



West Suffolk Catholic Pyramid of Schools

Public consultation on
proposal to reorganise
in September 2016



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Se precisar de ajuda para ler estas informações em outra língua, por favor telefone para o número abaixo.

Portuguese

بەم زانیاریەشیستی ئە بە ت گەدی بەتە دە یارمەر پ ویستی بەگەئە
بەگە، وە ی خوارم ژمارەندی بەیو بەزمان کی تر تگایە

Kurdish

Jeżeli potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu tych informacji w swoim języku zadzwoń na podany poniżej numer.

Polish

如果你需要其他語言來幫助你了解這些資訊，請撥以下電話。

Chinese

এই লেখাটি যদি অন্য ভাষাতে বুঝতে চান তাহলে নিচের নম্বরে ফোন করুন

Bengali

اگر شما نیاز دارید که این اطلاعات را به زبان دیگری دریافت کنید لطفاً به شماره زیر تلفن کنید.

Farsi

If you would like this information in another format, including audio or large print, please call **08456 066 067**.

1 Introduction

The Diocese, the Headteachers and the Governing Bodies of the six schools in the West Suffolk Catholic Pyramid, namely:

St Benedict's Catholic School, Bury St Edmunds
St Louis Catholic Middle School, Bury St Edmunds
St Edmund's Catholic Primary School, Bury St Edmunds
St Felix Catholic Primary School, Haverhill
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Sudbury
St Louis Catholic Academy, Newmarket,

have jointly agreed to consult on a proposal to move to a pattern of two-tier education across the Pyramid. This new pattern of education would consist of four primary schools with an age range of 4 -11 years old and a secondary school with an age range of 11-18 years. Three of the four primary schools already have that age range, so the proposal would mean that St Edmund's Catholic Primary School extended its age range to age 11. St Benedict's already has an age range of 11-18, but would increase its admission number from 60 to 150 in years 7 and 8 and would initially achieve additional space by using the St Louis Middle School site. Under this proposal St Louis Middle School would close.

The Diocese, Headteachers and Governing Bodies share the view that it makes educational and organisational sense to have a structure which is consistent with most of the schools in the rest of the country. This rationale is strengthened by the known benefits of a single transition point achieved in a two-tier model of education.

The Catholic Pyramid is consulting on the proposal to move to two-tier at the same time as schools in the Bury Schools Partnership. Details of the Partnership proposals can be found at www.suffolk.gov.uk/sor

2 Background

The Pyramid of Catholic schools serving West Suffolk has operated within a three-tier system where children change school at age 9 and again at age 13. Three of the primary schools, St Felix in Haverhill, St Louis in Newmarket and St Joseph's in Sudbury have changed their age ranges in line with the other schools in those areas where a two-tier system of schools with a single change of school at age 11 has been agreed and implemented.

When this process began, it was expected that schools in Bury St Edmunds would also consult on a move to a two-tier system for implementation in 2013. The financial crisis resulted in Suffolk County Council's School Organisation Review programme being slowed down.

In 2011, proposals were brought forward to set up a two-tier system for the Catholic schools in Bury. This proposal was rejected by the Schools Adjudicator leaving St Edmund's with an age range of 4 to 9, St Louis Middle as a school for 9 to 13 year olds and St Benedict's as a school for 13 to 18 year olds. In order to provide a suitable two-tier Catholic route for children at the primary schools in Haverhill, Newmarket and Sudbury, St Benedict's successfully consulted on extending its age range to 11-18 and from September 2013 offers 60 places in year 7 to children from those areas.

Choices for parents today

Parents in the Catholic Pyramid's primary schools in Haverhill, Newmarket and Sudbury largely keep their children at those primary schools until age 11 and then choose a two-tier 11-18 secondary school. They also have the option to apply to St Louis Middle School at Year 5 and Year 7.

Parents of children in St Edmund's Primary School in Bury St Edmunds do not have the option of keeping their children there until age 11. For these children, parents apply for a place at a middle school, usually St Louis Middle School, at age 9 and then change schools again at age 13 to an upper school, usually St Benedict's.

There is thus a difference in the Catholic education route available to parents in Bury St Edmunds compared to other areas of West Suffolk.

How the proposal was developed

After the decision of the School's Adjudicator in December 2011, a Parent Forum and a Technical Group were established to review the possible options. Details of their findings can be found at www.suffolk.gov.uk/sor. Of the options considered, four were put forward by the Parent Forum to the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors for final consideration:

- **All-through School (Bury)**
- **All-through school (Whole Pyramid)**
- **Two-tier model**
- **'Compromise' two-tier model.**

After a great deal of discussion and consideration of these models by the Headteachers and the Governing Bodies and further meetings between schools, it was agreed that the schools would proceed with a single preferred proposal which was a composite of the two-tier model and the 'Compromise' two-tier models. In doing so, the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors were deeply aware of the interest in the All-through (Bury) option, both in the Parent Forum and in the wider community. Information regarding the consideration of the all-through option can be found at www.suffolk.gov.uk/sor

3 The proposal

The Governing Bodies of the six schools of the West Suffolk Catholic Pyramid propose a move to a two-tier model of education through the expansion of the age range at St Edmund's Catholic Primary and increasing pupil numbers at St Benedict's Catholic School so that Catholic education opportunities in Bury St Edmunds become equal to those available to families across the rest of West Suffolk.

The Governing Bodies recommend this proposal in the knowledge that the existing system of primary, middle and upper schools has served Catholic and non-Catholic families very well for many years.

The proposal would allow all children in the Catholic pyramid to have a single point of transfer at age 11.

The proposal would be underpinned by a commitment from the primary, middle and upper schools to work closely together to build on the excellence of all three existing schools and create secure and outstanding educational opportunities for Catholic and non-Catholic children in the future. The pyramid acknowledges the strength of its excellent practitioners and its commitment to achieving high standards for pupils and would work together to

provide training and opportunities to retain as many teaching and support staff as possible from St Louis Middle.

To accommodate the extra children at St Benedict's, the school would need to teach some of its students on the current St Louis Middle site until funding became available to complete additional teaching space at St Benedict's. The St Benedict's site is large enough to take additional buildings with little or no loss of playing field space. In the meantime, the use of the St Louis Middle site would enable additional facilities to be provided.

St Edmund's would be funded for the extra classrooms it would need through the proposal to extend the age range of other primary schools in the Bury St Edmunds Partnership to age 11.

4 The Change Process

Public Consultation

From 7 October to 13 December 2013, parents, teachers, young people, governors and all other interested parties will have the opportunity to say what they think about the proposed new organisation of schools in the Catholic Pyramid. We welcome your views on all aspects of the proposed change including whether or not you agree that there should be a move to a two-tier system for a particular school or schools. Details of how you can have your say can be found on page 11. All responses will be analysed and taken into consideration. In previous school organisation consultations, comments from people at this stage helped to shape the final proposals.

Statutory Proposals

Once consultation has ended, the governing bodies of the schools concerned will decide what the proposals should be for each school taking into account all consultation responses.

Subject to agreement being reached, the legal process of making changes to schools by publishing statutory notices would begin. You would find these in the local paper and at schools and libraries. They would also be available on the Suffolk County Council website www.suffolk.gov.uk/sor. After notices were published there would be a further six-week period in which anyone could comment on the final proposals for each school.

Decision Making

In most cases, the final decision on the proposals will be made by the County Council's Cabinet. However in some cases the law states that the Schools Adjudicator must make the final decision. One example would be if the County Council cannot make a decision within the time limit set by law. The Secretary of State for Education appoints the School Adjudicator.

A final decision for schools in the Catholic Pyramid is expected by April 2014.

Implementing the Change

If the proposals are approved the first changes would happen in September 2015 when children in the current year 3 at St Edmunds Primary would not transfer to middle school but would stay as year 5 in their primary schools. The following year, September 2016, these pupils would become year 6 in their primary school.

St Louis Middle School would close at the end of the summer term 2016 and in September 2016 its pupils would transfer to secondary school. St Benedict's governors have agreed to

consult on a temporary change in admission arrangements for September 2016 to take account of those year groups in St Louis Middle School needing to transfer to secondary school at the point of closure.

We intend to keep to this timeframe. However, it will be kept under continual review in the light of consultation responses and any unexpected events. Parents will be consulted if any change in the timeframe is needed.

A diagram to help you understand how the proposed changes would affect individual children as they progress through the school system can be found at www.suffolk.gov.uk/sor.

Support for Change

County Council staff would work closely with the Catholic pyramid to establish a programme of support for staff in St Louis Middle School to ensure that they are in a position to make informed choices about their professional development. At the centre of this support is the shared aim to retain exceptional teaching and support staff and to help those staff prepare to teach across a different age range. This support includes training and a process for staff to help them find jobs in the new system of schools. Advisers are available to help schools prepare for the age range.

Conclusion

The Governing Bodies consider that this proposal is the best means currently of securing the continued success of Catholic education in Bury St Edmunds and across West Suffolk. The Roman Catholic Diocese extends its full support and backing to the proposed changes set out in this consultation document.

Further information for parents

There is further information available to parents to help understand how the headteachers, governors and parents of the West Suffolk Catholic Pyramid arrived at this proposal and what the implications might be for your child if the proposal is implemented. These include information from the Parent Pyramid Forum, the Technical Group and the Headteacher and Governors Meeting and can be found by following this link www.suffolk.gov.uk/sor.

A Diocesan Statement on Catholic Education in West Suffolk

In the Diocese of East Anglia, we promote our schools as part of the wider enterprise of the educative mission of the local Catholic community, the Diocese, and the Church as a whole. Our schools must strive to be educational institutions of excellent quality, sharing in the work of bringing the Gospel values to all people. We must work together for this same ultimate goal and our schools must foster close ties that bring a communal response to our Christian mission. We must be welcoming communities for all, whilst upholding our prime mission to provide Catholic education for Catholic families. In particular, the Diocese will work closely with the Local Authority and St Louis Middle School to offer practical support and guidance to the staff of the school who wish to continue working in a Catholic school. This support could include training, professional development and placement opportunities in other Catholic schools.

5 A vision for St Benedict's Catholic School from September 2016

The leadership teams of St Benedict's and St Louis Middle School have begun a series of meetings to discuss the way the school would work as an 11-18 school from September 2016. The leadership teams and governing bodies firmly agree that the ultimate aim would be to establish St Benedict's as a school of 900-950 students on the Beetons Way site. An initial feasibility study has shown that there is room at the front of the site to accommodate the additional classrooms that would be needed. The school fields would not be significantly affected.

In the first instance, St Benedict's would operate on both the Beetons Way and the current St Louis Middle sites. Current plans are to base all year 7 and 8 at the St Louis site but we will be seeking views throughout the consultation period from parents as to the future use of the sites and the placement of children. It would also be possible to site year 9 there, in line with the 'compromise' model suggested by the Parent Forum. The final decision will depend on many factors. One of these is the number of year groups in Key Stage 3. Many schools including St Benedict's favour beginning Key Stage 4 in year 9. This allows greater flexibility at Key Stage 4 (currently GCSE). However, revisions to all Key Stages are being proposed by the Government and we will have to make plans to suit the circumstances in two years' time. St Benedict's would develop a transition plan to ensure that routes for students already at St Louis Middle School or at St Benedict's in 2015-16 are clearly understood.

Whether two or three years are based on the St Louis site, the freeing up of teaching space would allow us to explore some exciting options on both sites. These options would be low cost and high impact, because we would want to conserve maximum funding for the development of the Beetons Way site at the earliest opportunity. These options include the following possibilities:

- **provision of 'breakout' areas for students to use at break and lunchtimes**
- **a school chapel and meeting spaces for retreats and other events**
- **additional space for staff workrooms.**

We would not plan to move children between sites during the school day, but we would have the potential for students to have an "away day" on the other site, whether on a regular weekly basis, or just for special events. We would do this by students going to the other site at the beginning of the day and leaving from there at the end of the day. Students would have full pastoral support on those "away days" and we believe that it would help to secure a single-school ethos across all year groups. Both sites would have the capacity to welcome half a year group at any time.

The size of the school, on one or two sites, would allow a Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 150 for the year of entry. This would give a school size of 900-950 pupils with a 6th Form. Our forecasts for the next 4-5 years indicate that at this size, St Benedict's could continue to meet the need for Catholic places in West Suffolk, as well as accommodating a percentage of non-Catholic students. The Diocese continues to work with Suffolk County Council to identify the need and funding for Catholic places in the longer-term.

Under the proposal for St Benedict's, the number of staff needed would be larger than it is at present. In the first instance we would work across the pyramid with the aim of retaining the exceptional staff already teaching in St Louis Middle School. The governing body of St Benedict's would co-operate in the development of a staffing protocol to assist this process so that every opportunity is taken to keep our excellent St Louis Middle schoolteachers and support staff. We would need specialists in Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 and we would expect most teaching staff to work in at least two Key Stages. Teachers would be based at one of the sites, but would be likely to teach on the other site, probably for whole or half days to avoid unnecessary journeys.

An 11-18 school offers many advantages for continuity and progression. Children would transfer schools at age 11 at the end of Key Stage 2, with nationally measured levels of attainment. Teaching from Key Stage 3-5 would continue to be undertaken by subject specialists. The collaboration that currently operates from primary to middle and from middle to upper schools would be replaced by a single layer from primary to secondary.

From September 2013, St Benedict's will have two classes of year 7 students. If reorganisation is agreed, by 2016 years 7 and 8 would be fully tried and tested. Year 7 and 8 students joining St Benedict's in 2016 would form part of an already established secondary school.

6 A vision for St Edmund's Catholic Primary School from September 2016

St Edmund's would become a full primary school offering education for pupils aged 4 years to 11 years with effect from September 2016, if the consultation proposals are approved. It would continue to have a Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 60 arranged as two parallel classes of 30 in each year group. The number on roll would therefore be 420 pupils when the school is full.

There is already planning permission for the extra classrooms needed to accommodate these pupils which means work can start straight away if the consultation is approved. Suffolk County Council has also earmarked funding for this building. The four classroom block includes space for specialist facilities to support the teaching of Food Technology and Art. For the most part the pupils in years 5 and 6 would be taught in mixed ability classes primarily by one class-teacher. However the provision for specialist teaching already in place in the current Key Stage 2 classes would be extended. For example pupils in years 5 and 6 would receive teaching in Modern Foreign Languages, Music and Sport from suitably qualified specialist teachers as is currently the case for year 3 and 4. The need for additional staff would mean there is an opportunity for the school to be able to recruit a wider range of specialist teachers and support staff. The current practice of giving particular consideration to St Louis Middle for these posts would continue.

Alternative and increased curriculum provision such as residential trips abroad are already being enjoyed by year 6 pupils at our partner school, St Joseph's in co-operation with St Felix Primary in Haverhill and St Louis Academy in Newmarket. A five day residential to the Normandy Beaches is planned for July 2014. St Edmund's would be able to join these experiences if the re-organisation is agreed. These strong links would also provide opportunities for competitive sports between the schools up to year 6. For example, plans have already been discussed to enable the netball team from St Joseph's to play at St Edmund's and vice versa. St Benedict's sports leaders would be involved in mentoring younger students. Discussions have also begun to look at how we could share resources and activities to provide for able and talented students by utilising expertise across the Pyramid; for example through maths master classes and art workshops.

The St Edmund's site would be large enough to meet the needs of an increase in pupil numbers as we have a dedicated sports field that meets Sport England requirements for football, rugby and hockey. The water meadows, now owned by St Edmund's, are a unique learning resource. They provide the opportunity to teach the science and geography curriculum in a creative and innovative way. The school has a dedicated, fully trained and qualified Forest Schools teacher who will be leading the development of the outside learning facilities to enhance the curriculum. St Edmund's would be able to provide schools across the Catholic Pyramid and Bury Partnership with access to a habitat of scientific and environmental

importance supported by an outdoor classroom, purpose-built board walks and pond dipping platforms. We have already installed wireless facilities which will allow pupils to make use of technology whilst learning in the water meadow.

A through primary school offers many advantages over the current system. Accountability for pupils' progress and attainment within the primary age range (4-11 years) would lie with one governing body and one school. The planning, organisation and delivery of the curriculum would be consistent across the Pyramid. Every pupil would have the choice to apply for Catholic secondary education at the end of their primary education. The transition and liaison programme would have a single point of contact as opposed to the multiple points now in place. This would provide the opportunity to make better use of resources, staff and time to concentrate on a successful single transfer point between the pyramid schools.

From September 2013, St Edmund's will be the only primary school in the Diocese that does not teach pupils up to the end of Key Stage 2 (age 11). The other primary schools in the Catholic Pyramid of West Suffolk will have significant experience of teaching the full primary age range as has St Louis Middle for years 5 and 6, which could be used to support the move to two-tier. For example, St Edmund's is already using its partnership with St Joseph's to provide staff at all levels with the opportunity to gain experience of teaching years 5 and 6 in preparation for the re-organisation. We would aim to expand this collaboration to all schools in the pyramid if the consultation proposals are approved. The Governing Body of St Edmund's believes the best interests of the pupils would be served by working in close partnership with all pyramid schools to ensure that a transition to a new structure is as smooth as possible for the pupils and staff.

7 A statement from St Louis Catholic Middle School

The St Louis Middle School Governing Body decision to support the consultation on the future of Catholic education in the West Suffolk Pyramid has come after nearly two years of prolonged discussion and debate. Throughout this period we have been grateful for the continued support of the parent body and the wider community. The St Louis Middle School Governing Body still considers an All Through School to be a better solution for the Catholic Pyramid in West Suffolk however, as there is no support for this option from any of the other schools, we have taken the difficult decision to support a consultation process which does not include an All Through School option in the interests of preventing further damage to community relations and in recognition of recent moves to restore relationships. By doing this we are acting to provide certainty for parents within the Catholic community of West Suffolk. We do, however, recognise that some parents and carers may be disappointed but feel this is the best available solution to protect the interests of both pupils and staff in the Catholic community at the current time. The Governing Body believe that the consultation process should take account of the recommendations of the Pyramid Parent Forum, which you will be able to read via a link in the consultation document at www.suffolk.gov.uk/sor.

The Governing Body recognises the other schools' commitment to retaining as many members of St Louis Middle staff as possible. The support offered by the Diocese and the Local Authority would help to ensure that the outstanding expertise of the St Louis Middle teaching and support staff is not lost in the move to two-tier.

8 Next steps

All consultation responses will be analysed and reported to the schools' governing bodies. In February, they will decide what final proposals they want to make.

These final proposals will be published in the local paper, on school gates and elsewhere in the community. People will then have six weeks to make their final comments on the proposals before the county council's Cabinet makes the final decision in April 2014.

If the proposals are approved, work will begin on building the new classrooms, training staff and all the other preparation that is needed.

9 How to have your say

Comments from parents and others have been very useful in shaping the final proposals for change in other parts of Suffolk.

You can learn more about the proposals by attending one of the local consultation events.

All meetings are for dates in 2013.

Meetings will run from 6.30pm to 8.00pm unless stated otherwise.

School	Date
St Edmunds Catholic Primary	18 November
St Louis Middle School	4 December
St Benedict's Catholic School	11 November
St Joseph's RCP School	28 November
St Felix RCP School	2 December
St Louis Catholic Academy	21 October

At these events any comments you make will be recorded and will be part of the evidence considered by councillors.

You can also complete a questionnaire on-line at

www.suffolk.gov.uk/sor

A paper version of the questionnaire is also available from schools

If you prefer you can also email or write to us at

sorbse@suffolk.gov.uk

**SOR Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk County Council
FREEPOST RTAC-HSKL-CSAY
Ipswich IP1 2DR**

Please make sure your comments reach us by 13 December 2013.

Please return your questionnaire to: **SOR Bury St Edmunds**
Suffolk County Council
Freepost RTAC-HSCL-CSAY
Ipswich IP1 2DR

Reorganisation of Catholic Schools in Bury St Edmunds Questionnaire

1. Are you a parent member of staff governor student other?

2. Which school or schools are you associated with?

3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Catholic schools in Bury St Edmunds should change to a two-tier school system? agree disagree don't know

Please say why you think this

The proposals

Please tell us what you think about proposals for the following schools. Please say why you think this.

4. **St Edmunds Catholic Primary** agree disagree don't know





5. St Louis Catholic Middle agree disagree don't know

6. St Benedict's Catholic School agree disagree don't know

7. Have you had enough information to comment yes no

8. Have you had enough time to comment yes no

Please use the space below to add any other comments. Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary