

Feedback from Formal Consultation

Catholic Diocese of Shrewsbury

In the interests of the common good, the Diocese of Shrewsbury would wish to support moves that will improve the education, and therefore life chances, of all young people in Macclesfield and surrounding areas. We believe that it is important that plans should not seek solely to address immediate issues but should have the vision to ensure that the future needs of parents and students are taken into account in prudent planning of provision.

As a result of the distinctive nature of diocesan Catholic schools as faith schools parents often make an active choice for our schools based on our faith, culture and values. The Diocese of Shrewsbury actively supports parental choice and diversity of provision knowing that parental engagement is a key factor in good educational outcomes.

The Diocese acknowledges that some parents seek a non-faith based education for their children. Many pupils in this area of the Authority are already travelling significant distances to attend their preferred schools. It would appear from the information available that many parents are making active choices for the three most successful schools in Macclesfield.

It is a matter of some concern that the proposed closure of Macclesfield High and its reopening as an Academy does not address the significant surplus places problem affecting Macclesfield. To date it would appear that a relatively small number of parents are likely to make the Academy a first preference, certainly fewer than the planned 4 form entry for the school. This would obviously have a major impact on the curriculum that could be offered. If however, as a result of the successful promotion of the proposed Academy over the coming months, the number of applications increases significantly this could have a deleterious impact on the curriculum, staffing and financial planning of the other three schools.

We are further concerned that increasing competition amongst four schools for a declining student population could seriously undermine effective collaboration between those schools. It would be to the detriment of all concerned if collaboration through the sharing of resources, good practice and areas of specialism in both the primary and secondary sectors were to be inhibited by competition for students amongst schools.

The Diocese of Shrewsbury recognises that a very difficult decision has to be made and it is hoped that a way forward can be found which allows for the best and most effective use of resources in order to provide stable and sustainable high quality educational provision in Macclesfield for the long term. It is our belief that the cornerstone of such provision is the three existing successful schools working together in collaboration for the benefit of all students.

Alex Scott
Director of Schools