

Village support for school development

As part of the current WSCC Consultation on the change of age of transfer of primary age children Amberley has an opportunity to present to WSCC its argument for a new school hall.

The background

WSCC has for the last 14 years been gradually aligning its primary/secondary provision from Years R-5, followed by Years 6 -8, then Years 9 – 13 to the national model of Years R – 6 followed by Years 7-13. The so-called STARS area (Storrington Area Rural Schools) is the last area in West Sussex to go through this process of change. Although no decision has yet been taken Amberley School is looking forward to providing for the children throughout the primary phase if that is the outcome of the consultation process.

Accommodating Year 6

Although the staff have every confidence that they can successfully deliver the Year 6 curriculum and support the children properly through that stage of their development, the current school building will force an element of compromise in what we can offer.

According to statutory WSCC provision we have enough classrooms (3) and toilets (4) to cope with the number of children we are likely to have in the next few years (a maximum of 80) and are entitled to no extra facility development. As such this means we are not entitled to any of the budgeted expenditure under the proposed Change of Age of Transfer scheme.

An opportunity

However we have been informed that, through the consultation process, we have an opportunity to present to WSCC the argument for a new school hall. The main reasons are

- the current 'hall' is only 80 sq meters which is well under standard provision these days
- it is centrally situated and is the only access in the school to all areas. It cannot thus be used as a teaching space, other than for PE. (Anyone needing to move around the school has to walk through PE lessons if they are taking place.)
- School numbers are growing anyway and projected numbers in the year groups in September 2017 (when the Year 6 children would remain at Amberley for the first time) mean that class sizes will be a difficult issue to resolve. Were the central area freed from being the venue for the daily assembly, lunch and PE lessons it could be used very flexibly as an extra learning space for groups of children being taught separately from the main classes.
- With a new hall we would be able to make some pre-school provision as well as a breakfast and after school club, all impossible at present but increasingly necessary provision by schools.

The role of the village

The school is keen to go on developing its relationship with the village. A new school hall would also provide an extra community space outside school hours which would have accessible parking, and modern facilities. We would love to have the support of the Neighbourhood Plan group and/or the Parish Council in presenting our case by their acknowledgement that a new hall would be a valuable community asset and would have the support of the village.

Carolyn Shaw Chair of Governors

Jon Gilbert Head Teacher

5 February 2016