

Proposed Redevelopment of Morley Memorial Primary School - Meeting the needs of all children

As a school, we have spent time in producing a clear vision for the school's future. Using the theme of 'Making Learning Irresistible' as a statement of the school's core purpose, this has been exemplified through consideration of a number of stated key objectives. Included in these is a clear focus on the learning environment and a commitment for the school to have a learning environment which effectively supports learning in the 21st Century.

Given this objective, as a school, we are, understandably, very excited about the proposed building plans. Not only will there be an enormous improvement in the fabric of the building, but we are particularly excited by the large number of benefits both for the children and for others within the school community, which will result from the redevelopment work. One of the very positive aspects of the proposals and the reason the school was so pleased with the plans, was the chance to relocate all the children onto the same site. The benefits of such a reorganisation are many and we have tried to address some of them, at least, in bullet form below; but they all fit under the key idea of supporting the school in effectively meeting the needs of all our children and helping to deliver our core purpose.

Benefits of relocation – Children all on the same site

• Large reduction in loss of curriculum or learning time

For children on the other side of the road to access the key resource of the school hall for dinner or indoor PE sessions, the children need to cross a road, there and back. Such an undertaking currently involves 60 children having to be properly attired, so in cold or wet weather this will mean that 60 children will need to put on coats etc. to make the journey; this is inevitably a time consuming process, with the loss of over an hour of teaching time a week, and one which is highly intensive of adult support.

• Increased time dedicated to PE and a focus on Healthy Lifestyles

With children on a separate site, their PE sessions inevitably become truncated as time is lost travelling to and from the main school site. With the children on the main site they will have much greater access to the Hall and specialist PE equipment.

• Access to a wide range of resources

Relocating the children to the main site allows them to have ready access to the wide range of resources, both with regard to indoor and outdoor space, as well as a range of different learning resources including IT equipment and access to the very well-resourced school library.

• Increased opportunity for investment in a range of new resources

A split site inevitably means some duplication of resources. With the children all on the main site, resources can be used more strategically and an already stretched budget can be better used in purchasing additional and exciting resources for the children.

• Increased access to whole school activities

The time commitment and inconvenience involved in transporting 60 young children back

and forth across the road means that they sometimes miss out on whole school activities and do not regularly get to take part in such things as school assemblies. This means that they can miss out on important opportunities to help them feel an integral part of the school.

• **Consistency for SEN children**

Some of our children who have special educational needs can often find change difficult and challenging. Because the children in the Early Years are separated from the main site, visits to the 'unfamiliar' main building can prove to be challenging and unsettling for some of our children.

• **Effective Support for our vulnerable children**

As with many main-stream schools, we do have children with quite challenging needs - These may be related to behavioural or emotional issues. By being separated from the main site, it is inevitably very difficult to provide teachers and teaching assistants, and the children themselves, with timely support and intervention if it is needed.

• **Effective monitoring of support for our vulnerable children**

In order to support their development, some of our children have clear support plans in place. Whilst formal monitoring of these take place at fixed times, having children all on the same site, gives the opportunity for the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and other representatives from external agencies, to be able to monitor things informally through 'drop-ins' to lessons or through quick conversations with teachers or teaching assistants working with the children. This means that a clearer picture of the impact of support programmes can be established and children's needs responded to in a timely manner.

• **Increased Challenge for More-able Learners**

We are aware that we have children in all year groups who may be regarded as more-able learners and to ensure they achieve as we would hope, then we seek to ensure that an appropriate level of challenge is in place. This challenge can be provided by engaging with older pupils, working together on particular tasks, or even accessing teaching provided for children arranged in vertical groupings. Having children on the same site supports this approach to addressing the needs of more-able learners.

• **Effective professional Development of teachers (Leaders of Learning)**

Our current split site means that the on-going pedagogical discussions which teachers share in the staff room or even the informal exchange of ideas when passing in the corridor are denied to those who are away from the main school site. As a school, we are very aware of the important skills and principles which make up Early Years Foundation Stage practice. To have that practice on site as a resource to support the development of all our teachers will be of huge benefit.

• **Effective transition**

Our current split site poses transition problems for many of our children. Having settled into

school in the Early Years, some children find the move across to the main site daunting because it is unfamiliar. Indeed, we currently have to invest money in providing ‘therapy’ sessions for some of our Early Years children who find the move to the unfamiliarity of the main site difficult. The proposed redevelopment, whilst offering the security of a dedicated entrance for the Early Years, as well as a separate playground and toilets, means that the children are not faced with a dramatic change at the end of their first year of schooling.

• **Keeping the children safe**

Whilst we take the issue of health and safety incredibly seriously, a split site poses all manner of health and safety issues, since there is an inevitable delay in providing any sort of response which might be needed.

• **Increased opportunities for Peer Learning**

We are very aware of the importance of peer learning for the children. With the children all on the main site, the opportunities for our Early Years children to be involved in peer learning with older children becomes feasible and a potentially very important part of their development, both academically and socially.

• **Increased opportunities to develop social skills**

It is the norm in Primary schools for children in the Early Years to have the opportunity to take on tasks such as returning the dinner register to the office or taking messages. Such opportunities to exercise responsibility are important for the children and help them to develop confidence and supports them in developing skills of social interaction; being separated from the main building means that our youngest children currently miss out on these opportunities.

• **Increased opportunities to get to know all the staff**

The opportunity to get to know all the teaching and non-teaching staff is really helpful in supporting children’s induction into the school community, as well as being particularly helpful with regards to issues such as transition – it is very helpful for the children to have faces and people around them that they recognise. Our current split site means that our Early Years children do not get a chance to regularly see and meet many of the teaching and non-teaching staff who make up the school community here at Morley, as such, transition to the main site can be particularly daunting.

• **Increased involvement in the life of the school community**

The current split site means that the Early Years children’s opportunities to be fully involved in the life of the school community are seriously curtailed. The logistics of transporting 60 children back and forth across the road, in all types of weather, means that the children are often isolated from regular events which make up the life of the school community. As such, younger siblings can often miss out on things like seeing older siblings’ instrumental renditions or class assembly performances.

• **Increased opportunities for all parents to be a part of the life of the school**

Our current split site means that some parents can become isolated from the events which

help to create the positive ethos and culture of the school. The informal meetings in the playground before and after school are important, as are the chances to be a part of the fun events which may happen after school, including things like Cake-sales organised by the children. We are aware from feedback that this is a real concern among some parents.

These bulleted points highlight just some of the very important reasons why, as a school, we are pleased to have the opportunity to create a one-site school, clear that it will support our key objectives and importantly help us to meet the needs of all children.

Benefits of the changes/redevelopment of the main site

The proposed redevelopment of the school building on the main site includes many improvements, which we are sure will have enormous benefits for the children and the whole of the school community. The plans offer the exciting prospect of a purpose built After-School (Wrap around care) facility, a multi-use games area for sports activities, a Multi-media suite, new toilets for both children and staff, along with the replacement of a significant number of our old and inefficient windows and a major overhaul of our inefficient heating system. On top of this, there are some other important benefits which these particular plans offer, that have been highlighted to indicate the impact that they will have on helping to respond to our objective of meeting the needs of all children in an environment which supports learning in the 21st century.

➤ Greatly improved traffic around the school building

The current narrow corridors mean that travel of large numbers of children around the school is difficult and, for some of our children, quite challenging. This proposed redevelopment increases the width of corridors and, as a result will make travelling through the school much more pleasant and safer, for everyone. Discussions with outside agencies have confirmed that the current narrow and congested corridors mean that the school is not a conducive environment for children with particular Special Educational Needs issues.

➤ Increase in size of classrooms

Our current Y4 classes are very small and this reduces the opportunities which can be provided for the children with regards to dedicated learning zones around the room. In turn, the children are faced with daily difficulties of trying to squeeze past each other as they move around the classroom. These cramped spaces can end up being the teaching and learning environment for 60 children for up to 5 hours a day. The proposed building redevelopment increases these teaching spaces enhancing the possibilities for both children and teachers and having the clear potential to positively impact on children's sense of well-being.

➤ Improved storage arrangements for resources

The current cramped arrangement of our shared areas (corridors etc.) means that storage of

resources exacerbates the problem. The proposed plans provide a number of solutions to our storage problems, meaning that resources can be better stored and accessed and the environment made to feel open and free from clutter.

• **Inclusion of a meeting room**

Being a large school community, there is the need to meet with a number of external agencies, so that we can ensure we are supporting the children as effectively as we can. In turn, meetings with parents and family members are very important in ensuring that the home-school partnership is as effective as possible. The proposed plans include the installation of a dedicated meeting room for such purposes and this will be a huge improvement on the current situation of meetings taking place in cramped offices or in areas that do not afford the privacy and sense of confidentiality which are often needed.

• **Increase in usable space for the habitat area.**

The plans propose an increase in usable area for our habitat area and improved access, providing increased opportunities for learning, exploration and discovery.

As a school, we are very mindful of the impact that the building plans will have on our current playground space. As such, we have been very active in looking at how we can ensure that the benefits which the new building offers for the children and staff team are not compromised. Great amounts of time and energy have gone into thinking carefully about how the outdoor space can be redesigned and developed to provide exciting and increased opportunities for both play and learning, which we know are important for children's development. As this work has gone on, we are very confident that we can provide these opportunities in an outdoor environment which will be the envy of many schools.

We remain very excited by the possibilities that these building proposals offer the school, confident that this opportunity that has been presented will play a significant role in helping us fulfil our vision of making learning irresistible and ensuring that children, who attend Morley, are able to grow and develop in a learning environment which fully supports their learning and their needs in the 21st century.

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