

School Expansion

In December the Governing Body of the federated Sefton Park Schools was approached by the Local Authority (LA) and asked to consider both a temporary and a permanent expansion of Sefton Park to three form entry.

Temporary Expansion

In July 2008 the first of the two three-form intakes from 2001/2 (now years 5 and 6) will leave the Junior School. Knowing of the high demand for places at the schools, and anticipating an LA request to once again take a third reception class, governors started work early in the autumn term on assessing the impact of a third class for September 2008. A small working group, led by Sally Dore, has been working with the LA on this in order to fulfil our responsibility to safeguard the well-being and education of the children at the schools, whilst seeking to reach an agreement early enough for the LA to be able to offer the additional places in January. These discussions are ongoing and no final decision has been made yet.

Permanent Expansion

Also in December, governors were approached by the LA with a revised proposal for a permanent increase in the provision of primary places in the area. The idea of building a single form entry school on the reserved site in Ashley Down has now been replaced with a proposed expansion of the Sefton Park schools to make them permanently three forms per year. The plans would see the whole of the site now occupied by the Youth Centre joined to the current school site (the Youth Centre being re-housed elsewhere), and the Youth Centre building demolished and a new school building including Hall, kitchens and classrooms built there. There would also be other significant changes to the existing site, including playground provision, and changes to the entrances and road layout to make it safer for children. This proposal, which requires additional funding from the LA as opposed to the one-form school plan, is being recommended to the City Council's cabinet on Thursday 10th January. A press release, which can be viewed on the city council's website www.bristol.gov.uk, was released on 2nd Jan and there was an article in the Bristol Evening Post the same day

When governors met in December to discuss this new proposal they agreed to support fully the principle of expanding the schools to become permanent three-form entry schools, as long as the extra accommodation and site could be provided as planned. The evidence of demand for places in these two successful schools is compelling, and the new provision would undoubtedly enhance opportunities for our children.

If the proposal goes to the next stage, governors will continue to work closely with LA officers to ensure the best possible outcome from the new building and expansion for the schools and children. This is both in terms of securing the optimum use of outdoor and indoor space, accommodation and facilities, as well as ensuring the minimum of disruption whilst the work takes place.

We will continue to keep you informed of developments as we are made aware of them. If the proposal does get Cabinet approval this week, a formal consultation on increasing the schools' numbers, as well as the application for planning permission, will follow as part of the process. All stakeholders, including parents and carers, will be able to participate in both of these.

Janet Bremner, Chair of Governors