 students were registered for the 2012-2013 school year, the archdiocese said.

“Due to the low enrollment, St. Ambrose has been unable to meet financial obligations, including payroll and health benefits for employees, without assistance from the archdiocese,” the archdiocese’s statement said.

St. Ambrose families are “encouraged to attend” Holy Angels, which opened in the fall of 2010 and is located on the campus of Seton Keough High School.