

Submissions to the City of Edinburgh Council Meeting March 23rd 2006,
From the Deputation from St Mary's RC Primary School, East London St

We understand that -there is a need for fairness.

- there are difficult choices and financial constraints,

BUT budgetary decisions do not take place in a vacuum. We would urge you to remember the real-life dimension to this. There is clear perception amongst our parents that these proposals would not be fair nor appropriate to St Mary's for a number of reasons.

As you know, we have serious reservations about the running of P1/2 composites which were flagged up last week. I will not repeat these points. We welcome the commitment to carry out research in Scotland.

1. SCHOOL This policy would deprive our current pupils of resources and opportunities. There are 6 schools running at under 40% occupancy, and more running at under 60%. Is it better for the education system, or fairer, to disrupt unnecessarily a good and popular school? These proposals can only have an adverse impact on the school, educational standards and choice within affected schools.
- We have almost exactly 2x25 intake – why change this now, with 1 year to go to class size reduction? This policy will put such pressure on numbers at St Mary's that there will be families (some Catholic) moving into the area, as happens every year, who cannot get places if they have several children.

2. FAMILIES This proposal would have a disproportionately hard impact on a small number of families, those with children at St Mary's and younger siblings yet to start school. There are currently 5 families in this category.

1) The council implicitly recognises the family issue in prioritising sibling requests at Borongmuir and JGH. How much more relevant at primary stage?

2) Hitherto, there has **Never** *de facto* been a problem obtaining an out of district place at St Mary's. Whilst we understand that the Council is committed to consultation, parents registered their prospective P1 children in December 2005. The basis on which they made that decision is being changed, and will have retrospective effect. They feel that *de facto* they were quite legitimately entitled to expect to get a place at St Mary's.

Families will be split up: How are they to manage with a child of 4/5 and a child of 6/7?

3) **Moving house:**

Catch 22 for parents: EITHER restricted to moving within catchment- cost of housing in city

OR. move out of catchment and transfer school

BUT no places to which to transfer – viz St Mary's Leith.

4) **Offsetting of 2007 intake against 2006 P1 numbers**

This is particularly difficult for the 2007 intake, as there may be fewer than 40 places in 2007.

3. DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS

-The Catholic Church is unhappy with the proposals, and feel they should have been consulted.

-I refer you to letters received from Monsignor Gemmell, and to submissions to the Council by parents earlier in the week, suggesting that there may be a legal obligation to consult the Church. I understand that this is under consideration by the Council solicitor, to consider whether this has been done in due and proper form.

-Pressure on places in denominational schools is already excessive

This policy would put such pressure on numbers at St Mary's that there will be new families, some Catholic, as happens every year, who cannot get places if they have several children.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Our principal contention is that numbers are too tight

A) in St Mary's

B) in the Catholic schools

in our area to allow capping of another RC school in our area.

2. We request you to review whether all consultation required in respect of Catholic schools has been duly carried out.

3. The family dimension- these are peoples lives and daily reality

- Education policy must reflect this: it is not just an abstract numbers exercise.
- Impact on a small number disproportionate to the declared objective
- Families had de facto legitimate expectation of a place
- basis on which decisions were taken would be changed retrospectively
- too much left to chance – we need a policy and real assurances re siblings

4. There is mounting opposition to these proposals. Please think again. If there is really no alternative,

5. Please incorporate some transitional measures to:

- phase this policy in
- except the small, clearly defined group of families with siblings from disproportionately harsh consequences.