

Princess Frederica

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CE VA Primary School

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Dear Parents and Carers,

We are pleased to be able to announce that we have further information about the possible expansion of Princess Frederica Primary School. As those parents who attended the recent Parent Partnership meeting will be aware, our school has been approached by the Local Authority (LA) several times over the last couple of years to consider expanding.

On Wednesday 14th November, our Full Governing Body welcomed Carmen Coffey to school. Carmen is a member of the cross departmental team responsible for school places planning in Brent. Her team carefully considers the demand in particular areas and the projections for population changes. There is an extreme shortage of school places in London schools and in particular, Brent LA is desperately in need of primary places. The LA has been awarded funding by central government to address this problem.

Carmen asked our Governing Body to consider expanding the school by one form of entry to become a permanent three-form entry school. In practise this would mean our school would grow by one class each year over the next 7 years. We have rejected the short term temporary solution of a one off bulge class in September, 2013 as we feel this would cause significant disruption and, more importantly, not bring with it any on-going capital investment into the school. The permanent three-form entry would allow the school to progressively grow and enjoy the benefits of a comprehensive refurbishment and building plan.

The Governing Body took the view that the school had to seriously consider this proposal, especially in the current economic climate where money for capital investment in schools is seriously limited. As such, we will shortly be publishing a range of information about possible designs and other information on our website. We ask you to read and reflect on the information provided and let us know your views. No decision will be taken until we have consulted all stakeholders at our school and gained their views.

Our school must serve the community it is at the heart of. In the words of our school prayer we want our school to be a 'light in our community.' We must not only consider our self-interests in this decision. Some children in Brent do not have a school place at all. It is our Christian duty to reflect upon this proposal and think with a serious mind about its benefits and also, its challenges.

We have tried to answer some of the questions which have already been posed.

Will there be enough space on our playground?

Careful space calculations will be made and new buildings do not necessarily mean a reduction in outdoor space. Some schools site new playgrounds in the sky. Others use the space they have more purposefully. Consider that fact that our playgrounds are barely used for most of the day. Just because playtime has been at 10.45am for all children at Princess Frederica does not mean it always must be so. New ways of arranging the school day to maximise our resources would be innovated.

Will my child miss out of special resources, tuition or extra-curricular activities?

The contrary is true. More resources for the school, better funding and a modern school building would actually help us to make our funding go further. Economies of scale mean that we could be even more innovative in the way we deliver our outstanding curriculum.

How would this change affect our admissions arrangements?

Simply put, there would be more spaces available to applicants and this would be one important way of easing our oversubscription. We would be able to offer 90 places to children in a year.

Wouldn't the building work be a disruption?

The school has experience of major building works and has demonstrated the ability to lead major projects well. Doubtless, there would be serious disruption to school but this would be managed in a careful way. We would not educate children off site during the construction period. The Governors and the school must also consider the tough economic climate and the lack of funding for capital investment in schools. Our decrepit building is feeling its age with our dark corridors, broken floors and ageing drains. Expansion offers the chance of major refurbishment which would create a school for the future generations to enjoy.

What is the timescale for any decision?

The Governing body has been asked to respond to this request on the expansion proposal in the New Year with the intention of opening the first additional reception class in 2014.

We will keep you posted about developments and welcome your views, questions about comments. When we have more information it will be published on our website along with our initial consultation.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs S Nettey