

Outstanding education,
care and skills 2006|2007



Brentside Primary School

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To Ealing Council Planning Department.

Dear Holly Morgan-Smith,

We enclose our response from the governors of Brentside Primary to the statutory notice to expand Brentside Primary School from 1.5 to 3 FE. The response takes the form of a seven point submission with a summary.

We have seven major areas of concern which are listed below. The argument addressing these points with supporting evidence and appendixes is in each section.

1. Probable dilution of standards in English, Mathematics and Science as a consequence of doubling our pupil capacity.
2. Compromising our ability to deliver the same standards in well being and ECM agenda, something we now have national recognition for.
3. Exposing our future pupils to the harmful consequences of an over crowded school.
4. Making the assumption (without supporting evidence) that the future pupils of Brentside primary will be able to sustain similar standards of achievement and well being whilst being educated on a site that was built and designed for in 1937 as a 1.5 form entry (Middle School) School.
5. This proposal does not have the support of the parents, pupils and staff or the residents surrounding school.
6. The rights for an emergency access and entrance from Greenford Road were sold to the PFI partnership of Brentside High School and Kajima in 2004. Consequently, if the school were to move to three form entry the safe evacuation of up to a thousand children and adults would be severely compromised.
7. We have progressed from being considered for special measures by Ofsted in 2002 to being judged as outstanding in October 2006. Doubling our pupil capacity could undermine our ability to deliver an outstanding service to our pupils and parents.

Yours sincerely

Anne H Chapman- Chair of Governors
For and on behalf of the Governing Body of Brentside Primary School

Brentside Primary School

Summary of consultation and Governor's views on the Proposal expand to a three form entry School

1. Consultation process and results

The school community has deliberated in the last month as to whether or not accept the LA proposal to expand from 1.5 to 3 FE.

The consultation meetings were as follows:

- 3 parents' consultation meetings and secret ballot
- 2 staff consultation meetings and secret ballot
- Local residence opinions were sought by parent governors visiting houses in the surrounding streets. 56 residents signed a petition disagreeing with the proposed expansion.
- Pupil consultation
- Governors meeting and vote.

The results of the ballot and votes were as follows.

- Parents voted against the 3FE expansion by 201 with 23 in favour
- The teaching staff voted against the 3FE expansion by 18 votes with 1 in favour.
- All the non teaching staff voted against expansion (10 votes.)
- The governors voted against expansion by 10 votes, there was 1 vote in favour.
- The pupil school council vote 12 against expansion and 2 votes in favour.

2. Governor's views

Doubling our pupil capacity is likely to dilute our present standards of achievement.

School statistics.

We know from national statistics in 1965 that in England there were 93 schools with 3 FE or more out of 20,789 schools and in 2004 there were 139 schools of 3FE or more out of 17,762 primary schools in England. In this context of the school size demography in England, only 9% of school are 3FE or above.

In our research of large schools in London we found that out of 31 boroughs only 21 had schools of 3FE and over, these schools totalled 71.

We found that high performing large schools in 2007 KS2 SATs correlated positively with London Boroughs who had higher proportions of affluent and middle class families.

Table 1 Analysis of the worst and the best performing large schools by borough

Worst performing boroughs	Brent, Ealing, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Hillingdon, Newham, Lambeth
Better performing boroughs	Bromley, Croydon, Redbridge, Surrey

We also looked at the performance of the 3FE and more schools in Ealing. We found that only 2 of the seven matched and slightly exceeded the attainment of BPS in the 2007 KS2 SATs. These were Fielding and Montpelier both school associated with middle class and affluence. The

remaining school were in the bottom 30% percentile of the borough league tables, two in the bottom 7% percentile.

It should be noted that in 2007 BPS pupils achieved of 92% in Maths and Science and 89% in English at level 4 in KS2 exams. The national average for that year was 80% for English, 77% for Maths and 87% for Science. As a point of information Brentside Primary's pattern of achievement over the last six years in their KS2 results falls between 90 to 96% of our pupils achieving level 4 and above.

There is a convincing body of evidence both from the UK and US that large schools of 3 FE or more do not provide the individualised and positive learning environment and/or the well being outcomes that smaller schools do. This is particularly relevant for pupils in high deprivation categories and/or with EAL, SEN, and FSM status.

Ofsted inspections, Ofsted 1999 found that small schools achieved markedly better test results in reading, writing and science. Ofsted further observed that 'the quality of teaching in smaller schools was generally better than in larger schools'.

A more significant piece of research on small v large schools was conducted by the NFER. Spielhofer et al 2002 found that performance improved in secondary schools up to a certain size and then declined. The best performance results were found in medium schools and the worst in very small or very large schools.

To sum up the assertion that 'bigger is better' when it comes to schools either primary or secondary does not have an evidence base.

We have national recognition for our ability to deliver the ECM agenda.

Personalised learning and nurturing talent are the strengths of Brentside Primary. We have a proven record of excellence in supporting the well being of our pupils which is evidenced by our Ofsted Report 2006 and in media interest and coverage. It is most likely that pupils thrive and perform well in standardised test because we are able to meet their particular learning and motivational needs.

Edwards 1991 and Hines 1996 found that that the quality of the school environment was crucial in supporting performance in standardised tests. In poor school environments pupil's performance was 11% lower than in excellent school environments.

The Effect of overcrowding at home and school.

Approximately 40% of the land of the former Brentside First, Middle and High School sites has been sold off. In 1997 Brentside First School was sold to a consortium who opened the French school, and further, in 2004 land was sold for a private housing development. We do not accept that Ealing council did not have an indication of the need for more primary school places when it sold this land in 2004.

We have calculated that if BPS were to expand to 3 form entry it would be the smallest site for 3FE development in the borough and does not reach DCFS requirements for m² space per pupil for a 'confined' site. To ask future pupils of BPS to be schooled in very cramped learning conditions will be detrimental to their learning, health and unfair to them.

There is a direct correlation between overcrowding at home and at school and a child's ability to keep up with their school work. Ealing has high incidents of overcrowded house holds, some 40%. Many Brentside families live in over crowded conditions and until now we prided ourselves on being able to mitigate the harmful effects of overcrowding by providing a spacious quality learning environment for them. Clearly, if we expand to 3FE we will be compounding the challenges that our pupil will face in spatial and social density.

Safety Issues

Over the last six months the governors have had serious misgivings as to the feasibility of building on such a small site and the fire risk of expanding the school to 720 pupils including nursery. Whilst the land registry deeds for the Brentside sites still retain BPS's right to the previous emergency fire exit onto the Greenford Road, Ealing Council have allowed Kajima to build a car park across our access, thus denying us emergency access to the Greenford Road. We have been told on several occasions that the emergency fire access can not be reinstated by Ealing LA and Babcock representatives. In the event of a fire or explosion staff and pupils would be trapped in the back playground with no means of escape if further buildings were constructed in the edges of our site.

Communication and planning with LA and Babcock.

The governors and HT of BPS have worked long and hard to accommodate the proposal of Ealing to convert this school to a 3FE. We have done this because we were led to believe we were the only school site both in standards and in site suitability that could be used. Clearly this is not true. However there have been several factors which have made communication difficult. They are as follows:

1. There is an inherent lack of transparency in Ealing's commissioning process in buildings for schools. Working with Babcock who in turn are working directly for Ealing LA has resulted in an absence of essential information being shared with the building committee of BPS. Babcock's role is design and building not to advise the head and governors on LA policy. Since most communication has been with various Babcock agents things have moved on without an honest sharing of essential information.
2. Both Ealing LA and Babcock have gone against the DCFS recommendations and used holiday or edges of holidays to extract compliance and signatures without prior warning to the chair and HT thus not allowing time to consult fully with the governors of the school.

3. The building committee feel that the LA should have made them aware of the negative effects of building so intensely on the Brentside site. We did not understand, until we did the arithmetic, that such an expansion would lead to such overcrowding of our site. Rather their arguments addressed only the need to provide more school places. Ealing Council does have a duty of care towards Brentside Primary pupils and staff. However the LA seems unaware that Brentside Primary school could become the most densely populated school in the LA . Our pupils would have less than 15m² per pupil, whilst other school enjoy green and space and up to 83m² per pupil as Selborne currently enjoys.
4. We were not consulted on nor have we been given a copy of the feasibility study for converting this school to 3FE which was done whilst the school was closed in August 2008. However a fire safety officer should have been involved in that process and to date we have not had an adequate response to the health and safety implications of not having an emergency access at the back of the school.

3. Conclusion

Although the Governor's appreciate the concerns of the Ealing LA's need to provide sufficient school places for its primary age children from 2010, they feel that imposing a three-form entry on Brentside Primary School is not the answer. It will not provide a school environment that can give the children the care, individual attention, and sense of belonging that, in this area, they need if they are to have any chance of progressing in their education after primary school. The explicit mission of each school is to lessen and bridge the educational attainment gap of children who are vulnerable and less advantaged. We have a history of doing this and many of past pupils do very well in High school. In our last Ofsted 2006 it was noted by parents that our pupils 'love to come to school'. We want to keep it that way.