

## **School Expansion Update Newsletter - 18th July 2008**

### **Governing Body Meeting 16.7.08**

Governors held an extra meeting to debate the expansion and amalgamation proposals from the Local Authority. The main purpose of the meeting was to agree a response to the LA, through the Primary Review Consultation (copy attached). Agreed minutes of the meeting will be available in October, but in the meantime, here is a summary of the issues covered.

### **Discussion with Kate Champion, Strategy Leader - Transforming Learning, Children and Young People's Services.**

Almost an hour of the meeting was devoted to a question and answer session. Key points covered included:

- Kate reported that there had been an application for listing of Ashley House (Youth Centre), and the Council had also made a submission as part of this process. A decision on listing is expected in August. She also indicated that 2 sets of feasibility plans were being drawn up, with and without the demolition of the YC.
- Federation or amalgamation? Governors believe federation is delivering all the benefits outlined in the Primary Review that can accrue from amalgamation. Kate stated that amalgamation and plans to expand were not linked, and that expansion would still be possible for the federated schools if the Governing Body could provide a formal undertaking to remain federated for, for example 15 years. This would allow the LA to invest in the fabric of the schools as though they were an all-through primary school. \*
- Engagement with the LA. Governors expressed to Kate their dismay over the working relationships that had, or rather had not, developed over the past months. They indicated how this prevented them from fully understanding and evaluating what was being proposed. Kate undertook to arrange the appointment of a dedicated project officer for the Sefton Park Expansion project and promised improved engagement and communication, not only with governors, but also with stakeholders generally.
- Brunel Site. Kate assured us that this would remain part of the school site for use as a Junior School playing field and that this would satisfy the 106 agreement with the developers. She also agreed to put maintenance arrangements in place now and chase up the money allocated for changing facilities.
- Larger Schools. Governors challenged Kate on the LA's policy. This fed into the later debate on school size.
- Alternative ways to increase provision locally. Again a challenging discussion on different models that might deliver the increased provision, including a federation model with a single form entry school on the Brunel site linked to Sefton Park.
- Impact of building works on quality of provision. Possibility of using temporary relocation to reduce impact discussed, but Kate indicated the cost of this would need to be taken from the capital for the expansion and so this would not be a favoured option.

\* Further information on the governing body's reasons for rejecting the amalgamation proposals can be found in a separate document available outside the school office and on the website.

## Governors' debate

As the context for this debate, the Governors recognised that there is clearly a serious problem of lack of primary places for local children in this area of Bristol.

Governors had done research on relevant topics in advance. During the meeting, they looked at four key elements of the expansion proposals. Below is a table that captures some of the key issues considered

<b>Larger Schools - Benefits</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More staff, more expertise</li><li>• Better development opportunities for staff</li><li>• Better hall &amp; community space</li><li>• Better curriculum</li><li>• Larger parent group, more expertise to share</li><li>• Better PE facilities</li><li>• Better school catering</li><li>• Greater diversity amongst students</li></ul>	<b>Larger Schools - Disadvantages</b> <b>Site specific</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Moving around difficult site</li><li>• Disruption during building work</li><li>• Difficulty in sharing resources</li></ul> <b>Generally</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of community feeling</li><li>• Children may feel lost</li><li>• Loss of communication within larger staffing group</li><li>• HT loses contact with children, staff &amp; parents</li><li>• Diverse leadership</li><li>• Loss of team feeling amongst staff</li></ul>
<b>Site &amp; Access Issues</b> <p>Any proposals need to be assessed against BB99 (DCSF guidelines for space). Key areas to look at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Equal access to amenities</li><li>• Small play areas</li><li>• Access to site/congestion</li><li>• Safety of road access</li><li>• Need for nearby outdoor learning areas</li><li>• Remoteness of playing field</li><li>• Impact on neighbours</li></ul>	<b>Further options to explore or raise with LA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide places through federation with 1 form school on Brunel site or St Barnabas (if latter moves to old Fairfield site)</li><li>• Delay plans to Phase 2 of Primary Review</li><li>• Put Nursery provision on Brunel site</li><li>• Ensure no 'bulge' class in 2009 to ease pressure on site during building works</li></ul>

## Follow up

The governing body works on the basis of collective responsibility, so everyone now knows the views of all governors on the current LA proposals. We are not scheduled to meet again until October so those views can't change over the next few months. It is both unfair and inappropriate to ask individual governors their opinions and views, on what can be fairly emotive topics.

So please can I conclude by asking you to direct any follow up queries or comments that you may have to me, as Chair. My e mail address is given below. I will be monitoring it regularly, if not daily, through the holidays as well.

Janet Bremner, Chair of Governors  
chair.sefton.park.i@bristol.gov.uk