

CONSULTATION REPORT

**STATUTORY CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS TO CLOSE ST
MARGARET'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL IN HAWICK AND TO
OFFER THE CHILDREN CURRENTLY ATTENDING THE
SCHOOL A PLACE AT A CATCHMENT SCHOOL**

CONSULTATION PERIOD:

22 NOVEMBER 2017 TO 22 JANUARY 2018

This Consultation Report has been prepared by Scottish Borders Council Children and Young People's Services in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended

1. INTRODUCTION

This Consultation Report has been issued following a decision by Scottish Borders Council's Executive on 7 November 2017 to undertake a statutory consultation in respect of proposals regarding St Margaret's RC Primary School in Hawick (**St Margaret's**). The consultation process and Report have been prepared in compliance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended (**the Act**).

2. PROPOSAL

2.1 The proposals consulted upon were that:-

2.1.1 St Margaret's is closed; and

2.1.2 The children currently attending St Margaret's are offered a place at a catchment area primary school, based on their home address.

2.2 The Proposal Paper for the consultation is attached as **Appendix 1** and contains full details of the proposals and the Council's reasons for commencing the statutory consultation process.

2.3 This Report, in addition to providing a summary of the background to the proposals and consultation process, contains an analysis of the written and online submissions received along with the Council's responses to each comment received. Information is also given regarding the next stages of the consultation process, along with details of ways to further engage in the next steps of the process.

3 BACKGROUND

Pre-Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

3.1 In February 2016 Scottish Border Council's Executive agreed to commence a pre-consultation process regarding the current school estate provision and what it should aspire to look like across the region. The Council undertook to engage with all stakeholders to obtain information and opinions regarding the current school estate and to seek views and ideas in respect of the vision of the future school estate.

3.2 The five strategic principles that were adopted when reviewing the school estate were:-

3.2.1 Increased educational opportunities;

3.2.2 Improved outcomes for children and young people;

3.2.3 Sustainability;

3.2.4 Future proofing the school estate;

3.2.5 Affordability.

3.3 The pre-consultation was promoted through letters, school mail, press releases, social media, posters and newsletters with consultation events held across the region.

3.4 In September 2016 Council officers and Councillors met with:-

- the chairs of the parent councils for the denominational schools in the Borders; and

- Patricia Carroll the Pastoral Resources and RE Director from the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh.

This meeting was to discuss the School Estates Review and the issues and challenges facing each of the denominational schools in the region. Following this meeting it was agreed to address issues regarding leadership and sustainability across the schools. It was agreed that meetings would be held with the parents/carers and parent councils of the individual schools regarding school specific issues, including roll numbers

- 3.5 Following these meetings, the leadership structure across the schools was changed and progress was made at 3 of the denominational schools stabilising and increasing pupil numbers.
- 3.6 When Council officers met with parents/carers of St Margaret's pupils, the parents/carers indicated that they were happy with the learning provision at the school but did highlight some concerns regarding the challenges their children can face integrating into the community. Council officers expressed concerns regarding inclusion in the community (as a large proportion of the pupils speak English as an additional language) and also the limitations that a smaller roll presents in respect of the ability to fully provide the Curriculum of Excellence and the breadth of experiences for the children in terms of friendships and socialisation, teaching and learning. The Council also discussed with parents/carers ways in which parents/carers could help boost the school roll; which included positive promotion of the school through social media, events and advertising in the local area.
- 3.7 However the school roll at St Margaret's continued to decline. In the 2017/18 school year the roll fell by 17% from the previous year, with no new admissions into Primary 1. The Council's Children and Young People's Services team therefore met again with parents/carers, staff and pupils of St Margaret's and the Catholic Church to discuss the future of St Margaret's and Catholic denominational education in Hawick.
- 3.8 A decision was taken on 7 November 2017 by the Council's Executive to commence a statutory consultation process on 22 November 2017 regarding the proposed closure of St Margaret's given the;-
 - 3.8.1 sustained decline in roll, with no current evidence of a likely increase in demand;
 - 3.8.2 concerns regarding inclusion and integration of the children into their local community;
 - 3.8.3 constraints on opportunities for the children having a full range of curricular and learning opportunities in terms of the Curriculum for Excellence;
 - 3.8.4 constraints on team and group work;
 - 3.8.5 Council's ambition to further strengthen the social and emotional development of the children;
 - 3.8.6 Council's ambition to improve transitions for the children through the stages of learning;
 - 3.8.7 inadequate PE facilities at the school; and
 - 3.8.7 inefficient use of the school estate as the school is operating at 14% of capacity.
- 3.9 Prior to this decision, Council officers held further discussions with the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh regarding the future of St Margaret's. The Church, although

disappointed that the school roll had suffered a continued decline, confirmed their support to the proposals and, in the event the decision is made for closure, agreed:-

- to work with the Council to support the children and families; and
- to work collaboratively with the Council to provide religious instruction and education in a form acceptable to the families.

3.10 The Council's detailed reasoning for this proposal is set out in the Proposal Paper in **Appendix 1**. The Council considers that there are strong Educational Benefits contained in the proposals which would benefit the current and future pupils of St Margaret's, the staff and the Community.

3.11 Meetings were held with the parents of St Margaret's pupils on 20 November where the proposals and consultation process were explained and discussed (a full translation was provided). The Proposal Paper (in both Polish and English) was distributed to parents in advance of the consultation period.

4 PUBLIC MEETINGS

4.1 A Public Consultation meeting was held at 7pm on 5 December 2017 at St Margaret's.

4.2 18 members of the public attended the public meeting along with 5 elected members and 10 Council officers (including St Margaret's staff members and a translator).

4.3 A presentation was given at the meeting by Donna Manson, Service Director of Children and Young People at the Council. Minutes of the public meeting detailing the presentation, questions, comments and the Council's responses are attached as **Appendix 2**.

4.4 The presentation and all the documents were available at the meeting in both English and Polish and a member of Council staff provided a full interpretation of the presentation and Q&A discussion.

5 MEETINGS WITH PUPILS AND STAFF

5.1 Council officers held meetings with pupils and staff in St Margaret's on 6 December. Pupils were encouraged to talk about how they felt about their school and the possibility that their school may close. They were also asked for their thoughts about potentially attending another school. The main issues that they raised are detailed in **Appendix 3**. They were encouraged to ask questions and have had regular discussions in class with their class teacher and the head teacher on an ongoing basis to ensure that they receive the support that they need.

5.2 Staff have been engaged with throughout the pre-consultation and consultation process. There have been meetings with Council officers before the consultation started and during the process. The main issues raised at their meeting with Council officers are summarised in **Appendix 4**.

6 REPRESENTATIONS

6.1 There were 9 written representations made during the initial consultation period in respect of proposals, comprising 7 online responses and 2 written responses. The Council notes and welcomes all the responses, recognising that this might be an

emotional and worrying time for the affected families.

6.2 The responses can be categorised as follows:

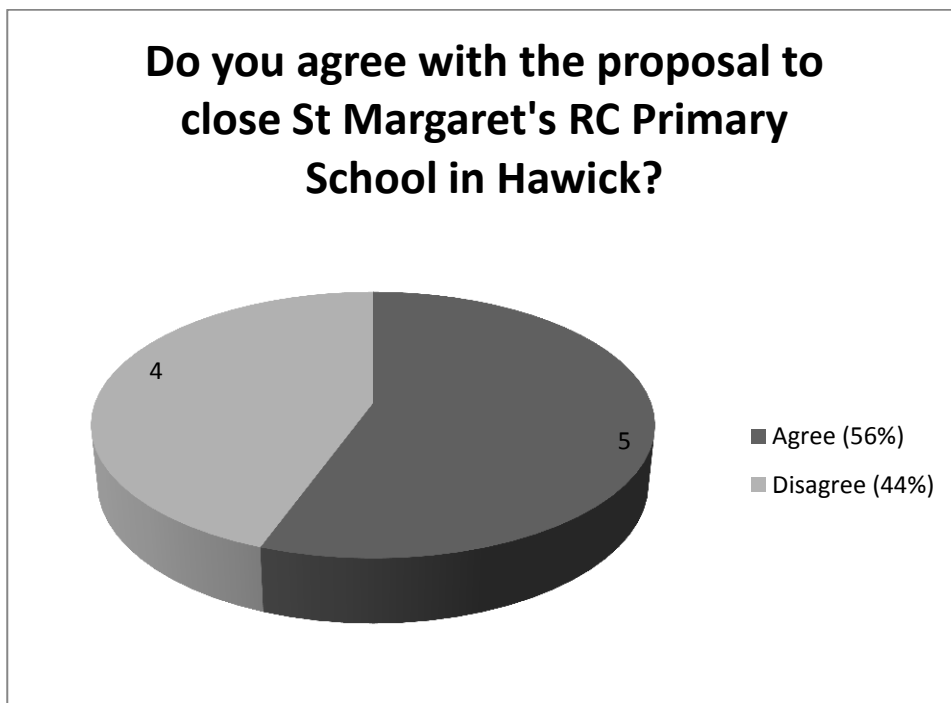
6.2.1 22% of responses were from parents;

6.2.2 22% of responses were from other parties connected to St Margaret's

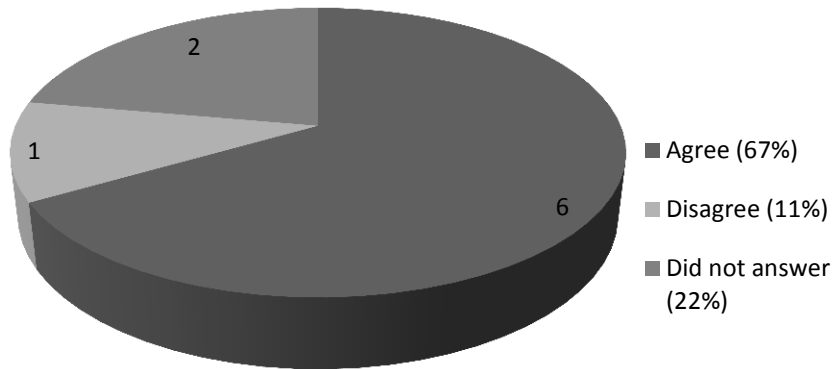
6.2.3 56% of responses were from members of the community.

6.3 To support the families with this element of the consultation process, individual appointments (with the Headteacher and a translator) were offered to each family.

6.4 We have analysed the responses based in the completed response forms. The responses indicate the following responses to each question:-



Do you agree with the proposal to offer the children currently attending St Margaret's a place in a catchment school?



6.4 A summary is given below of the main points contained in the responses regarding the Proposal and the Council's response to concerns or questions raised in the forms:

Summary of Comments in favour of the Proposal to close St Margaret's

The costs to keep the school open are high

Council Response: The comment is noted. The costs per pupil at St Margaret's are higher than at some primary schools in the area however the proposal has been made as the Council believes that the pupils would benefit educationally and socially if they were to attend a school which would be able to offer a fuller range of curricular and learning opportunities; and be part of a wider peer group.

It's difficult to justify the cost per pupil when there are spaces in other schools in Hawick

Council Response: The comment is noted. The Council confirms that the proposal to close the school is based on the potential educational and social benefits for the children.

Non-denominational schools with a similar roll profile have been closed

Council Response: The comment is noted. The Council is currently undertaking a review of all its schools and we have been working with all schools in the region with a roll of under 50 pupils to consider ways to increase the roll. A proposal regarding a school closure is only made when the Council considers that there would be strong educational benefits attached to the proposal. All proposals for closure require to be (1) in full compliance with the Act and (2) approved by Scottish Borders Council following third party assessment by Education Scotland. All closure proposals are subject to call in for review from the Scottish Government if Ministers consider that the Council has failed to comply with the requirements of the Act or has not taken account of material consideration relevant to the closure decision. If a call in decision is made a referral is made to the School Closure Review Panel who then can decide to either refuse consent or grant consent with or without conditions.

Non-denominational schools are better for inclusion and can reduce bias

Council Response: *The comment is noted. The Council seeks to support parents in their school placing choices, as far as possible. The Council has been working with the denominational schools within the Region and 3 of the 4 have seen either an increase or stabilisation in demand from parents for places at the school.*

The children are not able to participate in group and team work as they can in other schools in the town

Council Response: *The comment is noted. The Council considers that collaborative working is an important element of the curriculum. The Council believes that the proposals contain strong educational benefits for the children.*

There would be social and educational benefits for the children if they were to attend a larger school in the town

Council Response: *Noted and Agreed.*

Summary of Comments/Questions not in favour of the Proposal to close St Margaret's:

Why is the Council consulting on this when it is already recommending closure? It's like the decision has already been made

Council Response: *The question and comment are noted. The consultation process is laid down in the Act. The Act specifies that a Council must consult on certain proposed changes to its school estate (including closures, catchment changes and transport changes). The Act requires that Councils publish a proposal paper containing details of the proposal(s) and the educational benefits of the proposal. The proposal paper then invites responses to the proposal and seeks comments and alternative suggestions to the proposal.*

Council officers have not yet made a recommendation for closure but have made a proposal for consultation. The consultation process allows people their opportunity to have their say, make comments and challenge the proposal, which the Council must respond to. The comments, questions and responses received during the consultation process form an important part of the process and will be fully considered in both the Consultation Report and in the decision making process. All closure proposals require third party assessment from Education Scotland and are subject to call in from the Scottish Government.

Small schools are better for children

Council Response: *The comment is noted. The Council seeks, as far as possible, to support parental choice for school placings, recognising that a decision about school placings can be made for a number of reasons. The Council is currently working with all the schools in the region with a roll of under 50 pupils to seek to boost their roll. The Council considers that there can be strong educational benefits for children having the opportunity to engage with a full range of curricular and learning experiences. The Curriculum for Excellence places particular emphasis on collaborative and team working. The size of a school roll, if it is too small, can limit children's access to a wide range of opportunities for collaboration, team work and skills development.*

What has been done to increase the roll?

Council Response: *The question is noted. The Council commenced a review of denominational schools in 2016 as part of our current School Estates Review project. At this point meetings were held with the Church Educational Representative and the chairs of the Parent Councils of the denominational schools in the area. Subsequently meetings were held with the parents at St Margaret's to discuss the school and any issues/questions that parents/carers had. The Council at this stage shared suggestions with parents to help boost the roll which included promoting the school through social media, events and engagement with the community. Unfortunately St Margaret's has experienced a further reduction in pupil number as parent/carers have been making school placement choices for a variety of reasons and only a few have chosen St Margaret's in recent years. There were no P1 admissions in 2017/18 and we have seen no evidence of demand for places in future years.*

The community that the school currently serves will be adversely affected by the closure

Council Response: *The comment is noted. The Council is aware of the impact that a school closure can have on a community and individual families. In the event that a decision is made to close the school, we will work closely with individual families to support them with their choice of school and ensure that an individualised transition plan is put in place for each child. We will also continue to work with the Church and its representatives to ensure that religious instruction and education will continue to be provided in a form acceptable to the families.*

Hawick children should not lose the option of a Catholic education and the ethos that this education brings

Council Response: *The comment is noted. The Council seeks to support parents and carers in their educational choices as far as possible; however the demand for denominational education in Hawick has reduced considerably over the last 20 years. The Council considers that there are clear educational benefits regarding this proposal and will undertake with the families to support them in any transition. In the event that a decision is made for closure, the Council will continue to work closely with the Church regarding the future provision of religious education and instruction to the children.*

The quality of a school is not determined by its size

Council Response: *The comment is noted. The Council does not consider that the assessment of the quality of a school should be based on its size. The Council works hard to ensure that quality and standards are achieved across all of its schools. This is assessed independently by Education Scotland through their inspection programme. The Council considers that the size of a school can limit curricular and learning opportunities for children; particularly in respect of collaboration and team work.*

The children receive a good education at St Margaret's. They like the school and the teaching approach. They want to learn and are happy to go to school

Council Response: *The comments are noted. The Council also notes that the parents and carers are happy with the education provided at the school. However the Council considers that its proposal would have educational and social benefits for the children. In particular, it would allow the children opportunities to experience the full breadth of the Curriculum for Excellence; which places significant emphasis on collaborative working and peer challenge. The size of the current roll at St Margaret's can limit the opportunities for this.*

The educational standards are high and the children are well prepared for secondary school

Council Response: *The comment is noted. As stated above, the Council notes the parent's and carer's satisfaction with the school. However the Council does believe that there would be clear educational benefits for the children having more opportunities, to experience a fuller breadth of the Curriculum for Excellence and wider learning and social opportunities. Attending one of the town's larger schools would also allow the children access to a wider peer and friendship group, which can also assist with transition through the stages of education.*

Summary of Comments/Questions In Favour of the Proposal to Offer the Children Places in Their Catchment School:

The children will not have to travel far to attend school and would have more time for homework and rest

Council Response: *The comment is noted. In the event that the decision is made to close the school, the Council will work with families to support them in their decision regarding school choice.*

It would be common sense for them to attend the catchment school.

Council Response: *The comment is noted. In the event that the decision is made to close the school, the Council will work with parents to support them in their decision regarding school choice.*

Summary of Comments/Questions Not in Favour of the Proposal to Offer the Children Places in Their Catchment Schools:

The children may wish to attend the same school as their friends from St Margaret's

Council Response: *The comment is noted. In the event that the decision is made to close the school, the Council will work with parents to support them in their decision regarding school choice and will support the children through the transition process.*

The children should be given the chance to attend another RC school. They may be split up from their friends if they go to a catchment school

Council Response: *The comment is noted. In the event that the decision is made to close the school, the Council will work with parents to support them in their decision regarding school choice. Enhanced transition arrangements will be made to support the children in the event that they move school.*

7 AGREEMENT WITH THE CHURCH AND DENOMINATIONAL INSTRUCTION AND EDUCATION

- 7.1 The Council has worked closely with the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh for a number of years. Both parties have worked collaboratively to bring positive changes to the leadership structure of the denominational schools across the region and to address issues regarding roll stabilisation.
- 7.2 Prior to commencing this Statutory Consultation process, Council officers met with representatives from the Archdiocese and it was agreed that the Church would support the proposal and would work with the Council to support the families during the process.
- 7.3 Discussions have commenced between the Church and the Council regarding the provision of religious instruction, education and observance in the event that the decision is made to close St Margaret's. The Church has confirmed that it will work with all parties to agree the most appropriate way to provide this. Both parties are committed to support the families during this process.
- 7.4 The Council has prepared an outline plan regarding the way religious instruction, education and observance would be provided to the children, in the event the decision is taken to close St Margaret's. The plan will be finalised and formalised once the families and children decide which school they wish to attend.
- 7.5 The plan seeks to (1) provide a framework for the provision of religious education, instruction and observance in accordance with the Curriculum for Excellence and (2) to allow the children to continue on their faith journey.
- 7.6 Religious instruction and education will be provided by a suitably qualified teacher based on the principles and guidance contained in **This is Our Faith** – the programme recommended by the Catholic Education Service which incorporates the principles of the Curriculum for Excellence.
- 7.7 The Council will seek to support the continuation of the children's faith journey with support from the Church, to facilitate instruction and observance at appropriate times through classes run either in or outwith school time.

8 EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT

- 8.1 Education Scotland was notified in advance of the commencement of this Statutory Consultation. On completion of the Statutory Consultation period, a copy of the Proposal Paper was sent by the Council to Education Scotland. Education Scotland also received a copy of all relevant additional materials including the minutes of public meeting, written representations and responses received (where possible) by the Council following the consultation period.
- 8.2 Education Scotland has prepared a report on the educational aspects of the proposals, based on the representations and documents mentioned above as well as their interviews with pupils, parents and staff. In preparing their report, Education Scotland visited affected schools and made reasonable enquiries of people there as they considered appropriate. This can be found at **Appendix 5** and also on the Education Scotland Website following this link:

[Education Scotland Consultation Reports](#)

- 8.3 Issues raised in the Education Scotland Report with regards to the Proposals are set out below:

HM Inspectors considered:

“ 2.3 School staff who spoke to HM Inspectors reported that the online response system was awkward to use and it would not let them proceed unless they indicated that they supported the proposal or that they were against it. Several staff would have preferred a third “don’t know” option as they were neither strongly for or against the proposal.”

Council’s Response:

Noted. This consultation was launched on a new platform that Council has recently started to use for all our consultations. Constructive feedback is always welcome and we will ensure that future consultations are constructed to allow a third option to facilitate comment without the necessity of a definite response to a closed question. The Council ensured that there were alternative methods to engage in the process. Paper copy response forms were available at the school and to download from the consultation webpage. Details of website, postal and email addresses were also provided in the proposal paper to facilitate response and engagement in a variety of ways.

“3.1 The council considers that there are strong educational benefits associated with the proposal. It believes that being part of a larger school community will provide children with the opportunity to develop a wider and more diverse peer group within the community. It thinks that this will provide opportunity for interaction with a larger number of peers, allowing access to a wider range of views, and the opportunity to experience a wider range of teachers and learning experiences. It further believes that being part of a larger school community will enhance children’s learning and provide them with opportunities to experience a broader curriculum. There is a strong case for children from St Margaret’s RC Primary School benefitting by being part of a larger school and having a wider peer group. Children have very few peers of the same age, being part of a single class of 14 pupils from P2 to P7. They currently have to travel to a neighbouring school for physical education because they lack appropriate facilities in their own school. Overall, this aspect will be of significant educational benefit to children if the proposal moves forward.

Council’s Response: Noted and agreed. The Council considers there are significant educational benefits attached to this proposal

“3.2 The council believes that attending a primary school which has an early learning and childcare setting will allow children to learn with their peers from an early age. However, many schools across the country do not have nursery classes and this does not necessarily place children at a significant disadvantage. Overall, this aspect will be of more limited educational benefit to children.”

Council’s Response: Noted and agreed.

“3.3 The council thinks that attending a larger catchment school will

provide more opportunities for children to participate in team sports and other activities, including benefitting from a wider range of solo and group musical and artistic opportunities. The current size and makeup of the school roll makes team sports difficult to organise and run. Local PE teachers are clear that this puts children in St Margaret's RC Primary School at a disadvantage. Whilst these children undertake musical and artistic activities in their school, they will benefit from being part of a wider peer group, allowing them to come together in larger groups. Overall, this aspect will be of educational benefit to children if the council proceeds with the proposal."

Councils Response: Noted and agreed. The Council considers that there are significant educational benefits attached to the proposal in respect of participation and opportunities for PE and the arts

"3.4 The council considers that having a wider range of peers, to have discussions with, will help to develop children's awareness of the world of work, developing social and employability skills. Children from other local schools are clear that working in pairs and in groups is a very important aspect of their learning across the curriculum and they think that children from St Margaret's RC Primary School would benefit greatly from this approach. Overall, this aspect will be of educational benefit to children if the proposal moves forward."

Council's Response: Noted and agreed

"3.5 Children who attend St Margaret's RC Primary School who spoke to HM Inspectors are sad at the prospect of their school closing. They can see advantages in being part of a larger school but will miss being in the same class. They are concerned about what will happen to the records of their achievements in the school such as certificates and trophies if the school closes. They would like the opportunity to visit the schools which they could transfer to with parents and classmates so that they can make an informed choice. In its final proposal paper, the council should ensure that appropriate time and opportunity is made available for enhanced transition procedures to take place for children from St Margaret's RC Primary School."

Council's Response: Noted and agreed. The Council is aware of the children's attachment to the school and their pride in their achievements. In the event a decision is taken to close the school, the Council intends to investigate further, with the children, the best way to ensure that their achievements are preserved and the history of the school is preserved. Discussions will be held with local societies and the library in this regard. In our discussions with parents and the pupils to date, we have undertaken to arrange visits, meetings and events with other schools to assist and support the families in any decision making process. The intention is to provide enhanced support to each family during the decision and any future transition process.

"3.6 Parents of children who currently attend St Margaret's RC Primary School who spoke to HM Inspectors are not convinced that the

closure is either necessary or desirable. They have concerns that the proposal paper gives the early learning provision in other schools as a benefit of closure and yet they have been asking for this provision to be put in place in St Margaret's for a number of years. They also have concerns that they have heard of instances of bullying in other schools.

The council should ensure that they continue to discuss parents' concerns with them, including why early learning provision was never included in St Margaret's."

Council Response: Noted. The Council's early learning provision in the Borders is provided through a blend of local authority, private and voluntary providers. There are currently 6 local authority operated and 4 private and voluntary provisions within Hawick, which currently meet demand within the town. Unfortunately we have been unable to identify a level of demand for an early learning setting at St Margaret's which would sustain a viable setting. We are aware of the concerns regarding bullying and will continue to support and work with the parents as the consultation progresses. In the event a decision for closure is taken, we will work closely with parents and support them during and after their decision process regarding schools.

"3.7 Staff at St Margaret's RC Primary School understand the rationale for the proposal, although they feel that the establishment of an early learning provision several years ago could have helped the school roll to rise. They have justifiable concerns that timings for the council decision-making followed by effective transitions for pupils may be too tight for the school to be closed by August 2018. In its final proposal paper, the council should confirm that appropriate time and opportunity will be available for enhanced transition procedures to take place for children from St Margaret's RC Primary School."

*Council Response: Noted. Comments regarding ELC provision are given above. We are aware of this time frame and have had discussions with the staff regarding the potential timing implications. Our suggested time table, if a decision to close is taken, is provided in **Section 9**. We will continue to work with staff and families to ensure all necessary support is given to families to ensure the transition is as smooth as it can be.*

"3.8 Children who attend other local primary schools who spoke to HM Inspectors are in favour of the proposal. They are keen to make the children welcome in their own schools. They think that children from St Margaret's RC Primary School will benefit from a wider range of friends and from a wider range of learning opportunities. They also think that children and their parents should get the opportunity to visit other schools so that they can make an informed choice about where they would like to go next session."

Council Response: Noted and agreed.

"3.9 Parents of children who attend other local primary schools who spoke to HM Inspectors are in favour of the proposal. They feel

that the move to a larger peer group will be of benefit to the children who currently attend St Margaret's RC Primary School. They think that it will be important to have high quality transition procedures in place for these children and that the authority should be aware that the children will need ongoing support to help them to come to terms with closure of their school."

Council Response: Noted and agreed

"3.10 Staff from other local primary schools who spoke to HM Inspectors are generally in favour of the proposal. However, they have a justifiable concern that this will end Catholic education in the local area and they feel that the authority should make it clear how the children from St Margaret's will be supported in their faith journey should the school close."

*Council Response: Noted. The Council has been working closely with staff from St Margaret's, the local priest and representatives of the Church to agree a programme of religious education and instruction for the children. This is detailed in **Section 7***

"3.11 Representatives from the Catholic Church acknowledge that the current situation in St Margaret's RC Primary School is not an effective use of council resources and that children are likely to benefit educationally from being part of a larger peer group. However, there is not clarity in the proposal paper about how children will be supported in their faith whilst in a non-denominational school. In its final proposal paper, the council should clarify how children will be supported in their faith journey if their school is closed."

*Council's Response: Noted and agreed – see comments above in **Section 7**.*

"4 Summary

- There is overall educational benefit to the proposal to close St Margaret's RC Primary School. Children who attend this school do not currently have the opportunity to benefit from working in age-appropriate groups and their school is not well-suited to modern learning and teaching across the curriculum. Children and staff currently have to travel to a neighbouring school for physical education because they lack appropriate facilities in their own school. Team sports and other group activities are compromised by the total school roll of 14 pupils from P2 to P7.
- There are a number of aspects which the council should consider when finalising this proposal. There are justifiable concerns that timings for the council decision-making followed by effective transitions for pupils may be too tight for the proposed closure date of August 2018. In its final proposal paper, the council should clarify the timescale for closure and confirm that children and their parents will get the opportunity to visit other schools so that they can make an informed choice about which school they attend next session. It should further confirm that appropriate time and opportunity will be available for enhanced transition

procedures to take place for children from St Margaret's RC Primary School. The council should also clarify how children will be supported in their faith journey and to continue to progress with the curriculum for Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools if their school is closed and be supported in coming to terms with the closure. If the proposal is progressed, the council should ensure that it continues to discuss parents' concerns with them in the best interests of their children."

Council Response:** Noted and agreed. The Council has prepared a draft Transition Plan in conjunction with staff at St Margaret's and other schools within the town. This is detailed in **Section 9

9 PROPOSALS FOR TRANSITION

- 9.1 The Council has prepared an outline transition plan to assist with providing support to both the children and families in the event that a decision is taken to close St Margaret's. The Council has confirmed to parents that they will seek to support any placement requests that they may wish to make.
- 9.2 The transition plan has been prepared by Council officers in conjunction with staff from St Margaret's and other schools within the cluster. The draft plan seeks to provide enhanced support to assist with the decision making process and to assist children transition to their new school. To assist with this process a translator will be made available before, during and after the transition to assist and support the families in the process.
- 9.3 A detailed programme of dates and activities for transition will be drawn up and shared with all families once decisions have been made about which school(s) the children will attend. This programme will include visits to the receiving school, meetings with staff and headteacher, invitation to attend events in the receiving school during the summer term, opportunities to spend time in class and sharing all communication with families in the term before transition. There will also be a planned series of events and activities to ease the transition out of St Margaret's.

10 COMPLIANCE WITH THE STATUTORY PROCESS

Scottish Borders Council has complied in full with terms of the Act:

Proposal Paper

- 10.1 The Council prepared a Proposal Paper which was published on 22 November 2017, in both English and Polish. A copy of the Proposal Paper is attached as Appendix 1.
- 10.2 A copy of the Proposal Paper was made available free of charge in these locations: –
- Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, TD6 0SA
 - St Margaret's Primary School, Buccleuch Street, Hawick, TD9 0HU
 - Hawick Library, North Bridge Street, Hawick TD9 9QT

and published on the Scottish Borders Council website (in both English and Polish):

www.scotborders.gov.uk/stmargarets

10.3 The publication of the Proposal Paper was advertised in various local newspapers, on the week commencing 12 November 2017, providing the dates for the consultation period and the public meeting.

10.4 Formal notice of the proposals was sent by letter or email to:

- the parents/carers of children attending the affected schools;
- the Parent Councils of the affected schools;
- the parent/carers of any children likely to attend the affected Schools or any affected school within two years of the date of the publication of the Proposal Paper, as far as known to the Council;
- the pupils attending the affected schools insofar as the Council considers them to be of a suitable age and maturity;
- any Trade Union which is representative of the staff;
- the Staff (teaching and non-teaching) at the affected schools;
- the Community Councils of Hawick, Burnfoot, Denholm & District, Hobkirk, Southdean, Newcastleton and District, Upper Liddesdale & Hermitage and Upper Teviotdale & Borthwick Water
- the community planning partnership (as defined in section 4(5) of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015) for the area where any Affected School is situated or any other community planning partnership that the Council considers relevant;
- the constituency Member of the Scottish Parliament;
- the constituency Member of Parliament;
- the List Members of the Scottish Parliament.

Length of Consultation Period

10.5 The consultation period for the Proposals ran from 22 November 2017 until 22 January 2018 (both dates inclusive). This period allowed for the statutory minimum of 30 school days.

Public Meetings

10.6 A public meeting was held on:

5 December 2017 at 19.00 at St Margaret's.

Minutes of the meeting are contained in **Appendix 2.**

Meetings with Pupils and Staff

10.7 Meetings were held with pupils and staff at St Margaret's. A record of questions, views and responses is included in **Appendices 3 and 4.**

Preparation of Public Consultation Report

10.8 The Council has reviewed the proposals for St Margaret's having regard to the responses received during the consultation period and the Education Scotland Report. This Consultation Report will be published on **8 March 2018** and is available for further consideration for a period of three weeks from that date, until **29 March 2018**. The intention is that interested parties should have time to consider the Consultation Report and if they so

wish, to raise concerns and pose alternative solutions by making written or electronic submissions to:

St Margaret's RC Hawick Schools Consultation
Children and Young People's Services
Scottish Borders Council Headquarters
Newtown St Boswells
Melrose
TD6 0SA
or

Email Address: schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk; or

- 10.9 If you wish to respond by letter or electronically, you are invited to state your relationship with the school – for example, “pupil”, “parent”, “carer”, “relative”, “former pupil”, “teacher in school”, “member of the community” etc. Responses from Parent Councils, Staff and Pupil Councils are particularly welcome.
- 10.10 Those sending in a response, whether by letter or electronically, should know that their response may be open to public scrutiny and may have to be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it. If they do not wish their response to be made publicly available, they should clearly write on the document: “I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to Councillors and Council Officers of Scottish Borders Council and to the Scottish Government and its officers”. Otherwise, it will be assumed that the person making the response agrees to it being made publicly available.
- 10.11 For any written or electronic response to be considered it must be received by the Council no later than 5.00pm on the last day of the consultation period, **29 March 2018**.

Distribution

- 10.12. A copy of the Consultation Report will be made available free of charge for public consultation from **8 March 2018 to 29 March 2018** in these locations: –
- Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, TD6 0SA
 - St Margaret's Primary School, Buccleuch Street, Hawick, TD9 0HU
 - Hawick Library, North Bridge Street, Hawick TD9 9QT

and published on the Scottish Borders Council website:
www.scotborders.gov.uk/stmargarets

DECISION

- 11.1 This report together with any other relevant documentation will be considered by Scottish Borders Council who will be asked to make a decision at the full Council meeting on 26 April 2018.
- 11.2 Where a decision is taken to approve a school closure proposal, the Council is required to notify Scottish Ministers within 6 days of the decision and place a notice on its website stating the decision and advising that there is a period of 3 weeks from the date of the decision for any party to make representations, either in support or against the Council's

closure decision, to Scottish Ministers.

11.3 Representations should be made to:

schoolclosure@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

or

The Scottish Government
School Infrastructure Unit
2A (South)
Victoria Quay
EH6 6QQ

11.4 The Scottish Ministers have a period of 8 weeks following the Council's decision to decide whether to call the closure decision in or not. If the Ministers do not make a decision within that period the proposal is automatically permitted to proceed. If the decision is taken to call the Council's decision in the Scottish Ministers will advise the Council in writing as expeditiously as possible.

11.5 There are clear grounds within the Act for calling in a proposal. The Ministers can call in a proposal where it appears to the Scottish Ministers that the Council may have failed:

- (a) in a significant regard to comply with the requirements imposed on it by (or under) this Act so far as they are relevant to the closure proposal, or
- (b) to take proper account of a material consideration relevant to its decision to implement the proposal.

11.6 Any closure decision called in by the Scottish Ministers will be referred to the School Closure Panel for determination. The School Closure Panel has a period of 8 weeks to notify the Council of its decision. In the event that the Panel refuses to consent to the closure, the Council can appeal the decision on a point of law. In the event the Panel's decision is upheld there will be a 5 year restriction on the Council making a further school closure proposal in respect of St Margaret's.

12 INACCURACIES IN THE PROPOSAL PAPER

There were no material inaccuracies or omissions found or notified to the Council in respect of the Proposal Paper.

13 COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY PROCESS

13.1 Throughout this consultation, the Scottish Borders Council Children and Young People Services team has given due regard to the provisions of the Act.

13.2 The statutory consultation process was robust, with engagement from the local community, and provided an opportunity for all stakeholders to identify key issues. Any areas of concern are responded to within **Sections 4, 5 and 6**. This final consultation document seeks to present all information and ask for any further views or alternatives to the proposal to close St Margaret's.

13.3 A recommendation will be made to the Council at its meeting on 26 April 2018 to make a final decision on the proposals. The recommendation will be based on the documents and

information presented in this Consultation Report and will take due cognisance of any further views or alternatives to the proposals expressed during the consultation period regarding this Consultation Report.

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES
SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**

8 March 2018

Appendix 1 – Proposal Paper dated 22 November 2017

Appendix 2 - Minutes of Public Meeting 5 December 2017

Appendix 3 – Summary of Meeting with Pupils 6 December 2017

Appendix 4 – Summary of Meeting with Staff 6 December 2017

Appendix 5 – HMIE Report dated February 2018



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

PUBLIC CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

**STATUTORY CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED CLOSURE
OF ST MARGARET'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL IN HAWICK**

CONSULTATION PERIOD:

22 NOVEMBER 2017 TO 22 JANUARY 2018

PUBLIC MEETING :

**ST MARGARET'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL
BUCCLEUCH STREET,
HAWICK,
TD9 0HU
ON 5 DECEMBER 2017 AT 7PM**

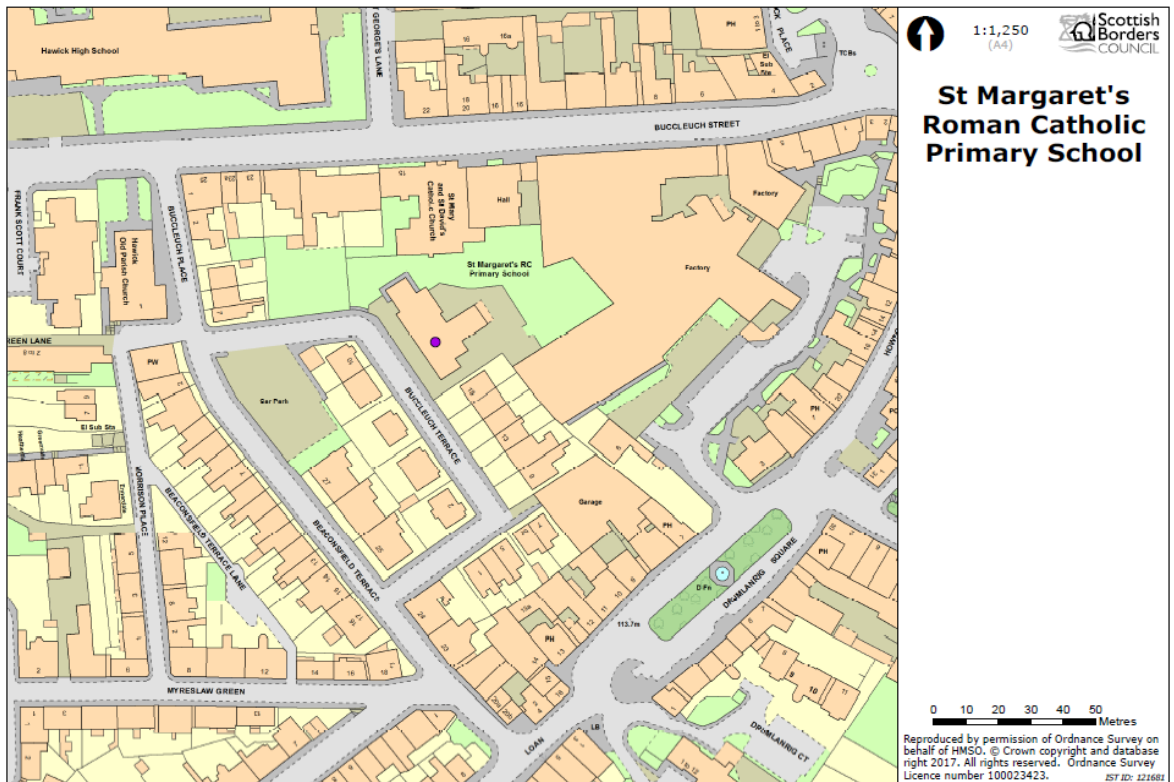
This Consultation Proposal Document has been prepared by Scottish Borders Council Children and Young People's Services in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended

1. THE PROPOSAL

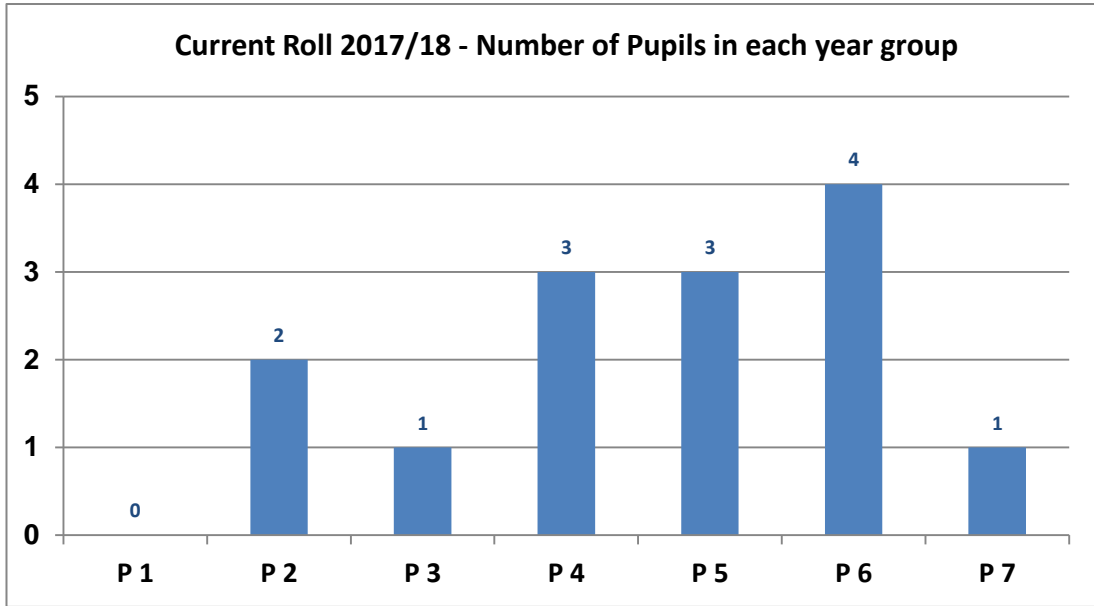
It is proposed that, subject to the outcome of this statutory consultation process, St Margaret's RC Primary School in Hawick (**St Margaret's**) is closed and the children that currently attend the school are offered places within a catchment area primary school, based on their home address.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 St Margaret's is a Catholic denominational primary school in Hawick and is within Hawick High School's catchment zone. There is no Early Learning and Childcare setting at the school.
- 2.2 St Margaret's location is shown below:-

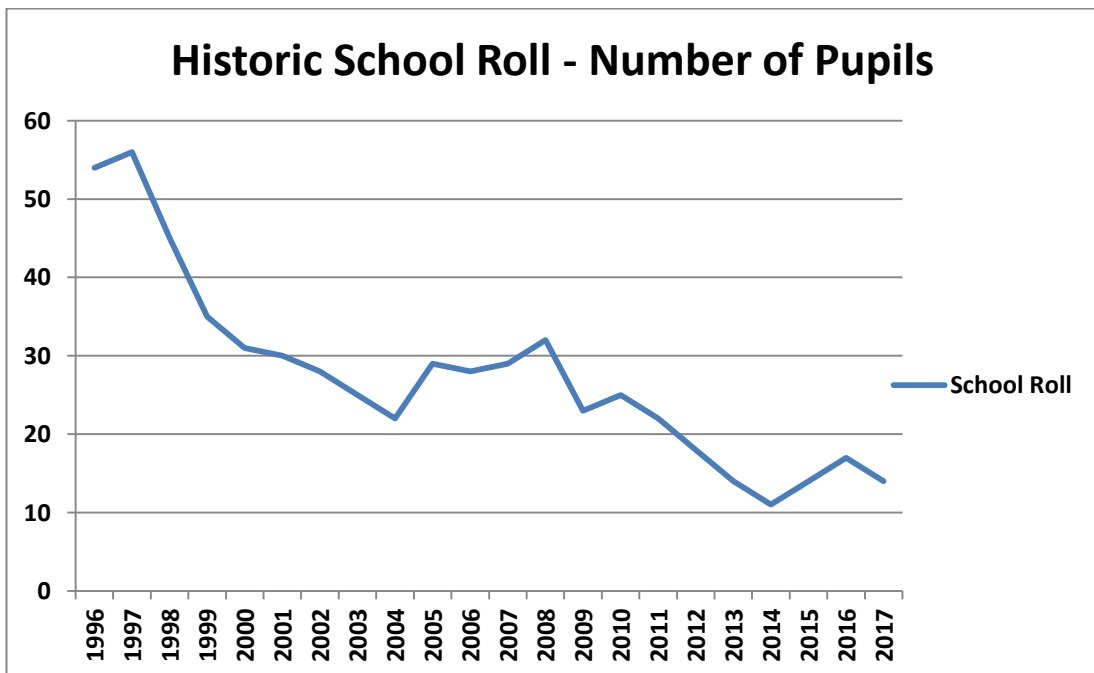


- 2.3 The school has capacity for 100 pupils. There are currently 14 children attending the school. 10 of the children are currently registered as being baptised Catholic. There were no admissions into Primary 1 for the current school year. Over the last 3 years only 3 pupils have been admitted into Primary 1. The current roll comprises the following:



2.4 St Margaret's currently operates with a P2-P7 class and has a full time teacher. There is a Manager of Learning who is Headteacher of St Margaret's, jointly with the RC Primary Schools in Galashiels and Selkirk. Other teachers visit St Margaret's during the week to provide lessons in music, PE etc. and support with English as an additional language. There is also a number of staff supporting the school. In total there are 5.22 Full Time Equivalent employees supporting the school.

2.5 The roll has been falling significantly over recent years and St Margaret's has consistently operated below capacity. Over the last 10 years the school has operated at an average capacity of 22%; and is currently operating at 14% of capacity. This is not projected to change as current projections indicate that the school roll will not exceed the current numbers in the next 2 years.



REASONS FOR FORMULATING THE PROPOSAL

3 PRE-CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- 3.1 In February 2016 Scottish Border Council's Executive (Education) Committee agreed to commence a pre-consultation process regarding the current school estate provision and what it should aspire to look like across the region. The Council undertook to engage with all stakeholders to obtain information and opinions regarding the current school estate and to seek views and ideas in respect of the vision of the future school estate.
- 3.2 The five strategic principles that were adopted when reviewing the school estate were:-
 - 3.2.1 Increased educational opportunities;
 - 3.2.2 Improved outcomes for children and young people;
 - 3.2.3 Sustainability;
 - 3.2.4 Future proofing the school estate;
 - 3.2.5 Affordability.
- 3.3 The pre-consultation was promoted through letters, school mail, press releases, social media, posters and newsletters with consultation events held across the region.
- 3.4 As part of the School Estate Review engagement, Council officers met with parents of St Margaret's pupils, who indicated that they were happy with the learning provision at the school but did highlight some concerns regarding challenges their children can face integrating into the community. Council officers expressed concerns regarding inclusion in the community, as a large proportion of the pupils speak English as an additional language and also the limitations that a smaller roll presents in respect of the ability to fully provide the Curriculum of Excellence and the breadth of experiences for the children in terms of friendships and socialisation, teaching and learning.
- 3.5 As the school roll further declined in the 2017/18 school year by a further 17%, the Council's Children and Young People's Services team wish to engage again with parents, staff and pupils of St Margaret's and meet with the Catholic Church to discuss the future of St Margaret's and Catholic denominational education in Hawick.

4 PROPOSAL AND REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1. The Council wishes to consult with parents, pupils, staff and the community on the proposal to close St Margaret's as a primary school within the town of Hawick. Pupils will be offered places within a catchment area primary school, based on their home address, with RC pupils being provided with religious instruction in a form agreed during the Consultation process with parents and the Church.
- 4.2 There are a number of reasons why the Council wishes to consult on this proposal:-
 - 4.2.1 The school roll has diminished significantly over a number of years and is not projected to increase. The fall in roll over the last 20 years may indicate that there may be insufficient demand for a denominational school in the town;
 - 4.2.2 A diminishing roll can limit the ability to offer a full range of curricular and learning opportunities to all the children. The size of the school roll limits the children's access to a wider range of peers' views and ideas for collaborative working and skills development which allows children to support each other's learning and learn how to challenge thinking. This also limits the children's

exposure to different teaching styles and methods. A small school roll can also result in children at key stages having a limited age related peer group.

- 4.2.3 The Council has concerns that there may be issues regarding inclusion and integration into the community for the St Margaret's pupils. Parents have also expressed concerns regarding the challenges their children can face integrating into the community.
- 4.2.4 St Margaret's does not have facilities for PE requiring specialist equipment. The children therefore have to travel to attend Drumlanrig St Cuthbert's Primary School for some PE lessons.
- 4.2.5 A small school roll restricts opportunities for team sports and other active recreational activities. This also applies to individual sports, where the successful learning of skills can also be supported by talking about and sharing experiences. This further applies to the health and wellbeing element of the curriculum which involves discussion and debate between pupils about healthy lifestyle choices.
- 4.2.6 The school is large enough for 100 pupils but has only 14 pupils; with such a diminished roll this is not efficient or effective use of space and may present issues for the children and staff as they cannot make full use of the building. There is capacity in all the primary schools within Hawick which would allow the St Margaret's pupils to attend their catchment school. More information about the catchment schools is given in **Section 5**.

5 SCHOOLS IN HAWICK

- 5.1 The proposal is that pupils will be able to attend their local catchment school. There are currently 6 primary schools (5 of which are non-denominational) and 1 secondary school in Hawick. These are indicated in the catchment map attached in **Appendix 1**.

<u>2016/17</u>	Capacity	Pupil Roll	Occupancy
St Margaret's RC Primary School	100	14	14%
Burnfoot Community School	373	236	63%
Drumlanrig St Cuthbert's Primary School	340	279	82%
Stirches Primary School	150	110	73%
Trinity Primary School	307	215	70%
Wilton Primary School	307	190	62%
Hawick High School	1339	887	66%

- 5.2 In line with the Council's asset management strategy condition surveys are undertaken on a rolling programme by a team led by a chartered building surveyor. The suitability assessment is undertaken by the Head Teacher and validated by Senior Managers within Children and Young People's Services. These assessments are undertaken approximately every five years unless significant building or operational change has occurred within the school requiring additional assessment.

The definition and assessment categorisations are set by the Scottish Government as follows:

Condition - an assessment of the physical condition of the school and its grounds.

A: Good	Performing well and operating efficiently
B: Satisfactory	Performing adequately but showing minor deterioration
C: Poor	Showing major defect and/or not operating adequately
D: Bad	Life expired and/or serious risk of imminent failure

Suitability - an assessment of the school as a whole, its buildings and its grounds and of the impact these have on learning and teaching, leisure and social activities and the health and well-being of all users.

A: Good	Performing well and operating efficiently
B: Satisfactory	Performing well but with minor problems
C: Poor	Showing major problems and/or not operating optimally
D: Bad	Does not support the delivery of services to children and communities

5.3 The schools in Hawick are rated:-

Hawick School Ratings			
	Survey Date	Condition	Suitability
St Margaret's RC Primary School	2014	B	B
Burnfoot Community School	2014	B	B
Drumlanrig St Cuthbert's Primary School	2014	C	C
Stirches Primary School	2014	C	C
Trinity Primary School	2014	C	B
Wilton Primary School	2014	B	B
Hawick High School	2014	B	B

5.4 The most recent inspection reports for each of the non-denominational schools in Hawick can be accessed on the Education Scotland website at <https://education.gov.scot/>

Or accessed here:

[Burnfoot Community School Inspection Report 2010](#)

[Drumlanrig St Cuthbert's Primary School Inspection Report August 2016](#)

[Stirches Inspection Report 2009](#)

[Trinity School Inspection Report 2011](#)

[Wilton Primary School Inspection Report 2014](#)

6 PRE CONSULTATION WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

- 6.1 Council officers have maintained a strong working relationship with representatives of the Catholic Church throughout the Schools Estate Review process; working together to achieve positive outcomes for the denominational schools in the Scottish Borders.
- 6.2 Meetings have been held between Council officers and Church representatives regarding the proposal to close St Margaret's and the educational benefits have been fully discussed. Council officers and the Church representatives will continue to work together during the consultation process.

7 EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS STATEMENT OVERVIEW

- 7.1 The Council has statutory duties relating to the provision of Education in the Scottish Borders. The Council's key priorities, within the context of national and local policies, regarding (1) raising levels of achievement and attainment and (2) improving educational outcomes for all children and young people are set out in the Council's Business Plan and our Children and Young People's Services Plan. The key priority is to improve attainment and achievement levels for all our children and young people, both within and outwith the formal curriculum. As part of a multi-agency partnership, the following priorities have been identified within the Children and Young People's Services Plan:
 - 7.1.1 Raising attainment and achievement for all and closing the gap between the lowest and highest achievers;
 - 7.1.2 Promoting the health and well-being of all children and young people and reducing health inequalities;
 - 7.1.3 Keeping children and young people safe;
 - 7.1.4 Improving the well-being and life chances for our most vulnerable children and young people;
 - 7.1.5 Increasing participation and engagement.
- 7.2 The Curriculum for Excellence is the national curriculum for Scottish schools. It aims to ensure that all children and young people in Scotland develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they will need if they are to flourish in life, learning and work now and in the future. The Council has a further duty to deliver a service which meets the criteria for best value, in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, economy and equal opportunities, and which meets the agreed priorities in the Single Outcome Agreement and Scottish Borders Council's Corporate Plan.
- 7.3 The purpose of the Curriculum for Excellence is encapsulated in the four capacities to enable each child or young person to be:
 - 7.3.1 a successful learner;
 - 7.3.2 a confident individual;
 - 7.3.3 a responsible citizen; and
 - 7.3.4 an effective contributor.
- 7.4 The Educational Benefits of the Proposal have been assessed taking account of the requirements under legislation and the priorities and aims of both the Council's Corporate Plan and Children and Young People's Services Plan and having regard to the terms and guidance of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS FOR THE PUPILS

7.5 The Council considers that there are strong educational benefits associated with the proposal which will positively impact upon the pupils currently and likely to attend St Margaret's:-

- 7.5.1 Being part of a larger school community will provide pupils with the opportunity to develop a wider more diverse peer group within the community. The forging of close friendships and the development of self-esteem will be enhanced by each pupil being enabled to be part of an age appropriate peer group of a sufficient size to allow a range of interactions and relationships to form and reform. This should also assist with both the children's integration into the community that they live in and with the children's transition through the stages of education from nursery to secondary; as children will support each other with the social and emotional aspect of transitions.
- 7.5.2 Being part of a larger school community will provide opportunity for interaction with a larger number of their peers, which will allow children to access a wider range of views and ideas for collaborative working and enable the children to support each other's learning and learn how to challenge thinking.
- 7.5.3 Being part of a larger school community will provide the pupils with the opportunity to experience a wider range of teachers and learning experiences. Some of the educational benefits will arise not just from larger pupil numbers but also because a larger staff and parent body increases the likelihood of greater community involvement in a range of activities that will support the provision of a richer and higher quality curriculum.
- 7.5.4 The Curriculum for Excellence places significant emphases on collaborative working and skills development in wider settings as it is recognised that a pupil's social and emotional development is essential to delivery of the curriculum. Being part of the larger school community will enhance their learning and will provide all pupils with opportunities to experience more aspects of the Curriculum for Excellence as the size of the current roll limits the extent of the Curriculum on offer.
- 7.5.5 Each of the non-denominational primary schools within the town of Hawick has an Early Learning and Childcare setting which will allow attending children the opportunity to learn from an early age with their peers, smoothing their transition into Primary stage education.
- 7.5.6 Attending a larger catchment school will provide more opportunities for team sports and other active recreational activities. This applies even to individual sports, where successful learning of skills is helped by talking and sharing experiences. It further applies to the health and wellbeing element of the curriculum which involves discussion and debate between pupils regarding healthy lifestyle choices. Whilst these problems can currently be partially overcome by taking the pupils to participate in activities in a neighbouring school, that in itself involves time out of school travelling there and back.

7.5.7 As with sports, a larger roll would also provide a greater likelihood of pupils benefitting from a wider range of solo and group musical and artistic opportunities.

7.5.8 As part of the Curriculum of Excellence, one of the aims of Developing Scotland's Young Workforce is to develop increased awareness of the world of work, social skills and employability skills. Such knowledge and understanding and skills acquisition very much benefit from discussions and dialogue with peers of the same age/stage and through increased opportunities for interaction with the community.

7.6 IMPACT ON STAFF

7.6.1 The staff will be supported by the HR Support Processes in the Council to ensure a smooth transition in their roles.

7.6.2 In a larger school staff will be able to receive support in providing an inclusive curriculum and work together to provide support to children who may have additional support needs. Being part of a larger team will enable staff to share planning and curricular resources and work more collaboratively and can also learn from each other to provide improved approaches to learning and teaching.

7.7 IMPACT ON PUPILS AT OTHER SCHOOLS IN THE COUNCIL AREA

7.7.1 The pupils at the other schools within the Hawick School cluster will benefit from the increased diversity in their schools and from the opportunity to expand both their social and educational peer group. This will allow children to access a wider range of views and ideas for collaborative working and allow the children to support each other's learning and learn how to challenge thinking.

7.7.2 St Margaret's is one of 4 denominational schools in the Scottish Borders and shares a Headteacher with St Joseph's RC Primary School, Selkirk and St Margaret's RC Primary School, Galashiels. If the proposal proceeds the children and staff at St Joseph's and St Margaret's in Galashiels will benefit from the Headteacher having more time to concentrate and work with them to continue to raise standards, close the attainment gap and improve the learning experience.

8 TRANSITION PLANNING

If the outcome of this statutory consultation process is that St Margaret's is to close it is proposed that this will come into effect from August 2018. The Council recognises that in the event the proposal proceeds that the transition process for the children, parents and staff will require to be carefully planned and managed. Each pupil will require an individualised transition programme to assist and support them before, during and after their transition.

9 EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

This proposal will assist in ensuring that children across Hawick will have parity of access to learning, opportunities and facilities in their communities. All children will have access to the same early years' experience, primary and secondary schools as those in their community which should assist with transition throughout their learning journey.

10. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 10.1 The 2010 Act, requires the Council to provide information regarding the financial implications of a school closure proposal. A template has been provided by the Scottish Government, following consultation with the Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education. The template has been completed in respect of St Margaret's utilising the projected figures in the Devolved School Management Budgets for 2017/18.
- 10.2 As the pupils currently enrolled at St Margaret's fall within more than one catchment area we have for the purpose of the financial template assumed that all the current pupils transfer to one school. As illustrated in the template the addition of a further 14 pupils will not have significant financial impact on the receiving school.
- 10.3 The completed template highlights that the current cost of educating pupils at St Margaret's Hawick at £10,300 per annum is significantly above the Scottish Borders average cost per pupil of £3,696 per annum.

11. SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS FOR THIS PROPOSAL PAPER

- 11.1 This Proposal Paper has been prepared by the Council's Children and Young People's Services in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended (**2010 Act**). The 2010 Act sets out a consultation procedure that a Local Authority must follow for certain proposals affecting schools in their area. The 2010 Act and its explanatory notes are available for reference at the following websites, respectively:

[Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#)

[Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010 - Explanatory Notes](#)

- 11.2 The proposal to close St Margaret's is deemed a relevant proposal in terms of the 2010 Act (the **Proposal**) and is therefore subject to the statutory consultation procedure specified in the 2010 Act.

- 11.3 The proposal paper will be available for inspection, free of charge, at:

- Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, TD6 0SA
- St Margaret's RC Primary School, Buccleuch Street, Hawick, TD9 0HU
- Hawick Library, North Bridge Street, Hawick TD9 9QT

and published in both English and Polish on the Scottish Borders Council website:

www.scotborders.gov.uk/stmargarets

- 11.4 Copies of this Proposal Paper are available in both English and Polish (and other languages upon request) from:

St Margaret's RC Hawick School Consultation

Children and Young People's Services

Scottish Borders Council

Council Headquarters

Newtown St Boswells

Melrose

TD6 0SA

Telephone: 01835 825080

E-mail: schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk

- 11.5 Formal notice of the Proposal and relevant information will be given and be made available, free of charge, to the consultees listed as follows:

- the parents/carers of the children who attend an affected school;
- the Parent Council of an affected school;

- the parent/carers of any children likely to attend an affected school within two years of the date of the publication of the Proposal Paper;
- the pupils attending an affected school;
- the Staff (teaching and non-teaching) at an affected school;
- any Trade Union which is representative of the staff;
- Hawick Community Council;
- the community planning partnership (as defined in section 4(5) of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015) for the area where an affected school is situated or any other community planning partnership that the Education Authority considers relevant;
- the constituency Member of the Scottish Parliament;
- the constituency Member of Parliament;
- the List Members of the Scottish Parliament.

11.6 **Advertisement in Local Media**

Advertisements were placed in the relevant local media the week beginning 13 November 2017, giving the dates for the consultation period and for the public meeting.

11.7 **Consultation Period**

The consultation for this Proposal will run from 22 November 2017 and will end on 22 January 2018. This period allows for the statutory minimum of six weeks, including at least thirty school days.

11.8 **Public Meetings**

A public meeting will be held, the details of which are set out below:

Tuesday 5 December 2017 at 7pm at
 St Margaret's RC Primary School
 Buccleuch Street
 Hawick
 TD9 0HU

11.9 **Format of Public Meeting**

Anyone wishing to attend the public meeting is invited to do so. The meeting, which will be convened by Scottish Borders Council, will be addressed by the Director of Children and Young People's Services and other relevant parties.

The meetings will provide an opportunity to:

- Hear more about the Proposal
- Ask questions about the Proposal
- Have your views recorded so that they can be taken into account as part of the Proposal process.

A note will be taken at the meeting of comments, questions and officer responses. These notes will be published on the Council website and a copy will be made available on request. These notes will be forwarded to Education Scotland, along with other submissions and comments received by the Council during the consultation process.

11.10 **Meetings with Pupils and Staff**

Meetings will be held with pupils and staff in St Margaret's. A record of questions, responses and views will be taken and this will be published in the Consultation Report.

12 HAVE YOUR SAY – HOW YOU CAN RESPOND TO THE PROPOSAL

- 12.1 A consultation regarding a proposed change to your child's or your community's school is your chance to share your views. Your responses can really shape and influence future decisions; you can play your part by:
- Submitting a written or electronic response to the Council as outlined below;
 - Attending the public meeting on 5 December at St Margaret's RC Hawick at 7pm to ask questions; raise concerns/issues; make suggestions;
 - Speaking to your local Councillors;
 - Engaging with your school's Parent Council. The Parent Council can play a key role in engaging with the Council throughout the process;
 - Make representations as part of your Community;
 - Informing Scottish Borders Council if you think that this Proposal Paper has significant inaccuracies or omissions.
- 12.2 All interested parties are invited to respond to the Proposal by making written or electronic submissions on the Proposal to:
- St Margaret's RC Hawick School Consultation
Children and Young People's Services
Scottish Borders Council
Council Headquarters
Newtown St Boswells
Melrose
TD6 0SA
Or
Web Address: www.scotborders.gov.uk/stmargarets
- 12.3 A response form is available from Children & Young People's Services, Scottish Borders Council, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose TD6 0SA or online at www.scotborders.gov.uk/stmargarets. A copy of the response form is provided in **Appendix 2**.
- 12.4 Use of the response form is not compulsory. If you wish to respond by letter or electronically, you are invited to state your relationship with the school – for example, "pupil", "parent", "carer", "relative", "former pupil", "teacher in school", "member of the community" etc. Responses from Parent Councils, staff and Pupil Councils are particularly welcome.
- 12.5 Those sending in a response, whether by letter or electronically, should note that their response will be open to public scrutiny and may be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it. If they do not wish their response to be made publicly available, they should clearly write on the document: "I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to Councillors and Council Officers of Scottish Borders Council". Otherwise, it will be assumed that the person making the response agrees to it being made publicly available.
- 12.6 All written responses must be received by the last day of the consultation period, **22 January 2018**.
- 12.7 Education Scotland has prepared guidance regarding School Consultations. This can be accessed at [Education Scotland's Guidance on School Consultations](#).

13 INVOLVEMENT OF EDUCATION SCOTLAND

A copy of this Proposal document will be sent to Education Scotland by the Council. Education Scotland will also receive a copy of any relevant written representations that are received by the Council from any person during the consultation period or, if Education Scotland agree, a summary of them. Education Scotland will further receive a summary of any oral representations made to the Council at the public meeting that will be held and, as available (and so far as otherwise practicable), a copy of any other relevant documentation. Education Scotland will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal not later than 3 weeks after the Council has sent them all representations and documents mentioned above. In some cases, it is possible for them to extend the 3 weeks with the agreement of the Authority. However, for the avoidance of doubt, the 3 week period will not start until after the consultation period has ended. In preparing their report, Education Scotland may enter the affected school(s) and make such reasonable enquiries of such people there as they consider appropriate and may make such reasonable enquiries of such other people as they consider appropriate.

14 PREPARATION OF CONSULTATION REPORT

- 14.1 The Council will review the Proposal having regard to the Education Scotland report, the written representations that it has received and oral representations made to it by any person at the public meeting. It will then prepare a Consultation Report.
- 14.2 This Report will be published in electronic and printed formats and will be advertised in local newspapers. It will be available on the Council website and from Council Headquarters, the public library in Hawick, as well as St Margaret's, free of charge. Anyone who made written representations during the consultation period will also be informed about the report. The report will include a record of the total number of written representations made during the consultation period, a summary of the written representations, a summary of the oral representations made at the public meeting, the Authority's response to the Education Scotland Report as well as any written or oral representations it has received, together with a copy of the Education Scotland Report and any other relevant information, including details of any alleged inaccuracies and how these have been handled.
- 14.3 The Consultation Report will be published and available for further consideration for a period of three weeks, before it is presented to Full Council at the next scheduled Council meeting.

15 NOTE ON CORRECTIONS

If any inaccuracy or omission is discovered in this Proposal Paper, either by Scottish Borders Council or any person, Scottish Borders Council will determine if relevant information has been omitted or there has been an inaccuracy. It will then take appropriate action which may include the issue of a correction or the re-issuing of the Proposal Paper, or the revision of the timescale for the consultation period, if appropriate. In that event, relevant consultees and Education Scotland will be advised

16 SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL DECISION AND SCOTTISH MINISTERS CALL-IN

- 16.1 No decision will be taken in regard to the Proposal or any changes put into effect by either the Council or the Council's Executive (Education) Committee until the statutory consultation process has been properly completed.
- 16.2 If the Council makes a final decision to implement the Proposal, it will require to notify the Scottish Ministers of that decision, and provide them with a copy of the Proposal document and Consultation Report. This must be done within 6 working

days of that decision. The Council must also publish on its website the fact that it has notified Scottish Ministers of its decision and of the period during which consultees have the opportunity to make representations to Ministers.

- 16.3 The Scottish Ministers have an 8 week period from the date of that final decision to decide if they will call-in the Proposals regarding a closure. During the first three weeks of this period, anyone is able to make representations to Ministers on whether the decision should be called-in. Within the first 3 weeks of that 8 week period, the Scottish Ministers will take account of any relevant representations made to them by any person. Until the outcome of the 8 week call-in process is known, the Council cannot proceed to implement the Proposals. Ministers may come to a decision sooner than eight weeks (but not before the three weeks for representations to be made to them has elapsed).
- 16.4 The Scottish Ministers may issue a call-in notice only if it appears to the Scottish Ministers that the Council has:-
- 16.4.1 failed, in significant regard, to comply with the requirements of the 2010 Act in terms of the closure Proposals; or
- 16.4.2 failed to take proper account of a material consideration relevant to the decision to implement the Proposals.
- 16.5 If Scottish Ministers decide to call in a closure Proposal, they must refer it to the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels for determination by a School Closure Review Panel. The Council, as the Education Authority, may not implement the closure Proposals (wholly or partly) unless the Panel has granted consent to it (with or without conditions) and either the period for making an appeal to the Sheriff has expired or, if an appeal has been made, it has either been abandoned or the Sheriff has confirmed the Panel's decision.
- 16.6 The School Closure Review Panel may refuse to consent to the closure Proposal, refuse consent and remit the Proposal back to the Council as the Education Authority or grant their consent to the Proposals subject to conditions or unconditionally.
- 16.7 The 2010 Act, as amended, gives Ministers and School Closure Review Panels the right to call on advice from Education Scotland in relation to a closure Proposal at the call-in or determination stage.

DONNA MANSON
SERVICE DIRECTOR (CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES)

November 2017

APPENDICES

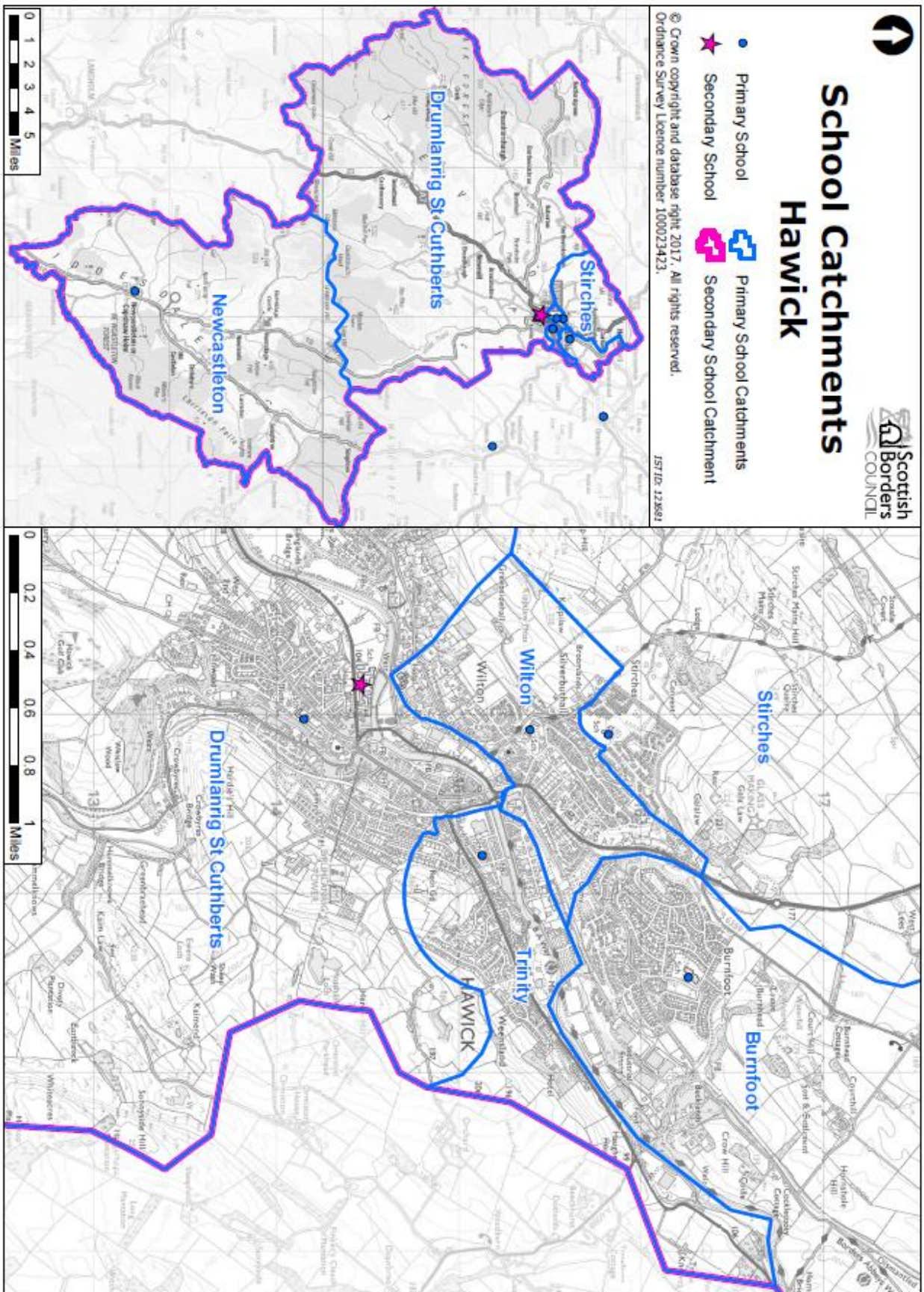
- Appendix 1** Hawick Catchment Plan
Appendix 2 Consultation Response Form
Appendix 3 Financial Templates Showing Current Revenue Costs for School Proposed for Closure

Note

This consultation is being conducted having regard to the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended.

The 2010 Act's principal purpose is to provide strong, accountable statutory consultation practices and procedures that local authorities must apply to their handling of all proposals for school closures and other major changes to schools. These consultation processes are expected to be robust, open, transparent and fair, and seen to be so. They are also expected to be consistent across Scotland.

APPENDIX 1 HAWICK CATCHMENT PLAN



APPENDIX 2

STATUTORY CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM

Children and Young People's Services
Statutory Consultation - Proposal Response Form



SCHOOL ESTATE CONSULTATION IN RELATION TO PROPOSAL TO CLOSE ST MARGARET'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL IN HAWICK

Detail of the Proposal

It is proposed that, subject to the outcome of this statutory consultation process as set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended:

- St Margaret's RC Primary School in Hawick is closed; and
- Children currently attending St Margaret's RC Primary School in Hawick are offered places with a catchment primary school based on their home address

The Consultation Period is from 22 November 2017 until 22 January 2018.

SCHOOL - please tick the most relevant box below to indicate which school(s) you are connected with

<i>St Margaret's RC Primary School</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Other</i>	

YOUR INTEREST – please tick the most relevant box below to indicate your interest in the in the School(s)

<i>Parent/carer</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Staff</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Pupil</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Relative of Pupil</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Parent Council Member</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Elected Member/MSP/MP</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Community Planning Partner</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Community Member</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Other</i>	

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS



1. Do you agree with the proposal to close St Margaret's RC Primary School in Hawick

Agree

Disagree

Please tell us the main reasons for your views and why you agree/disagree with the above proposal.

2. Do you agree with the proposal to offer the children currently attending St Margaret's RC Primary School in Hawick a place in a catchment school in their area, based on their home address?

Agree

Disagree

Please tell us the main reasons for your views and why you agree/disagree with the above proposal.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS



3. Please tell us if you have any further comments or alternative suggestions regarding the proposals

--

DETAILS

Please complete your details below to assist our analysis of the responses

Name	
Postcode	
Email Address	

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RESPONSE

I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to elected members and officers of Scottish Borders Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
--	--------------------------

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO GIVE US YOUR VIEWS

Your completed form can be handed into your local school or posted to: St Margaret's Hawick School Consultation, Children and Young People's Services, Scottish Borders Council, Newtown St Boswells TD6 0SA.

You can also give us your views online at: www.scotborders.gov.uk/stmargarets

BY 22 JANUARY 2018

If you have any queries, please email: schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk

APPENDIX 3

FINANCIAL TEMPLATES SHOWING CURRENT REVENUE COSTS FOR SCHOOL PROPOSED FOR CLOSURE

Financial Template

Table 1	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Row 1	Current revenue costs for school proposed for closure			
	Name of School	Costs for full financial year (projected annual costs)	Additional financial impact on receiving school [enter name of school]	Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)
Row 2	St Margaret's RC Primary School Hawick			
Row 3	<i>School costs</i>			
Row 4	<i>Employee costs - note 1</i>			
Row 5	teaching staff	£85,945	£17,058	N/A
Row 6	support staff	£32,809	0	N/A
Row 7	teaching staff training (CPD etc)			
Row 8	support staff training			
Row 9	Supply costs - note 2	£580	0	N/A
Row 10				
Row 11	<i>Building costs:</i>			
Row 12	property insurance	£742	0	
Row 13	non domestic rates	£7,841	0	
Row 14	water & sewerage charges	£1,774	0	
Row 15	utilities costs	£7,906	0	
Row 16	cleaning (contract or in-house)	£3,664	0	
Row 17	building repair & maintenance			
Row 18	grounds maintenance	£157	0	
Row 19	facilities management costs - note 6	£321	0	
Row 20	revenue costs arising from capital			
Row 21	Other			
Row 22				
Row 23	<i>School operational costs:</i>			
Row 24	learning materials	£2,722	£355	
Row 25	catering (contract or in-house)			
Row 26	SQA costs			
Row 27	other school operational costs (e.g. licences)			

Table 2	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7
	Capital costs	School proposed for closure	Receiving school
	Capital Life Cycle cost - note 7		
	Third party contributions to capital costs		

Table 3	Column 5	Column 6
	Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal	
	property insurance	
	non domestic rates	
	water & sewerage charges	
	energy costs	
	cleaning (contract or inhouse)	
	security costs	
	building repair & maintenance	
	grounds maintenance	
	facilities management costs	
	Other	
	TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL	

Row 28				
Row 29	Transport costs: note 3			
Row 30	home to school			
Row 31	other pupil transport costs			
Row 32	staff travel			
Row 33	SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	£144,461	£17,413	
Row 34				
Row 35	Income:			
Row 36	Sale of meals			
Row 37	Lets			
Row 38	External care provider			
Row 39	Other			
Row 40	SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL	£144,461	£17,413	
Row 41				
Row 42	TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL			
Row 43				
Row 44	UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR (based on 14 pupils)	£10,318		

Table 4

Non-recurring revenue costs	
TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS	

Table 5

Impact on GAE - note 5	
GAE IMPACT	



Statutory Consultation regarding Proposal to Close St Margaret's RC Primary School, Hawick

Minutes of Public Meeting on 5 December 2017 at St Margaret's RC Primary School, Hawick

Attendance:-

Carol Hamilton, Executive Member for Children and Young People
Donna Manson, Service Director for Children and Young People
Father Edward Wanat, Parish Priest from Saint Mary's and St David's RC Church, Hawick
Katarzyna Gajewska, member of SBC staff and translator
Moira Robertson, Head teacher of St Margaret's

18 people (including 2 children) – parents/carers, press and community members

5 elected members

1 member of St Margaret's staff

7 Council Officers

Meeting

Carol Hamilton welcomed everyone and introduced the meeting.

Donna Manson introduced the Council officers and talked through the Council's presentation. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes as **Appendix 1**.¹

The proposal for closure is being made following a sustained decline in the school roll. Council officers have been monitoring the position and were disappointed to see this continued decline.

The Council cannot see evidence of any future increase in demand for places at the school

The Council is responsible for providing education under a statutory framework. The Council is then held accountable through an inspection framework administered by Education Scotland.

The Proposal Paper for the consultation gives the Council officers views on the proposals. Tonight is an opportunity for us to hear your views and answer your questions.

We have held preliminary meetings with parents and carers; and would like to thank them for their engagement with us.

We have received several questions during our meetings with the parents and carers:

- **Would we have to attend the catchment school?**
 - *Council Response:* We would support you in your decision regarding your child's school. You would be entitled to make a placement request if you wish your child to attend another school. It is Council policy to (as far as possible) say yes to placement requests.
- **Would there be capacity at other schools in the town for our children?**
 - *Council Response:* There is currently capacity at each of the catchment schools this year. If this proposal proceeds arrangements would be made to ensure that classes are arranged to accommodate all the children in the new school year.
- **How would we decide which school to send our children to?**

¹ Copies of the presentation were available at the meeting in English and Polish for attendees. Katarzyna Gajewska provided full translation during the meeting. The presentation (in both English and Polish) will be added to the Council's Consultation website page.

- *Council Response:* We would support you as you make your decision. Visits to schools could be arranged along with meeting with teachers to assist with your decision process. The Council works with each of our schools to ensure that standards are maintained and we constantly strive for improved performance and attainment.
- **Why has a nursery (Early Learning and Childcare setting) not been introduced at St Margaret's and why have there been no plans to start one?**
 - *Council Response:* ELC provision in the Borders is provided through a blend of local authority, private and voluntary providers. There are currently 6 local authority operated and 4 private and voluntary provisions within Hawick, which currently meet demand within the town. We have been unable to identify a demand for ELC at St Margaret's which would sustain a viable ELC setting;
- **What arrangements will be made regarding our children's future religious instruction?**
 - *Council Response:* We have had several meetings with the Church and its representatives regarding religious instruction over recent weeks. We would continue to work with the Church to ensure that instruction would be provided in a form that both the Church and parents are happy with.

We would now like to hear your views comments and questions regarding the proposals:-

Questions and Comments during the meeting:

- **Comment from a parent:**

I feel there is nothing we can do and nothing you can do, I think it will just happen

Answer from Donna Manson:

Thank you for your comment. We have been working with the denominational schools across the region to try and develop sustainable schools. We started our School Estate Review almost 2 years ago - this comprised a review of the Roman Catholic schools where we held meetings with the parents and carers of the schools and the Parent Councils of the 4 schools. Through this review progress has been made; e.g. Halyrude School has come through quite challenging times and now has a rising roll; St. Joseph's Selkirk roll has stabilised and is now going up; St Margaret's Gala roll is steady and we have identified the need for nursery provision at the school which we will open next year. We have also changed the leadership structure of the schools, responding to the concerns of the parents/carers. While we have made definite progress implementing our plan to develop sustainable schools, unfortunately we are where we are today with this school where the roll has continued to fall.

- 2 **Question from a parent:**

Why are there no Scottish Children at the school? We don't have enough children coming to the school.

Answer from Donna Manson:

It would appear that parents have been making a choice not to send their children to this school. I do not consider this is based on nationality. Families choose schools for different reasons, such as proximity to grandparents, affinity to certain schools and logistics of travel etc., there are often many factors in their decision. Families in Hawick will make decisions for various reasons. If families make a placing request within Scottish Borders it is our policy (as far as possible) to say yes. We want to support the families in Hawick with their decisions. Families can appeal decisions if a placing request is refused. This would go to Councillors to ask why decisions were made.

Councillor Ramage commented:

Some families make the decision as they wish to go to bigger schools as they consider there will be educational and social benefits.

Comment from a member of the Community:

I have asked a family why they moved from St Margaret's and they said is simply because as they want their children to go a bigger school for the educational benefits and socialisation skills.

3 **Question from a member of the Community:-**

When the numbers reduced, why was nothing done to increase numbers? When you reduced the school to 1 teacher, the pupil number fell. 2 years ago, we had 35/37 pupils and 2 teachers, why did you not try to build up the school?

Donna Manson Answered:

There is a Scottish Government formula that allocates monies for each school. Teacher numbers are driven by class sizes. The reduction in numbers of teachers at a school is not driven by cost cutting by the Council but directly correlates to pupil numbers.

As part of our School Estates Review, we spoke to the heads and parents in all our schools with a roll under 50 and asked what is it you can do to build your school? Some of our schools have made good progress and have carried out work in the community to build the schools, whereas some schools have been unable to make progress with numbers.

4 **Question from a member of the press:**

Dumfries & Galloway Council have recently withdrawn proposals to close 3 rural schools and now cannot consult on these schools for 5 year. They are working to build these schools up. Why are we not trying that here?

Donna Manson Answered:

Work has been done with RC schools over recent years and we have seen 3 out of the 4 schools develop in this time – some schools have taken steps and have grown over this time period. Things have not developed in the same way for St Margaret's school over this period. Halyrude RC School has seen an increase in their role in this period. That has not happened here for the RC school in Hawick; people have made other choices about what school they send their children to. There are educational benefits for the children attending a larger school. The children benefit from a larger peer group and collaborative and group work.

5 **Question from a member of the press:**

Why did this report come out just before the enrolment process and why was it a recommendation for closure before the consultation? This is putting the cart before the horse!

Donna Manson Answered:

I take full responsibility for the paper and its contents. We are following a statutory process. This is a statutory consultation where there is a requirement to make a proposal which is then consulted upon; all comments and questions made during the consultation will be responded to in a report at the end of the period. The proposal is not linked to enrolment, no children enrolled in P1 last year. We have been working with 4 denominational schools for the 2 years pre-consultation and there have been different outcomes at each of the schools.

6 **Question from a member of the community:**

This is a question for the Headteacher – How do you share your workload with the 2 other schools? The report mentions that if the school closed that a positive would be that the Headteacher could that could work more at the other schools. How many hours does she spend at St Margaret's, Hawick?

Moir Robertson (Headteacher of St Margaret's) answered:

I spend roughly a third of my time in each school. I am in all 3 schools for assembly on Mondays and split time between each school roughly a day and a half a week in each school.

7 **Question from a member of the community:**

I am concerned that there was no mention about culture of a denominational school and about the benefits of a religious school. There was only one comment (in section 6) that mentions consultation with the church.

Donna Manson Answered:

When we started the denominational school review 2 years ago, we worked very closely with the RC Church's Education Representative, Patricia Carroll. We met with her regularly and she was heavily involved with our plans regarding leadership changes, school roll, curriculum and school activities. We have worked closely with the Church and will provide details of the meetings and engagement with the

Church and the parents/carers in the Consultation Report which will be published at the end of the consultation period.

8 **Question from a member of the community:**

I am concerned about the participation of the children in the consultation process regarding the potential closure of their school. In the 'Participants not Pawns' Guidance issued by Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People it stated that there should a real effort to get them to take part, dealing appropriately with issues relating to language, culture and religion. What are you doing to ensure that the children really get a chance to take part?

Donna Manson Answered:

We are very sensitive to the needs off the children and are very familiar with that Guidance. We met with the staff during the pre-consultation process, who then worked with us to present to the children what was about to happen and met with the children to chat things through. The formal consultation process requires us to meet with the children and discuss the proposal. This is being done in conjunction with the school staff and we will ensure that appropriate support is given to the children during this process. The people involved in this process are trained in this type of work and all the discussions will be fully documented and will form part of the Consultation Report that will be published and will be publically available at the end of the consultation period.

9 **Question from Councillor Turnbull:**

What is the process for the transition for the pupils to the other schools?

Donna Manson Answered:

We cannot pre-empt what the decision will be regarding the school's future. There is an interim period where Education Scotland will come in and speak to the children, with staff supporting them about what could happen. Once the Council makes a decision there is a period where Scottish Ministers can call the decision and consultation process in for review by the Schools Closure Panel. During this time we will be working with families and discussing matters with them. Some families may want this contact and support, others may not - it is offered to all of the families. If the decision is made to close the school, this needs to be a positive experience for the children and we will work with them to find the best way to assist them in this time e.g. organising theme days and activities to support them. We will ensure that they get a chance to engage with other children in other schools - this is important. The team will handle this properly and professionally but we will respond to what the children need with teachers and others supporting them. Individual transition plans will be used so that each child has a positive experience in their transition to a new school, while also ensuring that they keep on track with their learning.

10 **Question from a member of the community:**

This question may not be appropriate given balance of probability – but what would happen to the building if it was to be no longer used as a school?

Lesley Munro (Lead Officer School Estates SBC) answered:

If the decision is made to close the school we are certainly not keen to have the building empty. It will be made safe and secure, it is an Education SBC building at the moment and then it will be passed to the SBC's Estates Team.

All options for the building will be considered, which will include:

- capital receipt and sale;
- community asset transfer;
- lease

SBC's main aim is to be supportive of community aspirations

Councillor McAteer commented:

There is a lot of interest in this site for community and commercial use

11 **Question from a member of the community:**

Does the land and building belong to SBC?

Donna Manson answered:

It is our understanding that we own the land although we will carry out a review to clarify the full title

position. A plan is attached to these minutes confirming the Council's ownership as **Appendix 2**.

We need to be sensitive here this is currently a school and no decision has been made regarding its future. That is why the process requires extensive independent review to ensure that everyone acts properly. It would be unfair for only local Councillors to be asked to make such a decision; that is why Education Scotland are involved to consider the Educational Benefits; then a proposal goes to Full Council after an extensive report on the Consultation is prepared containing all the comments made during the consultation and responses to them. Ultimately the decision then has to be reviewed by the Scottish Ministers.

12 **Comment from a member of the Press:**

What a waste of time this meeting is. It is cut and dried. It is a done deal. Does the audience support this? Do Councillors support this? They are trying to sell the land! It's all about money!

Donna Manson Answered:

Your comments are noted. We are following a statutory process. Any closure requires a decision of the full Council. We are following the correct process as it would be unfair to local Council members to be put in the position of having to decide. The proposal is about educational benefits for the children.

We will make contact with every family through the Head Teacher to ensure they get a chance to respond to the consultation and families will have the opportunity to meet the inspectors if they wish.

Donna Manson thanked everyone for coming and encouraged everyone to take part in the consultation process. Response forms were available in both English and Polish at the meeting and on the Council's Consultation webpage as detailed in the presentation.

Special thanks were given to Katarzyna for all her assistance with translation.



**St. Margaret's RC Primary School
Public Meeting
Tuesday 5th December 2017**



**School Estate Consultation in relation to
the proposal to close St. Margaret's RC
Primary School in Hawick**

The Proposals

- St. Margaret's RC Primary School in Hawick is closed
- Children currently attending St. Margaret's are offered places with a catchment primary school based on their home address

STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS

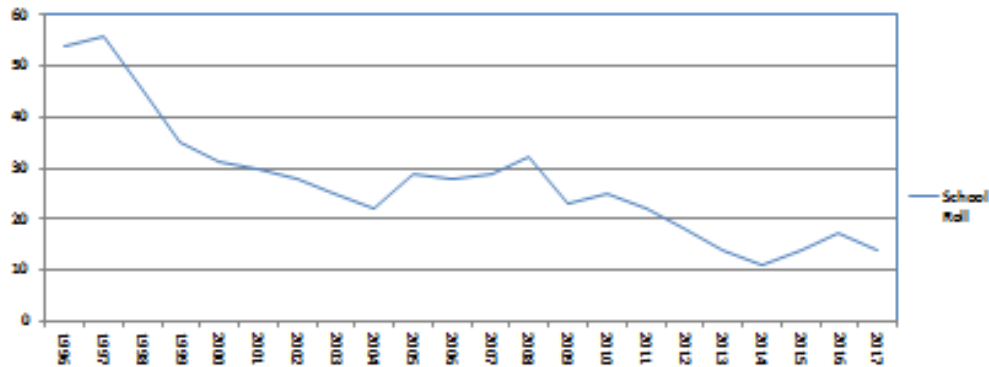
- Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 sets out the consultation process that local authorities must follow when proposing a permanent change to any school
- This includes:
 - Publishing a proposal paper including an Educational Benefits Statement
 - 6 week consultation period (minimum of 30 school days)
 - Holding a public meeting
 - Education Scotland meeting with parents, pupils and staff and report on Educational Benefits
 - Publishing a consultation report responding to issues raised during the consultation

STATUTORY CONSULTATION (cont'd)

- Council make a decision after a 3 week consultation period following the publication of the consultation report
- Scottish Ministers have 8 weeks to call in a proposal regarding closure for referral to Schools Closure Panel
- If Schools Closure Panel do not support closure a future closure proposal cannot be consulted on for a minimum of 5 years
- Denominational Schools closures also require specific consent from Secretary of State. This can only be granted if satisfied regarding provisions for religious instruction.

REASON FOR THE PROPOSAL

Historic School Roll - Number of Pupils 1997-2017



- St Margaret's has capacity for 100 pupils
- The School roll is currently 14
- The school roll has been < 20 since 2012
- The school roll is not projected to grow - no P1s this year

REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL

- Sustained and continued reduction in school roll
- Concerns regarding inclusion and integration into the community
- Curriculum for Excellence – constraints to opportunities for full range of curricular and learning opportunities
- Constraints to team and group work
- Seeking to strengthen social and emotional development
- Seeking to improve transition to High School
- Large school building significantly underutilised
- No full PE facilities

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS TO PROPOSAL

- Opportunities for children to develop a wider, more diverse peer group within the community
- Opportunities to enhance integration and inclusion in the community
- Opportunities for increased team and collaborative working
- Exposure to a wider learning experiences
- Improved transitions to High School
- Help to improve social and emotional development
- Increased opportunities to participate in team/group activities, including sports and the arts

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS FROM MEETINGS WITH PARENTS:-

1. Would we have to attend the catchment school?

Council Response: We would support you as you make your decision regarding your child's school. You would be entitled to make a placement request if you wished your child to attend another school.

2. Would there be space at the schools for our children?

Council Response: There is currently capacity at each of the catchment schools this year. If the proposal proceeds arrangements would be made to ensure that the classes are arranged to accommodate all the children in the new school year (2018/2019).

3. How would we decide which school to send our children to?

Council Response: We would support you as you make your decision. Visits to schools could be arranged, along with meetings with teachers to assist with your decision process. The Council works with each of our schools to ensure that standards are maintained and we constantly strive for improved performance and attainment.

4 Why has a Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) setting not been introduced at the school and why have there been no plans to start one?

Council Response: ELC provision in the Borders is supplied through a blend of local authority, private and voluntary providers. There are currently 6 local authority operated and 4 private and voluntary ELC provisions in Hawick which currently meet demand within the town. We have been unable to identify a demand for ELC at St Margaret's which would sustain a viable ELC setting.

5. What arrangements would be made regarding our children's religious instruction?

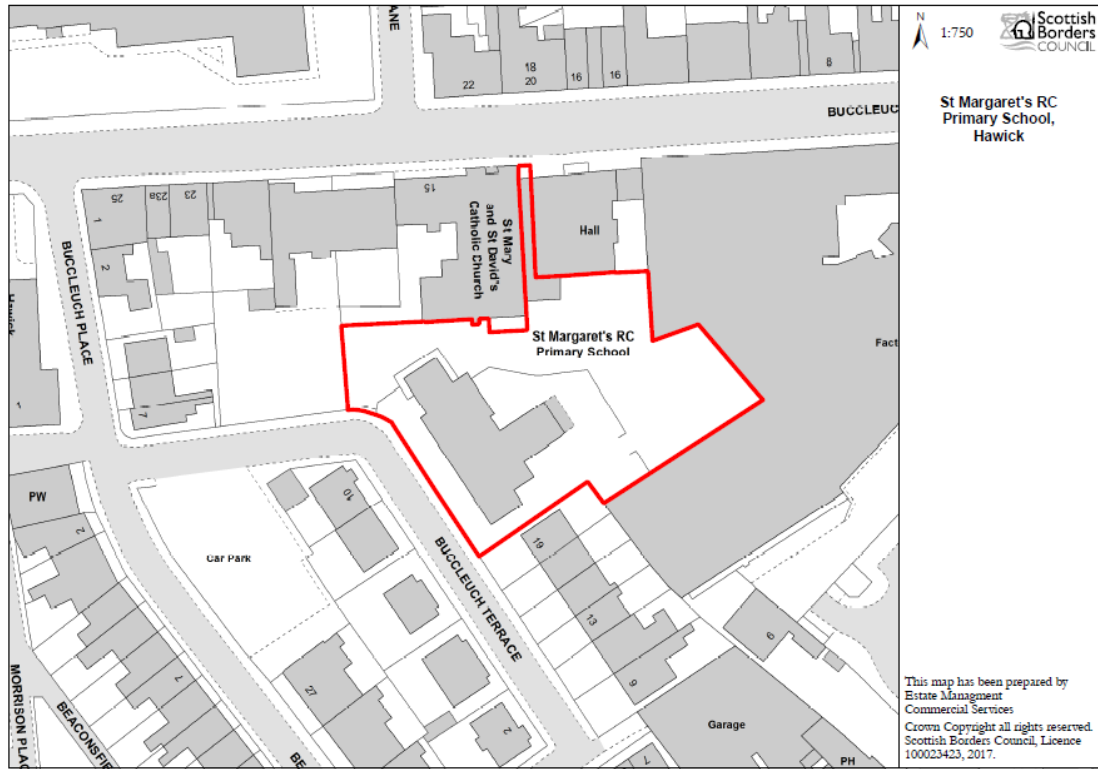
Council Response: We have had several meetings with the Church and its representatives regarding this over recent weeks. We would continue to work with the Church to ensure that a satisfactory proposal can be made to you to ensure that this instruction will be provided.

NEXT STEPS

- **This is a chance for you to have your say . Proposal Papers and Response Forms available here today and at www.scotborders.gov.uk/stmargarets**
- **Separate meetings will be held with children and staff to hear their views and answer their questions**
- **Consultation Period open until 22 January 2018**
- **Education Scotland will visit the school and meet with pupils, parents and staff**
- **Consultation Report will be published for further comments in February 2018**
- **Report on Consultation Process will go to Council in March 2018**

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Appendix 2 - Plan of site



END OF MINUTES

Appendix 3 Meeting with Pupils 6 December 2017

- Kevin McCall (Senior Lead Officer, Children and Young People SBC) and Gillian Sellar (Solicitor – SBC)
- The pupils were split into 2 groups P2-4 and P5-7.
- The pupils were supported by their Headteacher, Moira Robertson.

The pupils were asked:

- What they thought about the proposals and how it made them feel.
- What they would not like about potentially having to go to a new school; and
- If there was anything they might like about going to a new school

The children were very engaged and articulate and obviously attached to the school, the staff and each other.

Their comments included:

- *I don't want the school to close. If it does close I will be sad as the school is small and everyone is very kind. There is no swearing and I like to learn different things as a mixed group.*
- *I like the idea but would be a little sad as I won't see the teachers anymore. I would be happy to make more friends.*
- *I don't want the school to close as there is so much kindness here. Small is best.*
- *I am not sure if I would be working at the right level at a new school as here I sometimes get to work at the level above. (Reassurance was given that if the school does close, that the teachers would work together to make sure everyone would be working at the right level for them)*
- *What will happen to the computers and all other stuff? (Reassurance was given that this will be properly taken care of if the school was to close)*
- *I will be sad if the school closes – I wanted to be here from P1-P7*
- *There is nothing good about big schools*
- *Will we get to take all the toys?*
- *What will happen to this building? (Reassurance was given that if the school closes that this will be managed appropriately)*
- *Will the school close this year? (Reassurance was given that the proposal was being consulted on a no decision had been made. There is a long process and more people will come to speak to them to listen to their views and to how they feel. A big report will then be written containing everyone's views and questions and they will all be answered. Once the report has been prepared all the Councillors will read over all the information and then make a decision. Then the Report goes to the Scottish Government who have a final decision)*
- *Why is the school closing? I was told that the school would stay open as long as there was one pupil (Pupils were told that no decision had been made and about the process that proceeded the proposal – 2 years ago the Council met with parents of the 4 Catholic Schools in the Borders as everyone was worried that the schools were getting smaller and smaller and that is this continued that some might close. Since then there has been good work carried out to stabilise the schools, with a new leadership structure introduced and 2 schools have seen an increase in rolls, unfortunately this has not been the case for St Margaret's)*
- *It will be good to meet friends*

- *It will be good as there will be more to learn*
- *It will be bad as I have been here a long time*
- *My parents are worried*
- *I've heard that there is lots of bullying at other schools*
- *It will be shame to leave the garden as we have worked really hard in the garden*
- *I am somewhere between sad and good*
- *We have had some great trips and I will miss that*
- *It would be very hard for the P6s as they would only have 1 year left and they have been here for a long time*
- *We won the Sumdog competition it is a shame that could be the last time we do that together*

It was agreed that if the children had more questions or wanted another chance to speak to the Council officers, that officers would return again in January to speak with the pupils again (as some of them were a little bit upset about maybe having to move school). It was agreed that they would like more time to think about what questions they had and what they thought about the chance that their school might close and that they may have to move to another school.

Moira Robertson held another session with the children at the start of January and they confirmed that they were happy with what they had said and asked in December and did not consider that they needed a follow meeting with the Council Officers.

Appendix 4 – Meeting with Staff 6 December 2017

Kevin McCall (Senior Lead Officer, Children and Young People SBC) and Gillian Sellar (Solicitor, SBC) met with staff to discuss the Proposals:-

- All members of staff were encouraged to engage in the Consultation Process as this was their chance to respond in their own words and have their say on the Education Team's proposal.
- It was confirmed that all comments and questions will be responded to and that all comments and responses will form part of the Consultation Report which will go to Full Council for a decision and will then be submitted to the Scottish Ministers for their decision process.
- Staff were advised that we are now in the Statutory Process, which has a prescribed timetable that must be adhered to. A decision will not be made until all the information and responses have been considered. The Scottish Ministers have the final say

The Comments and Questions included:

Timing

There was concern about the proposed timetable as the Consultation Report was not going before Council until end of March 2018. After that the Scottish Ministers would have 8 weeks to decide whether to call in the decision. It was considered that last term of a school year is always very busy and challenging and the staff were anxious that, if the school was to shut, they would not have time to give the children the support that they would need and to tidy up the school for closure. There was also anxiety expressed about the time of year as this time of the Common Riding.

The Council Officers advised that SBC (if a decision to close was made) was very aware that enhanced transitional support (in some cases more than enhanced transitional support) would be required for the children and that this would be given. Similarly staff would be supported, if the school was to close in all that needed to be done to close the school and support and assist the children. The physical tidying and closure of the school would not take priority over the children and that this could be done at a later stage.

It was asked when the children would be likely to move to their new school if the closure proceeds.
It was agreed that the start of a new school year would be the optimum position.

Religious Instruction

It was asked what arrangements would be made regarding Religious Instruction if the school was to close.
Council Officers advised that discussions with the church are underway and would be ongoing. There are a variety of options and the Church is keen to support in different forms as required. This will be led by the families as it was important that they could choose what would work for them - not all the children go to the Polish School (there is a charge).

Catchment Schools/ Transition

There were also queries regarding placement requests

Council Officers advised that as far as possible SBC's policy is to grant placing requests. It was confirmed that SBC will work with parents and assist with the decisions to work out what is best for the families and the children.

Capacity in the other schools was also queried

Council Officers confirmed that work has been done to look at this and that there is and will be

capacity.

There were queries regarding the assimilation of the children into a new school, in the event St Margaret's closes

Council Officers advised that they would be given as much support as possible with their integration into their new school and that SBC would work to ensure that the transitions went as well as possible.

Redeployment

Queries were asked about redeployments and what would happen to the staff, in the event that the school closes. The staff were mindful of their wish to minimise this disruption for the school but also wanted to be secure in their own positions.

Council Officers advised that HR would provide full support to staff in the event that a decision was made to close the school.

History of the School

It was asked what would happen with all the historic photos, press cuttings and other information regarding the school. It was agreed that this was important to the community and the town. It was important to capture this history.

Council Officers advised that (if a decision is made to close the school) this would be considered carefully with the Archaeological Society, the library etc. and a solution would be devised to ensure that this was appropriately retained and preserved.

Staff were advised how to contact HQ with any other queries, concerns or questions.

Appendix 5– Report from HMIE dated February 2018

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Scottish Borders Council to close St Margaret's RC Primary School in Hawick.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments contained in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Scottish Borders Council's proposal to close St Margaret's RC Primary School in Hawick, with effect from August 2018. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include a copy of this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all legislative obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the school; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visits to the site of St Margaret's RC Primary School and Drumlanrig St Cuthbert's Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Scottish Borders Council undertook the consultation on its proposal with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

2.2 The council undertook a pre-consultation process whilst reviewing its school estate in 2016. This was promoted through letters, school mail, press releases, social media, posters and newsletters, with consultation events held across the region. As part of this there was a meeting with parents of children who attended St Margaret's RC Primary School. Meetings were also held between council officers and church representatives regarding the proposal to close St Margaret's RC Primary School and the educational benefits were discussed.

2.3 The formal consultation was begun as the school roll had continued to fall, resulting in a single P2 to P7 class with 14 children. This consultation took place between 22 November 2017 and 22 January 2018. A public meeting was held in St Margaret's RC Primary School on 5 December 2017. Members of the public were encouraged to respond to the proposal in a range of ways including written and online submissions. There were nine responses, four of which were from people who had a direct connection with St Margaret's RC Primary School. Five responses agreed with the proposal and four disagreed with it. School staff who spoke to HM Inspectors reported that the online response system was awkward to use and it would not let them proceed unless they indicated that they supported the proposal or that they were against it. Several staff would have preferred a third 'don't know' option as they were neither strongly for or against the proposal.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The council considers that there are strong educational benefits associated with the proposal. It believes that being part of a larger school community will provide children with the opportunity to develop a wider and more diverse peer group within the community. It thinks that this will provide opportunity for interaction with a larger number of peers, allowing access to a wider range of views, and the opportunity to experience a wider range of teachers and learning experiences. It further believes that being part of a larger school community will enhance children's learning and provide them with opportunities to experience a broader curriculum. There is a strong case for children from St Margaret's RC Primary School benefitting by being part of a larger school and having a wider peer group. Children have very few peers of the same age, being part of a single class of 14 pupils from P2 to P7. They currently have to travel to a neighbouring school for physical education because they lack appropriate facilities in their own school. Overall, this aspect will be of significant educational benefit to children if the proposal moves forward.

3.2 The council believes that attending a primary school which has an early learning and childcare setting will allow children to learn with their peers from an early age. However, many schools across the country do not have nursery classes and this does not necessarily place children at a significant disadvantage. Overall, this aspect will be of more limited educational benefit to children.

3.3 The council thinks that attending a larger catchment school will provide more opportunities for children to participate in team sports and other activities, including benefitting from a wider range of solo and group musical and artistic opportunities. The current size and makeup of the school roll makes team sports difficult to organise and run. Local physical education teachers are clear that this puts children in St Margaret's RC Primary School at a disadvantage. Whilst these children undertake musical and artistic activities in their school, they will benefit from being part of a wider peer group, allowing them to come together in larger groups. Overall, this aspect will be of educational benefit to children if the council proceeds with the proposal.

3.4 The council considers that having a wider range of peers, to have discussions with, will help to develop children's awareness of the world of work, developing social and employability skills. Children from other local schools are clear that working in pairs and in groups is a very important aspect of their learning across the curriculum and they think that children from St Margaret's RC Primary School would benefit greatly from this approach. Overall, this aspect will be of educational benefit to children if the proposal moves forward.

3.5 Children who attend St Margaret's RC Primary School who spoke to HM Inspectors are sad at the prospect of their school closing. They can see advantages in being part of a larger school but will miss being in the same class. They are concerned about what will happen to the records of their achievements in the school such as certificates and trophies if the school closes. They would like the opportunity to visit the schools which they could transfer to with parents and classmates so that they can make an informed choice. In its final proposal paper, the council should ensure that appropriate time and opportunity is made available for enhanced transition procedures to take place for children from St Margaret's RC Primary School.

3.6 Parents of children who currently attend St Margaret's RC Primary School who spoke to HM Inspectors are not convinced that the closure is either necessary or desirable. They have concerns that the proposal paper gives the early learning provision in other schools as a benefit of closure and yet they have been asking for this provision to be put in place in St Margaret's for a number of years. They also have concerns that they have heard of instances of bullying in other schools. The council should ensure that they continue to discuss parents' concerns with them, including why early learning provision was never included in St Margaret's.

3.7 Staff at St Margaret's RC Primary School understand the rationale for the proposal, although they feel that the establishment of an early learning provision several years ago could have helped the school roll to rise. They have justifiable concerns that timings for the council decision-making followed by effective transitions for pupils may be too tight for the school to be closed by August 2018. In its final proposal paper, the council should confirm that appropriate time and opportunity will be available for enhanced transition procedures to take place for children from St Margaret's RC Primary School.

3.8 Children who attend other local primary schools who spoke to HM Inspectors are in favour of the proposal. They are keen to make the children welcome in their

own schools. They think that children from St Margaret's RC Primary School will benefit from a wider range of friends and from a wider range of learning opportunities. They also think that children and their parents should get the opportunity to visit other schools so that they can make an informed choice about where they would like to go next session.

3.9 Parents of children who attend other local primary schools who spoke to HM Inspectors are in favour of the proposal. They feel that the move to a larger peer group will be of benefit to the children who currently attend St Margaret's RC Primary School. They think that it will be important to have high quality transition procedures in place for these children and that the authority should be aware that the children will need ongoing support to help them to come to terms with closure of their school.

3.10 Staff from other local primary schools who spoke to HM Inspectors are generally in favour of the proposal. However, they have a justifiable concern that this will end Catholic education in the local area and they feel that the authority should make it clear how the children from St Margaret's will be supported in their faith journey should the school close.

3.11 Representatives from the Catholic Church acknowledge that the current situation in St Margaret's RC Primary School is not an effective use of council resources and that children are likely to benefit educationally from being part of a larger peer group. However, there is not clarity in the proposal paper about how children will be supported in their faith whilst in a non-denominational school. In its final proposal paper, the council should clarify how children will be supported in their faith journey if their school is closed.

4. Summary

- There is overall educational benefit to the proposal to close St Margaret's RC Primary School. Children who attend this school do not currently have the opportunity to benefit from working in age-appropriate groups and their school is not well-suited to modern learning and teaching across the curriculum. Children and staff currently have to travel to a neighbouring school for physical education because they lack appropriate facilities in their own school. Team sports and other group activities are compromised by the total school roll of 14 pupils from P2 to P7.
- There are a number of aspects which the council should consider when finalising this proposal. There are justifiable concerns that timings for the council decision-making followed by effective transitions for pupils may be too tight for the proposed closure date of August 2018. In its final proposal paper, the council should clarify the timescale for closure and confirm that children and their parents will get the opportunity to visit other schools so that they can make an informed choice about which school they attend next session. It should further confirm that appropriate time and opportunity will be available for enhanced transition procedures to take place for children from St Margaret's RC Primary School. The council should also clarify how children will be supported in their faith journey and to continue to progress with the curriculum for Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools if their school is closed and be supported in coming to terms with the closure. If the proposal is

progressed, the council should ensure that it continues to discuss parents' concerns with them in the best interests of their children.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
February 2018**