

BELLEVILLE GOVERNORS

Dear Parents & Carers

Many of you will shortly be receiving a consultation document from Wandsworth Council proposing changes to the admission policy at Belleville school.

The Governing Body wanted to make you aware that we did not want the consultation to take place, neither do we support the changes to the admission policy the council is proposing.

The council is proposing to replace the sibling rule whereby children who already have an older brother or sister in the school on the date of entry are given priority over those who do not, no matter where they live, with effect from September 2012.

If these changes come into place we must stress it will not affect any families with children currently at Belleville under a transitional arrangement until 2017 whereby the council acknowledges there would be a reasonable expectation that siblings would be admitted.

In place of the sibling rule the council is proposing to set up two priority areas and families in these areas would have priority over other groups including existing siblings. The first priority area includes roads around Belleville's Webbs Road site and the second around the new site on Forthbridge Road. Our understanding is that this proposal is being made in response to residents in the Forthbridge Road area who objected to the establishment of a secondary site for Belleville school where their children might not be able to get a place.

Officers from Wandsworth Council presented these proposals at the Full Governors meeting on 22 October and asked for our support on the principle of consultation. We told them we would not support the principle of consultation and when we saw the consultation document that they are proposing to send out we asked for a number of changes as we felt the document was biased towards the new arrangement. These changes have not been made and we understand residents of the Northcote, Shaftesbury and Balham wards will receive the consultation document this week.

Governors at Belleville think the best outcome to this consultation is no change to our admissions policy so that siblings will still have priority. We have a number of reasons for this including:

- We believe a change to our admissions policy would put Belleville at a disadvantage to neighbouring schools who are not being asked to change their admissions policy, ie a parent with more than one child would naturally choose a school where they knew all children could be guaranteed a place. For example Honeywell as a Foundation School sets its own admission policy and has agreed to review this policy in 2011 but the council is expecting no change.

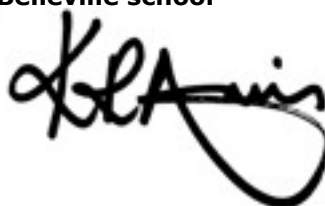
- We understand that families need to move house for any number of reasons (including job changes, new babies, care for relatives etc) whilst their children are at primary school and it is not always possible to find somewhere to live in this immediate area. It is not reasonable to expect these families to drop younger siblings at a different school.

- We take in a number of pupils in years other than Reception -- this September the number was 30. These additional pupils ensure we can keep classes full and run the school at an optimal level in financial terms. We also believe by taking children from a little further afield we are ensuring a degree of diversity amongst our intake -- a feature we are justifiably proud of at Belleville school.

- We believe if you can be out of the priority area by a road or two but still within walking distance of the school, a sibling policy is the simplest and fairest admission policy.

The council are proposing to hold a meeting on Monday 15 November in Belleville School hall to allow interested parties to discuss the proposals. Governors will be attending this meeting and we hope as many parents as possible will come along and make their views known. Although it will not affect any of you as current parents, the governors encourage you to take part in the consultation.

Thank you for your support of Belleville school



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