



Midlothian

# MIDLOTHIAN CONSULTATION

ALIGNING THE SECONDARY SCHOOL DAY

# OUTCOME REPORT

APRIL 2024

# Advancing Opportunities through an Aligned Secondary School Day

## 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. To share the findings of the Midlothian Consultation in relation to aligning the start/end time of the school day across all 6 Midlothian secondary schools.
- 1.2. To take forward plans to implement an aligned secondary school day and realise the associated educational benefits arising from an aligned school day.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. Midlothian Council's Business Transformation Strategic Group (BTSG) approved the following on 25/04/24:
  - the outcome of the consultation as summarised in this report
  - the implementation of an aligned secondary school day, including the necessary changes to affected services, e.g., School Transport
  - the introduction of an aligned Senior Phase across all 6 secondary schools to support the development of our Midlothian Aligned Curricular Offer (MACO)

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. Midlothian Council, in partnership with the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) and Education Scotland, participated in a Collaborative Improvement process. This recommended increased collaboration between our schools to support a more equitable curricular offer for all Midlothian children and young people, with the aim of securing improved attainment.
- 3.2. Midlothian secondary school Head Teachers and Curricular Depute Head Teachers agreed a draft aligned school day between May and October 2023.
- 3.3. Thereafter, a consultation document was drafted, and redrafted, in partnership with personnel representing associated Midlothian services and relevant professional associations.
- 3.4. The views of stakeholders were sought across a consultation period from Thursday 1st February 2024 until Friday 8th March 2024.

## 4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1. The consultation was made available via Citizen Space and distributed widely to relevant partners. Each secondary school distributed the Consultation Paper to all parents/carers, students and staff on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024. Each secondary

school held an in-person informal drop-in session within the consultation period to support engagement and answer stakeholder questions. An on-line informal drop-in session was held within the consultation period to support engagement and answer stakeholder questions.

- 4.2. A dedicated email, [midsecschdaycons@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:midsecschdaycons@midlothian.gov.uk) was created to support engagement and answer stakeholder questions.
- 4.3. Each of the 3 schools, Dalkeith HS, Newbattle CHS and St David’s RC HS, who will move to 32 period week, have undertaken consultation with their communities on changing the student week by 50 minutes. Each school has identified their preferred option and will be ready to move to an aligned model for Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June. They will confirm arrangements with their communities now that approval for alignment is secured.
- 4.4. During the consultation period 2082 responses were received through Citizen Space, with 71.85% of responses from school students (1496 responses) and 19.02% from parents/carers (396 responses). Across Midlothian schools 163 staff responses were received, 7.83% of respondents. No written responses were received. Through our dedicated email 6 enquiries were received. Relevant comments have been included in the data and analysis. In total 647 comments were submitted via Citizen Space and our dedicated email.
- 4.5. Overall, there is positive support to implement an aligned secondary school day as detailed in the consultation paper. Four specific questions in relation to the proposal were asked. These are detailed in the tables below. There is a clear majority in favour in 3 of the 4 questions and a very narrow majority in the question relating to the 40 minute lunch for staff and students.

| <b>Q1: Are you supportive of the proposal to introduce a common school day in all Midlothian secondary schools?</b> |                                  |                   |
|---|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Option</b>   | <b>Total Number of Responses</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
| Yes   | 1176                             | 56.48%            |
| No  | 402                              | 19.31%            |
| No strong opinion   | 502                              | 24.11%            |
| Not answered  | 2                                | 0.10%             |

**Q2: Are you supportive of the proposal to introduce a 32 period school week in all Midlothian secondary schools?**

| <b>Option</b>     | <b>Total Number of Responses</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Yes               | 1341                             | 64.41%            |
| No                | 283                              | 13.59%            |
| No strong opinion | 451                              | 21.66%            |
| Not answered      | 7                                | 0.34%             |

**Q3: Are you supportive of the proposal to align the organisation of the Senior Phase (S4/5/6 students) timetable in all Midlothian secondary schools to improve equity of opportunity and collaborative working?**

| <b>Option</b>     | <b>Total Number of Responses</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Yes               | 1246                             | 59.85%            |
| No                | 304                              | 14.60%            |
| No strong opinion | 515                              | 24.74%            |
| Not answered      | 17                               | 0.82%             |

**Q4: Are you supportive of the proposal to introduce a 40 minute lunch for students and staff in all Midlothian secondary schools?**

| <b>Option</b>     | <b>Total Number of Responses</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Yes               | 828                              | 39.77%            |
| No                | 818                              | 39.29%            |
| No strong opinion | 426                              | 20.46%            |
| Not answered      | 10                               | 0.48%             |

4.6. In total 647 comments were submitted via Citizen Space and our dedicated email. A broad analysis shows

| Comments Analysis                              |   |  |  |                                     |
|--|---|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| Number of comments supportive of the proposals | Number of comments that are non-evaluative suggestions or opinion | Number of comments with clear criticisms or concerns | Number of comments that are both supportive and critical of elements | Number of comments that are unclear |
| 51   | 344   | 168  | 46   | 38                                  |
| Percentage of Total Number of Comments         |   |  |  |                                     |
| 7.88%  | 53.17%  | 25.97%   | 7.11%  | 5.78%                               |

4.7. Significant themes have emerged from these comments.

4.7.1. **Lunch:** 310 comments were related to lunches. Almost all expressed concern at the 40 minute proposal and/or split lunches. Reasons included 40 minutes being too short to go home, to go to local shops, to socialise with friends or colleagues, to run lunch clubs. Staff were more likely to cite concerns relating to their wellbeing, particularly on full teaching days, from a 40 minute lunch. In relation to split lunches, comments often centred on the business of a full lunch, difficulties sustaining extra-curricular clubs, or not seeing friends. **Action/Response:** Midlothian will commit to a review of the impact of a 40 minute lunch in the autumn of 2025. This would allow a possible change for session 2026/27 as a reasonable period of implementation to allow stakeholders to reflect on the change.

4.7.2. **Transport/Traffic/Travel:** 74 comments were related to transport/traffic/travel. Almost all raised concerns in relation to worsening the impact of early drop-offs at school, the impact of changes to school days and how that aligns with Lothian Buses public bus timetables, traffic congestion (particularly around Dalkeith Schools Campus) and the impact of changes on personal/family circumstances. **Action/Response:** Improved tendering/ procurement with school transport providers to minimise early drop-offs at schools, i.e., no morning drop-offs at school before 8.20am. Midlothian Travel Team to undertake a Traffic Management Risk Assessment

at Dalkeith Schools Campus, *see section 4.11 and 4.12*. Active engagement with Lothian Buses regarding changes to the school day.

4.7.3. **Changing/Reducing the School Day:** 67 comments were related to changing/reducing the school day. Almost all were from stakeholders in the 3 schools reducing their time and almost all were opposed to the reduction. Concerns included links to registration/Homeroom time (particularly in relation to Newbattle CHS), a shorter day potentially impacting on attainment, not preparing young people for the workplace, not addressing pandemic legacy issues and a lack of clarity for some around how schools affected would organise the reduction in time. Other concerns raised linked the reduction to financial reasons. A few respondents wanted more radical approaches including a shorter week and/or 4 day week. **Action/Response:** individual schools to monitor closely the impact of a reduction in the school week with the potential to 'learn' from those currently on a 32 period model.

4.7.4. **Online/Digital and Curriculum Issues:** 61 comments were related to online/digital and curricular issues. A range of positive and negative comments were raised. Respondents welcomed plans to address an inequity in the curricular offer and improved partnership working. Concerns raised centred around the pandemic related online experience and poor student engagement, the importance of relationship in learning and the in-person experience supporting that, a lack of detail around how any digital offer would work and what it would mean in practice, concerns that such approaches were about saving money and reducing teacher numbers and finally concerns about the volume and pace of change. Almost all comments relating to this theme were made by Midlothian staff and parents/carers. **Action/Response:** The Midlothian Aligned Curriculum Offer (MACO) Team will commit to an inclusive and evidence led process of curriculum innovation and change. The process will involve significant stakeholder consultation to establish considered and detailed plans that support a sustainable implementation.

4.8. A full list of all comments received is available on request until the end of the school session 2023/24 via, [midsecschdaycons@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:midsecschdaycons@midlothian.gov.uk). Thereafter, the full list of comments is available via Midlothian's Freedom of Information procedures, [click here](#).

- 4.9. Midlothian Council Services, who would be impacted by the changes to align the secondary school day, have been involved in the development phase and throughout the consultation. These services sit primarily within the Place Directorate and, of most relevance, include Transport, Catering and Facilities (Janitorial/Cleaning). Feedback has generally been supportive from Place colleagues with positives identified and issues identified as surmountable.
- 4.10. Positive feedback includes:
- 4.10.1. opportunities for streamlining staff training on statutory matters relating to Health and Safety
  - 4.10.2. increased window for small Buildings Maintenance jobs to be completed on Fridays
  - 4.10.3. significant benefits for Active Schools in their work as a result of schools aligning are identified; most relate to an aligned Friday finish, e.g., easier for staff across schools to come together for training, opportunities for the Active Schools Leadership Academy to expand and develop allowing more senior students to gain qualifications, increased competitive events/opportunities for schools
- 4.11. In relation to Transport, Place Directorate colleagues have liaised with associated companies to identify issues. These primarily relate to 'double-runs'. This is where a provider will complete 2 pick-up/drop-off routes to 2 separate establishments on a back to back basis. This practice can result in school students being dropped-off at school very early, or indeed very close to a school start time. On occasions it can result in students being late for school. In addition, concerns were identified that the common finish time on Friday would now make this impossible. Place Directorate colleagues are confident that no issues are insurmountable. This proposal aligns with the procurement/tender practices and colleagues are confident there is local capacity to fulfil necessary contracts. It has been agreed that a condition in future procurement/tender processes will be an expectation that no students are dropped-off at school before 8.20am. The proposed changes have no impact on transport services provided to Early Years and Primary schools. There are no associated financial implications to the proposed alignment across schools and changes to school day timings.
- 4.12. The Midlothian Travel Team have been aware, prior to this proposal, of traffic congestion at the Dalkeith Schools Campus. In order to resolve this a full traffic

management risk assessment will be carried out. This may result in some revision to current practices. School staff, often Senior Staff, will be expected to work collaboratively with the Travel Team to advise stakeholders of arrangements and monitor implementation. There are no associated financial implications for Dalkeith Campus schools in relation to this process.

- 4.13. In relation to Catering, there has been a high level of consultation with catering personnel in schools. Initial concerns around 'turnaround' times with a 40 minute lunch were raised but have not proved to be of concern. No significant issues have been identified with minor changes to break and lunchtimes seen as presenting no issues. There are no associated financial implications to the proposed alignment across schools and changes to school day timings.
- 4.14. In relation to Facilities (Janitorial/Cleaning), no significant issues have been identified with minor changes to school day timings being seen as presenting no issues. Local arrangements will be agreed on-site at those schools most affected by the aligned Friday finish of 12.15pm. This is anticipated to be earlier access/finish time for cleaning staff to Dalkeith HS, Newbattle CHS and St David's HS on Friday afternoons. There are no associated financial implications to the proposed alignment across schools and changes to school day timings.
- 4.15. As a result of the above Education and Schools will be open to no additional or increased costs as a result of these changes.
- 4.16. Each Secondary HT will be asked to share this Outcome Report with their school communities; students, staff and parents/carers through established communication channels.
- 4.17. Any staff member impacted by the revised timings will be supported through the process via their immediate line manager and established HR policies and procedures. Managers should seek the advice of HR Business Partners as appropriate.



## 5. CONCLUSION and NEXT STEPS

5.1. The Business Transformation Strategic Group (BTSG) has approved the following proposals and action

- To align the start/end time of the school day across all 6 Midlothian secondary schools. All Midlothian secondary schools would begin classes at 8.40am and finish at 3.25pm, Monday through Thursday. On a Friday classes in each secondary school would finish at 12.15pm.
- To ensure the overall length of the pupil/student week for all secondary schools is the same and organised across 32 x 50 minute periods. The proposal is that the period times of classes will start and end at the same time in each school. *See Appendix 1.*
- All 6 Midlothian secondary schools move their timetables forward and begin the new 2024/25 school year on Monday 3rd June 2024. This means that the proposal to align the school day would begin on Monday 3rd June 2024 for all secondary schools.
- **Action:** Midlothian will commit to a review of the impact of a 40 minute lunch in the autumn of 2025. This would allow a possible change for session 2026/27 as a reasonable period of implementation to allow stakeholders to reflect on the change.
- **Action:** Improved tendering/ procurement with school transport providers to minimise early drop-offs at schools. Midlothian Travel Team to undertake a Traffic Management Risk Assessment at Dalkeith Schools Campus, *see section 4.12.* Active engagement with Lothian Buses regarding changes to the school day.
- **Action:** individual schools to monitor closely the impact of a reduction in the school week with the potential to 'learn' from those currently on a 32 period model.
- **Action:** The Midlothian Aligned Curriculum Offer (MACO) Team will commit to an inclusive and evidence led process of curriculum innovation and change. The process will involve significant stakeholder consultation to establish considered and detailed plans that support a sustainable implementation.

## Appendix 1

### COMMON SCHOOL DAY AND ALIGNED SENIOR PHASE

Recognising our current context, all Midlothian secondary schools from session 2024/25 will base their timetable on a 'pupil/student week' of 32 x 50 minute periods. This results in 7 periods Monday through Thursday and 4 periods each Friday. The school day structure from session 2024/25 in all schools is outlined below.

| Midlothian Schools Timetable<br>Pattern for all students |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
|  | Period 1      | Period 2      | Period 3      | Interval      | Period 4      | Period 5      | Lunch         | Period 6      | Period 7      |
|  | 08.40 - 09.30 | 09.30 - 10.20 | 10.20 - 11.10 | 11.10 - 11.25 | 11.25 - 12.15 | 12.15 - 13.05 | 13.05 - 13.45 | 13.45 - 14.35 | 14.35 - 15.25 |
| Monday   |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Tuesday  |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Wednesday  |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Thursday   |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Friday   | Period 1      | Period 2      | Interval      | Period 3      | Period 4      |               |               |               |               |
|  | 08.40 - 09.30 | 09.30 - 10.20 | 10.20 - 10.35 | 10.35 - 11.25 | 11.25 - 12.15 |               |               |               |               |
|  |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |

Some schools, generally due to capacity issues, currently operate a school day structure that accommodates split breaks and lunches for BGEd (S1/S2/S3) and Senior Phase (S4/S5/S6) students. Our aligned model allows schools to retain, or introduce, this option if they view it as appropriate.

A possible school day structure in those schools is outlined below as an illustration. Schools will confirm their pattern with stakeholders. Please note that in those schools without split break/lunch arrangements all students will follow the above pattern.

| <b>Midlothian Schools Timetable</b>                            |   |                                   |                       |                                   |   |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Pattern for all students in a split break/lunch context</b> |   |                                   |                       |                                   |   |
| <b>Time</b>  | <b>Monday to Thursday</b>                 |                                   | <b>Time</b>           | <b>Friday</b>                     |   |
| <b>8.40 to 9.30</b>  | Period 1                                  |                                   | <b>8.40 to 9.30</b>   | Period 1                          |   |
| <b>9.30 to 10.20</b>   | Period 2                                  |                                   | <b>9.30 to 10.20</b>  | Period 2                          |   |
| <b>10.20 to 11.25</b>  | Senior Phase<br>Period 3<br>10.20 - 11.10 | BGEd Break<br>10.20 – 10.35       | <b>10.20 to 11.25</b> | BGEd<br>Period 3<br>10.20 – 11.10 | Senior Phase<br>Break<br>10.20 – 10.35    |
|  | Senior Phase<br>Break<br>11.10 - 11.25    | BGEd<br>Period 3<br>10.35 – 11.25 |                       | BGEd Break<br>11.10 - 11.25       | Senior Phase<br>Period 3<br>10.35 - 11.25 |
| <b>11.25 to 12.15</b>  | Period 4                                  |                                   | <b>11.25 to 12.15</b> | Period 4                          |   |
| <b>12.15 to 13.45</b>  | Senior Phase<br>Period 5<br>12.15 – 13.05 | BGEd Lunch<br>12.15 – 12.55       |                       |                                   |   |
|  | Senior Phase<br>Lunch<br>13.05 – 13.45    | BGEd Period 5<br>12.55 – 13.45    |                       |                                   |   |
| <b>13.45 to 14.35</b>  | Period 6                                  |                                   |                       |                                   |   |
| <b>14.35 to 15.25</b>  | Period 7                                  |                                   |                       |                                   |   |