



TRINITY C. E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

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To Councillor M. Waine

CC Councillor Keith Mitchell
Counillor David Nimmo-Smith
Councillor Peter Skolar
Meera Spillet
Allyson Milward
Roy Leach

21st February, 2011

Dear Councillor Waine,

Re: Expansion of Primary School Provision in Henley

Our governing body has read the report prepared by Meera Spillet and the letter from Simon Smith, Badgemore's Chair of Governors. I am writing to further support and explain the position of Trinity's governing body

I would like to acknowledge that Badgemore is one of Trinity's partnership schools and that we have great respect and a very good working relationship with the staff there. We find ourselves in a very uncomfortable and regrettable position in which we are pitched against them to secure expansion and move the vision for our respective schools forward. Both schools have a strong desire and capacity to improve and we would each benefit organisationally and financially from expansion. It cannot be that any one school is more deserving in this respect than the other.

We too were very pleased with the way that we were consulted in the development of the initial scheme for Trinity. That scope and scale of those plans addressed all of the existing deficiencies at our school, as well as giving us additional capacity. Unfortunately we did not have any visibility of the cost of that scheme until early January and so our architect-governor had only a few days to develop the principles for the lower-cost scheme which we then submitted. We accept that it may lack final detail in some areas, but are delighted that OCC staff agree that it is broadly workable and within the cost parameters that we suggested. We are confident that these lower cost plans for expanding our school hall will not compromise standards and must point out that since the scheme includes a school hall with sliding partition walls, it would give us flexible SEN withdrawal space and does not result in the loss of any playground space. We are confident that our revised scheme is a realistic and achievable solution that would enhance school life for over 400 children, whilst also maximizing value for public money.

Trinity is already two years into the 2FE transition which is at the heart of our strategic vision for the school as we strive towards an Outstanding Ofsted rating. A decision not to expand the school more permanently would now be a retrograde step, forcing us into significant difficulty for many years to come. As the report states, we

did receive additional “one off” funding (twice) to help us support the cost of creating a new class/teaching post in KS1 for our current year 1 cohort of 60, and the year behind them which is currently 54 children. This funding will apparently not continue, and as this cohort moves into Key Stage 2 in 2012 we will be forced to run 3 mixed age- classes of 35 pupils unless we see additional revenue coming into the school via larger pupil numbers in the year groups behind them. It is impossible to see how running classes of this size will not lead to falls in standards of educational delivery, safeguarding and attainment, an unbearable prospect at a school which prides itself on consistently high standards in all of these areas. We would be failing in our duties as governors if we did not do everything in our power to protect the staff and children at Trinity from such an eventuality.

We are concerned about the implicit assumption in the report that an expanded Trinity might lead to the closure of Badgemore which we feel is a rather over-simplistic hypothesis. The well-deserved recent good Ofsted inspection at Badgemore is already proving to be a springboard for growth as they have welcomed their largest Foundation Stage cohort into the school for many years. Other highly relevant issues could have a significant impact on demand for primary school places at both schools:

- a much talked about and overdue review of school catchment boundaries in Henley, many of which are historic and no longer make sense given the way that the town has evolved.
- the possible closure of any of the smaller local village schools (there are three more half-form entry schools within a three mile radius of Henley)
- new housing development in the town. Each school appears to have different information, but our latest information (map attached) clearly shows that the vast majority is within Trinity’s catchment area on the south side of town

Trinity has delivered consistently high standards of attainment for many years despite the acknowledged existence of a number of deficiencies in terms of provision, most notably our hall, but also the much-referenced temporary classrooms. By expanding our school the county will simultaneously fulfill two objectives:

- increase the basic need for primary school places in the town
- improve space provision to meet national guidelines (for 1.5 and 2FE), improving educational delivery for over 400 children.

If our school is not expanded, these deficiencies will remain and will leave 334 children in facilities which do not meet national standards. **At a time when capital budgets are being severely cut, and public sector spending is under real scrutiny, the double-benefit and lower cost of our scheme must surely be a prime consideration.**

We remain at your disposal to clarify any of these points in further detail.

Yours Sincerely,

Jo Edmondson
Chair of Governors, Trinity CE Primary School