

Statutory consultation

on the proposals to close
Our Lady's RC High and
St Augustine of Canterbury RC
schools and open a new
Roman Catholic high school

November 2008



Oldham
Council

The proposal

Roman Catholic Diocese of Salford and Oldham Council have drawn up exciting plans that will affect Roman Catholic schools in Oldham and we have sent you this leaflet because it is likely that this will affect you or your child.

Our plans are called 'transforming secondary education' and are part of the national Building Schools for the Future programme. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to replace, rebuild or refurbish every secondary school across Oldham. Part of this plan is that a single, brand new Roman Catholic school would open on the Lower Radclyffe site on Broadway in Chadderton on 1 September 2012. To enable this to happen Our Lady's RC High and St Augustine of Canterbury Roman Catholic schools would both close on 31 August 2012.

Both Salford Diocese and Oldham Council are working closely together on these proposals. In line with Government guidelines we are required to consult with all those who may have an interest in the proposals. The formal consultation period is taking place between 10 November and 28 November 2008. Please read this leaflet and tell us what you think. Your views are important and can be provided by completing and returning the consultation survey form accompanying this leaflet.

Why replace Our Lady's and St Augustine with a new Roman Catholic school?

The Catholic population is changing. In Oldham there are fewer children being presented for baptism and therefore fewer requests from the Catholic community for places at Roman Catholic schools. As funding is dependent on the number of pupils attending, not the number of places, this could create a financial difficulty for the schools.

The staff and governors at both schools have worked hard to provide pupils with a good education. Educational standards in Oldham are improving, but results generally across the borough remain below the national average. We want to change this and help more young people gain the skills and qualifications they will need to get a good job or place in further education, college or university when they leave school.

Why will the new school be better than the current two schools?

Both schools have served generations of Oldham's children well. However, these are based in old buildings that do not provide the modern facilities our young people deserve and must have for the modern education they need. The new Roman Catholic school will have superior facilities that are more fitting for 21st century education. It will have enhanced accommodation, better use of modern technology and vastly improved external play areas. In addition, the new school will be able to build on the expertise of both Our Lady's and St Augustine schools.

Why the Lower Radclyffe site?

After a full appraisal of the various options the Lower Radclyffe site has been chosen by the Salford Diocese as the preferred location for the new school. We believe this provides the best solution to achieve our aims of building a new school on a neutral site and with access to on-site playing fields. As it is already a council-owned site, if agreed, the proposals can move ahead quickly. In fact, as the new Roman Catholic school has been nominated as a 'sample scheme', this means the school will be built first within the Building Schools for the Future programme.

What is the vision for the new Roman Catholic school?

The Roman Catholic school serving Oldham will be a welcoming and all-embracing community through which all young people will leave the school:

- confident, responsible and successful learners
- secure in understanding their emotional and spiritual being
- supported in identifying and drawing out their unique talents
- equipped to live in a world which contains people with a difference

The new school will be committed to providing a working environment in which the design provides a climate for learning which challenges and supports every learner to fulfil their potential, tailored to the specific and personal needs of learners.

If the two Roman Catholic schools close, will the pupils be guaranteed a place at the new school?

The Governing Bodies of the two existing schools are already working collaboratively to ensure that all those pupils currently within the schools will be able to transfer to the new school. Parents and carers are entitled to look for alternative provision, if they so wish, at other schools where there are vacancies. If there are vacancies, the child will be given a place. If there are no vacancies, the child can either be placed on the waiting list for the preferred school or the parents and carers can appeal for a place.

If the schools close, what will happen to its pupils with additional educational needs?

There are legal protections for pupils which mean that all of their current provision is secure at the new school. Like all Oldham secondary schools, the new Roman Catholic school will be fully inclusive and provide improved education for pupils with additional educational needs.

Will the new school still have a post-16 provision?

Yes. The new school will provide an 11-19 provision, with 1500 11-16 places and 150 post-16 places.

If the schools close, what will happen to its staff?

School staff are understandably apprehensive about such a big change. The key to its success will be retaining the high quality staff currently working in our schools and ongoing successful recruitment. As the proposals progress we are committed to working closely with schools, unions and staff to ensure stability and continuity.

At this stage a staffing structure for the new school has not been agreed but, once decided, the Governors of the new school will be responsible for making appointments. Existing staff at Our Lady's and St Augustine with clearly defined corresponding roles in the new school will be able to transfer under TUPE regulations. This preserves the continuity of employment and terms and conditions of employees who transfer to a new employer.

What will be the admissions policy for the new Roman Catholic school?

The new Roman Catholic admissions policy will be developed by the Governing Body. The new school will consult on its proposed admission arrangements, which must comply with the Admissions Code.

How will the transition from the existing schools into the new school be managed?

Safeguarding children's education is our first priority and effective transition arrangements are the key to success. Much work planning for this has already been done with further experience and lessons learnt with the recent moves to Oldham's new Radclyffe and Failsworth schools. This will continue in preparation for the proposed closures and transfer to the new school in 2012. Particular care and effort will be taken to minimise any disruption to pupils in examination years.

Are the proposals a done deal?

The proposals have been made taking into account a wide range of issues including pupil projections, educational attainment, and availability of appropriate sites, costs and timeframes. We now feel these proposals offer Roman Catholic pupils the best opportunity to make a real and practical difference to their future education.

This does not mean that the proposals are totally fixed. There may be elements of the proposals that are adapted or changed as a result of the views expressed during the consultation period. It may be that consultation throws up better alternatives for achieving the changes we are seeking to make within timescales and affordability. It is important to say, however, that the final decision remains with Oldham Council, and it is the Council's job to make the decision that achieves the best overall outcome for the children and young people of Oldham, now and into the future.

What happens next?

When the consultation period ends on 28 November the Diocese and Oldham Council will decide whether or not to continue with the proposals, and if we do proceed we will then publish public notices. Following this there will be a further six weeks for you to make your views known. Oldham Council will then make a decision whether or not to proceed, and this decision will be reached by April 2009.

Where can I find out more?

Salford Diocese and Oldham Council invite you to attend public consultation 'drop-in' events at the two Roman Catholic high schools where you can ask questions and tell us in person what you think.

Tuesday 18 November,
St Augustine of Canterbury RC School, Grange Avenue,
Werneth, Oldham, OL8 4ED. 3.30pm-6.30pm.

Wednesday 19 November,
Our Lady's RC High School, Vaughan Street, Royton,
Oldham, OL2 5DL. 3.30pm-6.30pm

How do I make my views known?

We want to encourage all pupils, parents, carers, school staff and other stakeholders to express your views. It is important that you share them with us so that we can build a full picture across the borough. You can do this by completing the consultation survey form and either posting it to the freepost address shown below or attending the 'drop-in' events.

You have until 28 November to give us your views.

Write to: The BSF Project Team, Oldham Council, FREEPOST, RRXE-JYCL-BELC, Level 10, Civic Centre, West Street, Oldham OL1 1UT.

E-mail: bsf@oldham.gov.uk

Phone: 0161 770 3094 Fax: 0161 770 1111

Internet: www.oldham.gov.uk/bsf

In person: At the 'drop-in' events

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آپنی এই لیفلٹوں کو دیگر زبانوں، بریل اور بڑے حروف میں مل سکتا ہے۔ اگر آپ کو اس کی ایک کاپی چاہتے تو براہ مہربانی ہمارے ساتھ 0161 770 3094 پر رابطہ کریں۔