



Dorchester Primary School  
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15 FEB 2010

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Headteacher:- Mrs L. Austin. MA Bed (Hons), Dip Ed, Dip Man.

12th February 2010

Dear Dr Birnbaum,

### **Re Primary Expansion Programme**

As you know, Dorchester Primary School was considered by Sutton, as a possible school for expansion under the Primary Expansion Programme. The Governors have had several meetings and correspondence with David Ayres regarding the proposals.

The Governors had confirmed their support for expansion plans at the school, whilst wishing to explore issues such as the type of accommodation on offer and funding should the additional places not be filled (letter of 21st November 2009). Mr Ayres, at a meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> December explained that Sutton had been unsuccessful in gaining additional funding and gave us an assurance that the new KS1 classes would be a permanent building. The Governors indicated they were still supportive of the plans and understood from Mr Ayres that there would be an opportunity to meet with Stephen Ingram early this year to pursue the matter further (letter of 10 December 2009)

We are therefore extremely disappointed that Dorchester Primary School is not being proposed as a school to be expanded in the first phase, particularly in light of the following:

1. The school was on all the original lists for expansion and had been identified by the Asset Management Group as a high priority for improvement;
2. The data shows Worcester Park ward, where the school is sited, has the biggest percentage increase in births 04/07 of all the wards in Sutton and hence a very high percentage potential increase in demand and subsequent pressure on places.
3. The school has a reasonably large site compared to other schools in the area and has access to a large park next to it;
4. There has always been a clear aspiration on the part of the senior leaders and governors to expand as detailed in all previous building meetings;



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5. Dorchester Primary is a good school which provides good value for money (Ofsted 2008) and has increased its roll by 70 pupils over the last 3 years.

6. The school is situated on a secondary road and we would hope that expansion here would not cause any major traffic issues for local residents.

The Governors were even more disheartened when they learnt of the plans to expand the Cheam Common schools. Cheam Common school has not previously been identified or considered as a school for expansion. We cannot understand the reason for expanding a school in the Nonsuch Ward (with one of the lowest potential increases in demand for places in the borough) on a significantly smaller site and further away from the recent housing developments. We are extremely concerned that by expanding Cheam Common to a four form entry school this could draw away pupils from Dorchester Primary resulting in a decreased roll similar to the situation at Brookfield. Indeed this has been put forward as an argument to discontinue the increase of roll in that purpose built 2 form entry school (although a 3 year guaranteed funding for a teacher has been secured at Brookfield).

The report on the Primary School Expansion Programme is very ambiguous, lacking in transparency and offers little clear details of the reasons that these particular schools have been chosen especially Cheam Common School. Paragraph 2.27 of the Report confirms that feasibility studies were commissioned (although we doubt this to be the case with Cheam Common) at a cost of £0.25 million and yet we have never, despite a written request, seen a copy of any study. Surely the details if not the studies themselves should have been included in the report to go before The Executive?

We will be sending a Freedom of Information request to Sutton requesting copies of the feasibility studies carried out on the relevant schools considered for expansion including any documentation detailing Cheam Common's involvement.

If every child matters and every school matters surely the Council should be looking at giving all Sutton pupils access to a high quality environment as expected in the new Ofsted Framework and the new White Paper Building a 21st century school system. Dorchester Primary School is a good school and has been identified as one capable of being outstanding (National Leadership College - National Challenge for London Project), however the conditions of the buildings will impede this ever happening.

By building a new three class base with toilets attached to the nursery, then possibly a 4 class base with toilets, initially to cater for the projected increase in pupils in the Worcester Park Ward, could be the start of the replacement of the temporary buildings where 240 pupils are educated. However, by

expanding Cheam Common first we feel it inevitable that this will draw away vital funding from Dorchester Primary in the future.

There appear to be many factors which do not seem to support the proposal for expansion and the Governors of Dorchester Primary would like a detailed response as to the reasons that Cheam Common Infants and Juniors have been selected for expansion in preference to Dorchester.

Please could we have a speedy response either in writing or alternatively we would be happy to have a formal meeting with you. We do intend to pursue this matter as we feel it is of vital importance to Dorchester Primary school's future.

Yours sincerely



pp Tony Marshall	pp Ian Phipps	Karen Dukes	Louise Austin
Chair of Governors	Chair of Premises	Parent Governor	Head teacher

Cc Sean Brennan

Tony Brett Young

Paul Burstow