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Pittsburgh — August 22, 2018

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The Diocese of Pittsburgh is taking the name of Cardinal Donald Wuerl, a former Pittsburgh bishop, off the name of a Catholic high school in suburban Cranberry Township.

What had been known as Cardinal Wuerl North Catholic High School will now be known simply as North Catholic High School.

An Aug. 22 statement from the diocese said the action came at the request of Wuerl, who for the past 12 years has been archbishop of Washington.

The name change is another example of the fallout from the Aug. 14 Pennsylvania grand jury report which found that 300 priests in six dioceses around the state had sexually abused more than 1,000 minors over a 70-year period, and found bishops complicit in protecting many of them.

The report said that while Wuerl had reported some abusive priests to the Vatican early during his time in Pittsburgh, he later allowed some priests to be reassigned or retire early without facing any harsher sanction. In one case, according to the report, he OK'd a loan to help one priest suspected of abuse with personal debts. Since its release, the cardinal has disputed some portions of it.

Classes began Aug. 20 at the high school. That day, someone painted over Wuerl's name on a sign at the school. Some school alumni also had organized a petition drive to have his name removed.

The name-scrubbing began before the grand jury report was released, when Bishop Ronald Gainer of Harrisburg, in publicizing in advance the names of priests in his diocese with abuse allegations lodged against them, ordered their names removed from any building, room or hall of a Catholic facility in the diocese, as well as former bishops dating back 70 years.

"In light of the circumstances today and lest we in any way detract from the purpose of Catholic education," Wuerl wrote in an Aug. 16 letter, "I respectfully ask you to remove my name from it. In this way, there should be no distraction from the great success of the school and, most importantly, the reason for the school -- the students."

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The high school's board met Aug. 17 and approved his request. Three days later, the board of Catholic High Schools of the Diocese of Pittsburgh Inc. also approved it. Bishop David Zubik, Wuerl's successor in Pittsburgh, accepted the two boards' recommendations.

In an Aug. 22 statement, Zubik said he did so in the high school's best interests. "My concern is first, foremost and always for the students, that nothing overshadows their Catholic education," he said.

He also lauded Wuerl's efforts on behalf of Catholic education in the diocese during his tenure.

"At a time of great economic upheaval for the people of Pittsburgh and financial stress for our diocese, he made education a priority. As bishop of Pittsburgh he raised tens of millions of dollars for tuition aid," Zubik said.

"The Bishop's Education Fund and the Extra Mile Foundation has provided over \$32 million in scholarships to save schools that serve some of the most vulnerable communities of our city and whose success continues to be an example for the nation and a source of pride and hope for Pittsburgh," he added.