

Proposal to Expand Cheswick Green Primary School



Frequently Asked Questions - 20 November 2020

1. What are the benefits of the expansion for Cheswick Green Primary School?

The expansion of Cheswick Green Primary School will provide improved sustainability of pupil numbers and financial viability for the school. Pupil numbers and birth rates fluctuate year on year, when pupil numbers fall then one form entry schools are far more susceptible to the impact this can have on the delivery of education across the school. By expanding the school to meet the demand from Blythe Valley Park this will increase the catchment area demand for places at the school, minimising the impact any future fluctuations in the birth rate may have on the school.

Over recent years it has become increasingly difficult for one-form entry primary schools to manage on their finances. More pupils will mean increased funding.

With increased funding comes greater opportunities to purchase resources to support learning and this includes staffing. This could be through having greater numbers of support staff, through increased training, or by being able to retain experienced staff by offering wider opportunities for career progression whilst staying in the school.

More staff means more curriculum expertise. All the curriculum subjects need to be led by a co-ordinator. In a one-form entry school there can be the need for more subject co-ordinators than there are staff; this can be a challenge. In a two form entry school key subjects such as English and Mathematics could have two teachers leading to maximise impact.

Creating staff teams for planning is very effective and whilst this can be done in phases (FKS, KS1 and KS2), in a one-form entry primary school it is far more effective when done in year groups. This is possible in a two-form entry school because each year group has two teachers and other support staff who can work collaboratively and share new ideas. This can not only improve the outcomes of the children but can also enhance the professional development of all staff.

In a one form entry primary school children stay together as a cohort through the school. With some classes this is a benefit as the children are a cohesive group but for a variety of reasons there can be groups that do not get along well. Such groups have many years together. A two-form entry primary school gives some flexibility which enables groupings to be changed to the benefit of the children.

2. What will the impact of the expansion be on teaching and learning for pupils already at the school?

The ethos of Cheswick Green Primary School is strong and would not change if the school were expanded to two-form entry. The priority on personal, social development alongside high standards of teaching and learning would continue.

During the feasibility stage for this proposal, when the plans for the proposed expansion were being developed the school ensured that the design included key elements of the present building that support teaching and learning.

These include:

- A building and grounds that are safe and secure
- Good organisation of indoor spaces that are fully accessible
- Good environmental conditions such as natural light, good acoustics, ventilation
- Light, airy well-proportioned classrooms with appropriate storage space and cloakroom area
- Easy outdoor access and appropriate outdoor learning areas including a canopy area for every classroom
- Spaces that allow staff to shape teaching around the way children learn
- Breakout space for smaller group work or individualised learning
- An additional SEN group room that can be made into a sensory room
- Use of attractive materials that are durable and can be maintained as in the present building
- Flexibility to use ICT in a variety of ways

The school has experience of managing a long term building project whilst maintaining teaching and learning in the school. The last experience was well managed and the school was able to minimise disruption to pupils so that there was no identifiable adverse effect on their education. This experience will be invaluable if the expansion goes ahead.

3. Will the expansion provide enough space for the increase in pupils?

The proposed expansion of the school buildings has been designed in partnership with the Headteacher and Governing Body of the School but also in accordance with Government building guidance contained within the Department for Education's Area Guideline for mainstream schools - Building Bulletin 103 which provides guidance on the space required for a two form entry school. The school site is sufficient to accommodate the expansion.

The proposed additional accommodation will also be built in accordance with the revised 2020 building regulations in particular Approved Documents L2A: Conservation of fuel and power, meaning focus towards a fabric first approach, designing buildings for energy efficiency from the start, instead of designing an asset and then installing renewable and low carbon technology to meet CO2 reduction targets, which is a great step towards improving sustainability of the built environment.

4. Are you building on the school playing field?

A small strip of grass land adjacent to the school will be utilised to support the required developable area, without compromising the sport pitch provision which is protected for the school's curriculum requirements. The plans allow for the required outdoor play space for a two form entry school.

5. Are any trees being removed as part of the expansion?

Currently, we need to remove 1 tree as part of this proposal to expand the staff car park. We will mitigate the loss of this tree by planting suitable replacement trees elsewhere within the campus.

If, following on from the consultation process, the design team explore the need for a second access to the school site then this could potentially have a further impact but a detailed proposal will be confirmed as part of any town planning application.

6. Is there a second entrance planned off Saxon Wood Road?

No, Saxon Wood Road does not border the school site and there are no plans or investigations into delivering an additional access to the school from, or via, Saxon Wood Road. With the exception of The Mount, and the remote end of the field at the rear of the school building, the entire school site is bounded by private property.

If as part of this consultation process the community were to express an interest in the provision of a second access, or if it is recommended as an option as part of the traffic and highways mitigation work that is being undertaken, then the design team will consider the opportunity to create a second access to the school site.

7. The traffic and parking is already really bad how will the extra traffic and parking be managed?

The most difficult issue to address will be around the impact of additional vehicle access and egress / drop off and pedestrian movement associated with the proposed expansion. If the Council decides to move forward with the proposal, after the consultation period, it will be the subject of a planning application and the planning committee will be particularly concerned around this issue. A transport assessment is being prepared by an independent consultant to inform our thinking and will be a starting point for determining what additional mitigation may be required to enable this development to proceed.

The consultants will consider both the existing and future issues around traffic and parking and will consider options to better manage traffic and parking around the Cheswick Green Primary School site.

As part of their investigations they will consider opportunities such as park and stride initiatives, staggered pick up and drop off times (similar to the current COVID access arrangements), any potential for pick up and drop off zones and possible walking routes to the school site. The School's existing travel plan will also be reviewed. The

School and the Council are keen to promote parents and pupils walking to school, using informal drop off points away from the school and appropriate behaviours when parking in the local roads.

In addition, information received as part of this consultation process will also be used to support or evidence future traffic and parking solutions.

Once the consultation process is complete all of the information received will be analysed and the concerns or opportunities raised by the local community fed into the work being undertaken around traffic and parking to develop any future potential solutions. The final proposal both for the school buildings and the traffic and parking mitigations will be made available as part of the planning submission which is expected to be in February 2021, subject to development of a suitable Transport and Highway mitigation solution.

8. A lot of the parking around the school site is staff parking, are you increasing staff parking as part of this proposal?

We are providing a further 14 parking spaces by remodelling and expanding the existing car park.

9. What is being planned for the tarmac access road off Cheswick Way

The tarmac access road shown on the plans for the proposed building scheme is to enable vehicle access to the rear and around the school site, such as for the maintenance of grass and tree areas.

10. What is planned for the field at the back of the school

A small part of the land to the rear of the school could be considered as one of a number of possible options to provide transport and highway mitigation for this proposal. However no decision can be taken about this until the traffic and highways investigations that have been commissioned as part of this proposal, are completed.

We will continue to update our frequently asked questions document though out the consultation process. If you have a question that you would like answered, you can email researchandpolicy@solihull.gov.uk and ask your question. Please put ask a question in the subject box.