



# Governance and Planning

## School Boundaries and Boundary Exemptions

Policy Number GP-15

The Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board establishes a school's catchment area for students and families within specific boundaries. These boundaries are determined following an extensive consultation process with key stakeholders in the school's geographic area.

Requests for students to attend schools outside established boundaries are to be made through the school Principal and considered by the school Principal, the school Superintendent of Education or the Director of Education according to the procedures.

### Procedural Guidelines Follow

*Approved: Board Meeting #02-2005 (Wednesday, December 15, 2004)*  
*Revised: Board Meeting #09-2013 (Wednesday, May 22, 2013)*  
*Reviewed: Board Policy Review Meeting #01-2021 (Wednesday, January 27, 2021)*  
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*Revised: Board Meeting #10-2023 (Wednesday, October 18, 2023)*



# **Procedures and Guidelines Supporting** Policy Number GP-15 **School Boundaries and Boundary Exemptions**

## **1. BOUNDARY REVIEW**

School boards are responsible for managing their school capital assets in an effective manner. They must respond to changing demographics and program needs while ensuring continued student achievement and well-being, and the financial viability/sustainability of the school board.

The decision to proceed with a boundary review will be made by the Education Leadership Council following a Boundary Review Report. This staff report may, but is not required to, include boundary options.

Where possible, Boundary Reviews will consider a logical grouping of schools including proposed new construction in a board defined review area.

### **1.1 RATIONALE**

A Boundary Review is an administrative process involving a Board Staff Committee responsible for proposing solutions to identified accommodation issues. A Boundary Review may be undertaken when staff identify an accommodation issue from time to time.

There are many reasons a Boundary Review process may be initiated. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Establishment of a new school boundary
- Enrolment exceeds capacity
- Enrolment is below capacity causing an inefficient use of board resources
- Excessive transportation costs
- Site and building limitations
- Accommodation of special programs

### **1.2 GUIDING OBJECTIVES**

A Boundary Review shall align with the following objectives, where possible:

- Establish new boundaries as a result of a new school or capacity concerns in the existing area.
- Balance school enrolment and capacity.
- Maximize walk zones.
- Consideration of site restrictions.
- Consideration of projected development and enrolment.
- Follow logical divides such as major roads, physical barriers, etc.



### 1.3 BOARD STAFF COMMITTEE

The Board Staff Committee will be comprised of the following:

- School Superintendent (Chair)
- Planning Department Representative(s)
- Principals of the Affected Schools
- Simcoe County School Transportation Consortium
- Other staff as need, ie. Student Support and Program Services, Capital Projects, Facilities Services

### 1.4 REPORTS

Two (2) reports shall be prepared and presented to the Education Leadership Council:

1. Initial Boundary Review Report
2. Final Boundary Review Report

Between the Initial Boundary Review Report and the Final Boundary Review Report the Board Staff Committee will seek Public Input.

#### 1.4.1 Initial Boundary Review Report

The Initial Boundary Review Report will be presented by Board Staff and will include:

- identification of school or group of schools to be included in the Boundary Review
- rationale for the need for a School Boundary Review
- background information including objectives and constraints
- relevant information from municipalities and other community partners
- Board Staff Committee composition
- alternative options with analysis may be presented, where appropriate
- a recommended option(s) with justification for the recommendation, where appropriate
- proposed timeline for implementation of the recommended boundary changes

The Initial Boundary Review Report Board will be circulated in advance (minimum 48 hours) to the affected Trustee(s) in preparation for a meeting with Staff to discuss the current option(s). This will occur following approval by the Education Leadership Council to proceed but prior to notice being communicated with the affected communities.

#### 1.4.2 Final Boundary Review Report

The Final Boundary Review Report will be presented by Board Staff and will include:

- summary of information contained in the Initial Boundary Review Report
- summary of comments and questions received during the public consultation phase
- final Board Staff Committee recommendation(s) and justification for the recommendation(s)



- timeline for implementation of the recommended boundary change(s)
- timeline for the implementation of the recommended capital, renewal, or alterations projects required
- Communications Plan

Both the Initial Boundary Review Report and the Final Boundary Review Report will be provided to the Board of Trustees as information.

## 1.5 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Following the presentation of the Initial Boundary Review Report and the Education Leadership Council approval to conduct a School Boundary Review, along with the meeting with the affected Trustee(s), Board Staff will provide communication to the affected school communities.

The Initial Boundary Review Report will be posted on the board's website following the decision to proceed and following the meeting with the affected Trustee(s).

Representatives of the Board Staff Committee will organize a meeting of the review area schools to present information in the Initial Staff Report to the schools' Catholic School Community Council Chair(s) or Designate. The intent of the school level meeting is to obtain input from affected individual school communities. An invitation to attend will be extended to the affected Trustee(s).

The Board Staff Committee will facilitate a Public Meeting to share information in the Initial Boundary Review Report. The intent of the Public Meeting is to respond to questions of clarification and receive feedback on the recommended option(s). A Public Meeting is an open meeting with the purpose of sharing relevant information with members of the public and soliciting feedback. The public meeting will generally take the form of an open house, but may take place virtually or otherwise, as determined at the time of the review. An invitation to attend will be extended to the affected Trustee(s).

The Board Staff Committee will solicit public input via other means, including, but not limited to, a specific email address. The Board Staff Committee will consider input received from the public prior to preparation of the Final Boundary Review Report.

## 1.6 DECISION

Following review of the Final Boundary Review Report by the Education Leadership Council, the recommendation(s) may be accepted and the boundary change(s) implemented as set out in the Final Boundary Review Report, or, recommendation(s) may be referred back to Board Staff for additional action.

Where a proposed decision varies from the recommendations of the Final Boundary Review Report, sufficient time should be provided to staff to evaluate the merits and feasibility of the alternative proposal.

The Final Boundary Review Report will be provided to the Board of Trustees as information.



## 1.7 TRANSITION PLANNING

A transition plan will be put in place by the area Superintendent of Student Engagement and Learning following a decision to change boundaries.

## 1.8 BOUNDARY REVIEW EXEMPTIONS

In most cases, a boundary review would involve the full process as outlined above. There are, however, exceptions which would allow the Education Leadership Council to make a final decision based on a single Boundary Review Report. These exemptions are as follows:

- Where a boundary change is being considered for an area where there are no existing students. This may apply to the determination of holding areas or holding schools.
- Where there are relatively few students affected by a proposed boundary change, the families of those students will be consulted directly and given an opportunity to comment on the boundary options being considered. This may apply to the determination of holding areas or holding schools.
- Where an enrolment cap is being considered at a particular school(s) and an overflow school must be determined.
- Where an elementary feeder school will be redirected to an alternate secondary school. Students will be notified a minimum of one (1) year in advance of the redirection.

## 1.9 Timelines

Timelines for boundary reviews are dependent on local circumstances and will be determined at the time of the Initial Boundary Review Report.

Implementation for existing students affected by boundary changes will be the start of a school year, unless under special circumstances.

## 2.0 STUDENT BOUNDARY EXEMPTIONS

Under normal circumstances, a student will attend the school that is in the same attendance area as the student's Legal Guardian's residential address. This is the students' home school.

Should the Legal Guardian of a student wish the student to attend a school that is not their home school, an application may be made at the home school. The decision to approve the request is at the discretion of the receiving school principal, in coordination with the home school principal based on the following parameters:

- 2.1 there must be accommodation within the class(es) of the school to which application for admittance is being made. School Principals will approve Out-of-Boundary applications only when the addition of these students can be accommodated without class reorganization. Further, the School Principal will approve out-of-boundary applications only when the addition of these students can be accommodated without addition of portable classroom facilities and without additional resources as directed by the Planning Department;



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2.1.1 as the potential approval is a long-term commitment to the student who is 16 years of age or over or legal custodian(s) of a student under 16 years of age, there must be accommodation within the school, taking into consideration the short and long-term implications with respect to the potential growth within the school's boundaries and the expected timing of that growth as directed by the Planning Department. School Principals must provide appropriate accommodations and class sizes to accommodate students from their own school area prior to accommodating students from outside the school's boundaries;

2.1.2 all children of elementary school age in the family are to be considered in a decision related to this procedure;

2.1.3 requests will be entertained once the school year has started only for those requests of families which are:

- to finish the year at a school when they have moved out of the boundary area
- for secondary schools at the end of semester one
- from another jurisdiction;

2.1.4 Students who are 16 years of age or over or legal custodians of students under 16 years of age must begin the process by completing a Request to Attend an Out-of-Boundary School form at the home school, and then take it to the Receiving Principal for completion.

2.1.5 Notwithstanding the above, in the case of a boundary review, Request to Attend an Out-of-Boundary School forms will be processed through the office of the Superintendent of Education.

### 3.0 APPROVAL PARAMETERS

3.1 The following applies to all boundary exemption requests with the exception of requests applying to the children of board employees. The Receiving Principal, with the approval of the Home School Principal may grant requests where none of the constraints outlined in this procedure exist. The final determination is that of the Superintendent of Education if the decision is unresolved by the two principals.

The primary determinant in granting a request is the education of the student as determined by the Receiving Principal in consultation with the Home School Principal and the student who is 16 years of age or over or parent/guardian for a student under 16 years of age. When a request is made for Out-of-Boundary admission and space is available as outlined in Section 2.0, the priorities for admission are:

3.1.1 the education of the student for the continuity of program (secondary);



- 3.1.2 younger sibling(s) of a student who has previously been approved and continues to be approved to attend the school as an Out-of-Boundary student;
- 3.1.3 students who receive child care services at a location within the school boundary;
- 3.1.4 non-resident students under provisions of the Education Act not already covered by these priorities.
- 3.1.5 The following applies to all boundary exemption requests applying to the children of board employees. Staff members will apply to the appropriate Superintendent of Education for approval of boundary exemptions for children of school staff members. Senior Staff (members of the Education Leadership Council) will apply to the Director of Education for approval of boundary exemptions for children of Senior staff. The Superintendent of Education and/or the Director of Education will follow the same processes outlined for Principals herein.

#### 4.0 TRANSPORTATION

The responsibility for transporting the student to and from the Receiving School rests entirely with the student or the legal custodian of a student under 16 years of age.

Please refer to policy GP-13 Transportation for additional information.

#### 5.0 ANNUAL REVIEW

Students admitted to a Receiving School will continue to attend the school based on an annual review which is subject to the procedures outlined.

#### 6.0 SCHOOLS CLOSED FOR BOUNDARY EXEMPTIONS

Closing a school for out-of-boundary admissions is done at the discretion of the Education Leadership Council and normally occurs when a school's enrolment exceeds its physical or staffing capacities. Please contact the Planning & Properties Department for a current list of schools closed to out-of-boundary admissions.

#### 7.0 REQUEST FORM

Legal guardians of students under 16 years of age or students who are 16 years of age or over must begin the process by completing a Request to Attend an Out-of-Boundary School form at the home school, and then take it to the Receiving Principal for completion.



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## 8.0 DEFINITIONS

- 8.1 Holding Area: Holding Areas are not considered part of the permanent long-term School Boundary. A Holding Area may be created to accommodate students for an interim period.
- 8.2 Holding School: A Holding School is a school at which students are attending until long-term accommodation is available and is not part of the student's permanent School Boundary. Examples of Holding School situations include, but are not limited to, enrolment pressure, construction of a new school or renovation of an existing designated Home School.
- 8.3 Home School: the school; which the student would attend based on School Boundary. The residential address of the Legal Guardian whom the student resides with will determine the geographically designated Catholic School.
- 8.4 Legal Guardian: an individual who has obtained a Guardianship Order from the Provincial Court, Family Division Legal custody/custodial parent/legal guardian
- 8.5 Overflow: The Board may cap enrolment at a particular school, restricting admissions to that school despite a student's regular eligibility. When enrolment is capped at a school, the Board will identify an alternative school which will be designated as that student's Home School until the cap is lifted. The overflow students' School Boundary does not change.
- 8.6 Receiving School: A school in a different Board defined School Boundary than the residential address of the Legal Guardian
- 8.7 School Boundary (Attendance Area): The defined boundary of the school that is appropriately sized to accommodate sustainable student enrolment. School boundaries are subject to change based on enrolment trends, construction of new schools, program changes, and alignment of elementary and secondary school boundaries. The physical school boundary is defined by geographical features including but not limited to roads, railway tracks, rivers, and land parcels. A School Boundary may also be referred to as an Attendance Area.



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## Reference

### [GP-13 Transportation](#)

*Approved: Board Meeting #02-2005 (Wednesday, December 15, 2004)*  
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