

Feedback from our pre-consultation meetings held in August 2019

Our recent pre-consultation meetings on denominational education took place in August 2019. These form part of the wider Midlothian Learning Estate Strategy 2017-47.

The strategy highlighted that a review of denominational school provision is required to establish the best strategy to provide denominational education in Midlothian.

These discussions gathered some initial views and will help shape future proposals. This document provides a record of the event. Participants are welcome to clarify comments further if they wish to do so. Contact details are included at the end of the document.

Further pre-consultation will be undertaken and any future proposals will be subject to formal consultation in the coming months.

What are you saying?

The session included information on background to the consultation and highlighted school rolls, staffing challenges, catchment areas and the consultation process.

As part of the session groups were asked to comment on the discussion models (appendix 1) and also consider the following questions in their discussion groups.

- Why attend a denominational school? (Session 1, 2, 3)
- Would your choice of school change if the denominational school were in another location? (Session 2 & 3 only)

Responses received to date are summarised below and a number of questions were also asked via emails & post session and through the session feedback.

Q1) Why attend a denominational School?

Views gathered so far.

- *Because Catholic & local*
- *Reputation*
- *Believe in Catholic Education*
- *Education and ethos better*
- *Support & retain school/parish/parent links*
- *Smaller, better, more teacher time*
- *Local and accessible walking distance*
- *Big school too impersonal, needs get lost in system*
- *Location of big schools transport issue, cost and distance*
- *Local smaller schools preferable*
- *Big schools impersonal*
- *Small schools ethos and quality*
- *Non RC attend smaller schools*
- *Composite classes*
- *Benefits of school/parish/home model*
- *Small schools*
- *Ethos*
- *Community*
- *Faith*
- *Benefit of smaller class sizes*
- *Extra-curricular activities*
- *Reputation of schools*
- *Smaller schools provide a better level of education*
- *Smaller schools build a stronger community*
- *Remain with status quo*
- *Small schools have a place*
- *Big schools don't suit all children*
- *Lots of children attend smaller schools due to the challenge at larger schools*
- *Although faith was not the main reason behind sending children to school but the choice for religious education should be there*
- *Location for RC primary is important*
- *Midlothian is a large area and travel options and traffic make this hard*
- *Children moving from a smaller setting would require additional support (resources money teachers etc.) in a large setting*
- *Taught catholic education*
- *Church connection to school*
- *Inclusive of all faiths and teaching of this*
- *Nurture bases - best*
- *Multi-cultural children choose catholic schools*
- *Morals and values*

- *Sense of community*
- *More nurturing environment*
- *Whole class involvement with sacraments*
- *Behaviour - expectations are higher in a good way*
- *Encourages positive relationships with other children*
- *So that pupils can attend catholic HS*
- *St David's, St Luke's, St Andrew's has a good reputation - values unique qualities, attainment not catholic per say but more Christian values*
- *Reputation outweighs the non-denominational other options*
- *Choosing to send non-Catholic to the school based upon reports, ethos, word of mouth, and attainment*
- *Important to consider Christian % within schools*
- *Importance of looking into the qualification allowance for teachers and flexibility of this due to the drop of amount of catholic people training to be teachers as there are fewer catholic teachers*
- *It's about the Christian values not just the catholic*
- *Continue Catholic education - spiritual way of life*
- *Link from one to school*
- *Values and ethos of school (non RC)*
- *Family / community feel*
- *Better turnout in the school*
- *Relationship community/church/school - children taught this responsibility*
- *Achievements e.g. Pope Francis Award, CARITAS The whole reason not just maths etc.*
- *School moto*
- *Feeder school for the RC Primary*
- *The whole person not just maths etc.*
- *Reputation*
- *All choosing an East Lothian primary fed into High School example of moving further for school*
- *No HS provision (RC) in East Lothian*
- *Better School*
- *Parents' experience*
- *RC ethos*
- *Smaller school*
- *Sense of community parish*
- *Catholic ethos moral ethical*
- *Ethical values*
- *Feeling of the school*
- *Reputation word of mouth - behaviour, education etc.*
- *Learn about religion*
- *Smaller schools - support for additional needs*
- *Religious Compromise - mixed religions parents*
- *Christian input and values*
- *Respect for people*

- *Changes between life as an older more ecumenical Catholic Vs. younger Catholic*
- *Spiritual Strengthening through Sacred Heart ethos/family/community/coming together*
- *Closeness*
- *Sacramental preparation*
- *Acceptance of Christ (respect) by non-Catholics*
- *Monthly mass for children - good opportunities to engage with church*
- *Christian values*
- *Learning about other religions*
- *To be able to practice their faith*
- *Tend to be smaller, protective environment, community spirit, more individual care*
- *Caring environment - ethos good general moral grounding opens up RC faith to wider community acceptance of other faiths*
- *Our unique values/ethos*
- *Church links with Community*
- *Sense of community*
- *Denominational schools tend to be smaller*
- *Much more than a school it's a safe haven for many many children*
- *A fostered sense of community, well-being*
- *Part of a community*
- *Values and community and educational beliefs of the school.*
- *Not only a school but our extended family*
- *Best learning environment*
- *The staff, class numbers, curriculum, learning approach and overall inclusion*
- *Additional needs can be met*
- *In small schools, teachers can be more flexible to pupils' needs and areas of interest*
- *Has a fantastic atmosphere, caring teachers and staff and a genuine community feel*
- *A community spirit*
- *Small schools give an opportunity for innovation and leadership*
- *The values and principles of the school*
- *The nearness to their home or the small classes*
- *Lots of facilities*
- *Recruitment is a large issue where need to have changes*

Q2) Would your choice of school change if the denominational school were in another location? (Session 2 & 3 only)

- *Yes but depending on distance and transport arrangements*
- *Worried about grouping all the catholic children in one school*
- *Need to change something at the top*
- *Pupils coming from Musselburgh already make choice to travel in*
- *It is more about the ethos and identity at the schools that stand at the moment*
- *It would change ethos due to changing the dynamic due to diversity of pupils attending*
- *Already travel to a catholic school*

- *All parents at a table would travel to a catholic school*
- *Low SIMD would be affected most*
- *Depends on new school reputation*
- *Larger schools - less individual support*
- *Distance could be problem logistically - travel times*
- *Logistics - drop off/pick up/ childcare*
- *Transport - issues created*
- *Anxiety about P1's on a bus*
- *Travel sickness*
- *Not all parents/pupils will support a merger of schools and would rather move to another school that meets their requirements than to follow their current school to the new place*
- *Would feel we are already doing this e.g. denominational 50m from house*

Discussion Models – Your feedback

You were also asked to consider the 8 discussion delivery models as part of the session. Attendees worked in groups to look at the benefits and disadvantages of some of the models.

The 8 discussion models are summarised here;

- 1) **Status quo.** Current provision of 7 primary schools and one secondary school
- 2) **One secondary School and three primary schools.** This model would realign the 7 primary schools with the realignment of the RC parishes creating three primary schools.
- 3) **One secondary school and four*primary schools** (*5 primary schools with 2 primary schools being under shared headship)
- 4) **One all through model plus three primary schools in another location.**
- 5) **One secondary school and four primary** schools based around the current geographic learning community areas.
- 6) **One shared campus with secondary and primary school plus two primary schools in other locations.**
- 7) **One all through school plus one primary school in another location**
- 8) **All through model** – One all through school comprising the RC High School & merging all 7 primary schools, to be located at the current High School campus.

The 4 models chosen for discussion (Models 2, 3, 5, and 7) contain elements of all 8 models identified to date. The output and comments from these discussions are shown in the tables below.

Further questions were asked by attendees and these are also noted below the models and some initial guidance/answers is given to these.

Discussion Model 2

One Secondary School and Three Primary Schools

This model would realign the 7 primary schools with the realignment of the RC Church Parishes, creating three primary schools. (Map 2.7)

- Retain St David's High School in its current location with pupils attending from Midlothian and East Lothian
- St David's and St Luke's would combine to form the school for St David's Parish based in Dalkeith or Mayfield/Easthouses
- St Mary's St Andrew's and St. Mathews would combine to form the school for St Matthew's Parish and be based in the new St Mary's school building
- Sacred Heart and St Margaret's would combine to form the school for St Margaret's parish based in the Sacred Heart school building

Catchment areas for each of the three denominational primary schools would be redrawn so as to optimize the distribution of pupils and minimize distances for pupils from home to school.

Benefits

- Good links to strengthen community
- Viable Catholic ethos
- No dilution of Catholic Teachers
- Rationalising would mean more catholic teachers in front of the children - but this could be impersonal and loose ethos
- More costs effective to run school
- Would still have a catholic school option
- more of a connection with parish
- Like the idea of the parish option as mostly keeps the community as together as it can.
- Same Parish priest already e.g. St D's & St L's
- May support priests as one school parish
- Bigger schools would potentially be a compromise
- One HT - potentially not shared headships
- Solve staffing a little by RC teachers - fewer needed
- RC curriculum is school/parish/home based - schools would fit into parish boundaries

Disadvantages

- Transport would have to be guaranteed long term
- Larger class sizes - may need clarification
- Issue of opportunity of Catholic Students not been given opportunity to teach in catholic schools
- School numbers would increase to over 300 pupils at present St Matthews has just over 50 pupils this will affect our children's education
- Class sizes would increase dramatically
- Transport to the school
- Pulling 3 schools together doesn't solve the issue on lack of catholic teachers
- Traffic issues
- Children as young as 5 on a school bus
- Parents who don't drive at present are within walking distance of the school
- Dangers of anti-Catholic feeling
- 2 miles away entitled to transport this has not been made available to parents

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parish better model for Sacred Heart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All St Andrews pupils would be transported • Does not promote healthy living as some children walk to and from school • Community cohesion • Exclude non-Catholics due to lack of space • Not community based • Removing catholic values • Local community - more of them + us scenario back to 80's sectarianism • Distance is a big factor • Extra costs to LA due to school travel • Negotiating different locations and provisions of all children e.g. high school nursery & primary all in different area • Issue with child care • Admission criteria and challenges to this within the school climate of the local areas • added pressure on the ASN provision • Disconnect from the parish and the community - disengagement from St Luke's parish • Parish model putting St Luke's and St David's together when they are the biggest schools, dilutes pupils and impacts class sizes more. • Walk to school week? Encouraging improvement in health • Limitations put on teachers by diocese (Catholic and Christian) • Transport Costs • Transport costs to council • Time on bus for wee ones • Supervision of children on bus
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Further Questions;

Q: Would LA Assist with transport arrangements?

A: Following our Admission to Primary and Secondary Schools policy, a pupil may receive free transport if they attend their catchment school and their home address is more than two miles from the school based on the shortest safe walking distance. A pupil may also receive free transport if the Council has placed them in a non-catchment school due to a catchment school being full.

Q: How many other faiths are at a catholic school and why parents chose to send their children to a catholic school?

A: We do not hold data on all faiths present in any establishment. The responses to why parents may choose a Catholic School are shown from the discussion sessions.

Discussion Model 3	
<p>One Secondary School and Four Primary Schools. (*5 Primary Schools with one shared headship across two schools)</p> <p>This model would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain St David’s High School in its current location with pupils attending from Midlothian and East Lothian • St David’s Primary school would be retained on its existing site in Dalkeith • St Andrew’s and St Luke’s would merge and be based in Gorebridge at the St Andrew’s Primary School site • St Margaret’s and St Mary’s would merge and be based in the new St Mary’s school building in Bonnyrigg • Sacred Heart would be retained in Penicuik and St Matthews would be retained in Rosewell under current shared headship arrangements with Sacred Heart <p>Catchment areas for each of the four denominational primary schools would be redrawn so as to optimize the distribution of pupils and minimize distances for pupils from home to school</p>	
Benefits	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New School in place for St Margaret's & St Marys • New building for St Luke's/ St Andrew's • Two mergers would support the catholic teacher crisis • Benefits are that various areas within Midlothian can still access RC Education • Model will service the fastest growing areas within Midlothian - Rosewell and Bonnyrigg • A change in catchment allows the choice for parents to find an appropriate school for their child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricting choice • Geographical benefit - weather becoming more extreme • Catholic intake? • Moving St Mary's / St Margaret's is an unfair expectation for children & parents • Keeping schools local to the parishes is important to the ethos • St Andrews doesn't have space to expand no land/space for this • Families without cars would struggle to get from Mayfield to Gorebridge • Would buses be put out to support this?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint headships allows a share in resources / teaching staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of identity • Joining of communities will be tricky • Number of catholic staff will still be low • Merging 1st +3rd Biggest would create a school with nearly 400 pupils • Result in change of close family ethos • Doesn't address % of RC at Sacred Heart in this model • Would a school being merged loose link to a local parish church • How would kids attend mass during school day if not close by? Bus? Good to walk • At Christmas , pupils go to local care homes & day care centres • Mixing of youth & elderly locally , this model might lose this for merging schools • A local school means kids can use active travel in line with public health priorities
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Further Questions:

Q: For merged schools where pupils have to now travel an increased distance, what additional provision would there be for school/public transport?

A: Following our Admission to Primary and Secondary Schools policy, a pupil may receive free transport if they attend their catchment school and their home address is more than two miles from the school based on the shortest safe walking distance. A pupil may also receive free transport if the Council has placed them in a non-catchment school due to a catchment school being full.

Discussion Model 5

One Secondary School and Four primary schools based around the current geographic learning community areas

This model would:

- Retain St David's High school in its current location with pupils attending from Midlothian and East Lothian
- St David's Primary School and St Luke's would merge and be based on the current St David's Primary School campus (Dalkeith/St David's Learning Community)
- St Andrew's would be retained (Newbattle Learning Community)
- St Margaret's, St Matthew's and St Mary's would merge and be based in the new St Mary's school building in Bonnyrigg (Lasswade Learning Community)
- Sacred Heart would be retained in Penicuik (Penicuik/Beeslack Learning Community)

Catchment areas for each of the four denominational primary schools would be redrawn so as to optimize the distribution of pupils and minimize distances for pupils from home to school.

Benefits

- Same parish in St David's + St Luke's , same priest
- Open further opportunities to bigger schools, parent support
- Keeps the High School
- End up with larger schools
- Merger increases catholic capacity
- Not having too many composite can be beneficial
- Keeps the High School end up with larger schools merger increases Catholic capacity
- Not making too many composite can be beneficial
- St M's x 3 amalgamation most realistic in terms of numbers
- Realistic option
- Locality/geographically based - ensures peers live close by and maintain sense of community

Disadvantages

- Larger schools - rising rolls
- St Margaret's on a campus with a different parish
- Adverse weather - longer distances
- Travel - Particularly St Margaret's
- Losing parish link
- Disadvantages of sacrament and logistics especially of St Margaret's
- Savings in closing St Matthew's minimal
- Naming of new school
- Creates 4 very large catchment areas
- Schools split apart
- Transport issues
- New schools out-with catchment area, non RC might not have a choice
- less pupils likely to transition to SDHS
- In a larger community of Catholics higher likelihood they would progress to SDHS

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Luke's St Matthew's & St Margaret's would lose their schools • Requirement/cost of transport • St David's radius is large • St Andrews catchment is huge • More pupil's no more small schools
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Questions

Q: How is the current level of building (Shawfair etc.) feeding into the numbers?

A: The projections are based upon a number of factors that include projected property numbers, estimations of pupil growth from the MPLD (Midlothian Local Development Plan) and current percentages of pupils attending RC provision in Midlothian.

Q: What will be the impact of St David's HS by reducing the number of premises?

A: St David's HS draws on a number of communities and school sizes, this model would continue to do so. If the reduced number of premises results in a smaller total number of pupils attending RC primary schools this could lead to a reduction in numbers attending St David's HS.

Q: Concerns about projected figures - only to school capacity?

A: The projected figures in our discussion models are based on the current percentages of all pupils attending RC provision in Midlothian, restricted to the planned total capacity of the current 7 RC primary schools.

Q: Concerns about projected figures - including RC only?

A: The projections include all pupils attending RC provision in Midlothian.

Q: Would the current school need to be rebuilt?

A: New school at St Mary's RC PS is already under construction and further expansion would be required at St David's RC PS under this model.

Q: Why is the largest primary being merged?

A: This discussion model is based around alignment with the current learning communities. If taken forward the catchment areas of all the RC schools would be redrawn so as to optimize the distribution of pupils and minimize distances for pupils from home to school.

Q: *Would school identities be preserved?*

A: Any new campus or merged campus could consider naming and identity to reflect the new catchment area and links to original school names.

Discussion Model 7	
One all through school plus One primary school in another location	
<p>This model would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain St David’s High School in its current location with pupils attending from Midlothian and East Lothian • 3 denominational primary schools (St David’s, St Andrew’s and St Luke’s) would merge into one primary school and be located on St David’s High School campus • 4 primary schools (St Matthew’s St Margaret’s, St Mary’s and Sacred Heart) would merge into one primary school and be located in the new St Mary’s school building in Bonnyrigg <p>Catchment areas for each of the denominational primary schools would be redrawn so as to optimize the distribution of pupils and minimize distances for pupils from home to school.</p>	
Benefits	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catholic education can be taught by one teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Splitting a parish • More chance of bullying /relationship difficulties • Parents would just send children to local denominational schools • Parents don’t want to be bussed • Weather, Penicuik an issue • Need to take parishes into account • Other non-denominational schools are full or near capacity already • Why? Sought out to find the needs of our children • Benefits of smaller school • Transport distance time • Class size increase

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of education • Longer day • Traffic jams • Late for class • Access • St David's School would be much bigger than St Mary's • Lose the benefits of Catholic schools • Transportation not good for P1 too many buses too much traffic • Too many buses too much traffic • Building would be needed • Alienates you from the community - e.g. after school clubs, transport would prohibit these, weather may affect this model • Range of religion in the school • Couldn't walk to school with friends • Too early a start
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Questions

Q: Would parents choose to travel such a big distance with young families?

A: Some responses to that question are listed on pages 4 & 5

Q: Could Catholic teacher be shared between schools similar to heads?

A: This would involve teachers being peripatetic or being employed at multiple locations. We do have teachers who teach at different locations.

Q: Can we make sure that this is clearly communicated to all parents?

A: Yes as part of the pre-consultation and consultation process stakeholders will be notified of any developments or intended actions.

Q: Why? Possible reduction in one of the fastest growing communities.

A: The Council's Learning Estate Strategy and the discussion models allow for growth.

Q: What is Capacity of St Mary's?

A: The capacity of the new St Mary's school will provide 231 pupil places.

Q: In these new times of financial constraint and with the new extensions securing the future of the Sacred Heart school could there be ways of restoring after school use of the buildings for the parish?

A: After school access is currently available for community users in a number of community facilities in Penicuik - [.https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/directory/50/community_spaces_for_let_or_hire/category/484](https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/directory/50/community_spaces_for_let_or_hire/category/484)

Q: Roll numbers are out of date?

A: The current rolls at the events were based on numbers supplied from schools in June 2019 and will be updated following analysis of the September 2019 census.

Q: Are all the new houses in Rosewell, Bonnyrigg, Hopfield etc. being accounted for in forecasting?

A: The Learning Estate Strategy takes into account growth from planned housing identified in the MLDP which includes Rosewell, Bonnyrigg and Hopefield.

What happens next?

Once again thank you for your valuable input at the recent meetings.

Using your feedback, comments and views we will now start to develop viable models of delivery that will be the basis of further pre-consultation and engagement.

Any future proposals will then be subject to formal consultation.

Further comments & views that are received by email by the 11th October will also be added to those gathered and noted above at the discussion meetings.

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