

Big changes at the schools in Send.

Plans are underway to make big changes at Send First and St Bede's Junior CofE schools that will bring major benefits to both the children and community.

What's changing and why?

St Bede's was built in 1939 as a secondary school, over 75 years ago. In the 1970s it was converted to a middle school and is still used today as a junior school, catering for children from 7-11 years of age. Send First school, which is the associated infant school and built in the 1950s, is several hundred yards away in Send Barns Lane.

Not only are the buildings at St Bede's now in extremely poor condition and in need of significant investment, but also the delivery of primary education has changed beyond all recognition since it was built. Having an infant school that is remote from its junior school is also far from ideal.

The Department for Education recognised this and has categorised St Bede's as one of the neediest schools in the country, under the Priority School Building Programme. The DfE has determined that it is more cost effective with public funds to rebuild St Bede's, than it is to refurbish and then face high ongoing maintenance costs.

After consultations and meetings with the school community, the Local Authority and the schools' educational advisors, all agreed that because of the overwhelming educational, financial and operational benefits, the most suitable location for the proposed new building was next to Send First School.

Having reviewed the options, the DfE agreed, and has now submitted a planning application to Guildford Borough Council.

In conjunction with this, Governors have requested Surrey County Council to approve the merger of the two schools, creating a new all through primary school, catering for children from ages 4-11, using the proposed new building and the existing building at Send First.

Ready for the future

The new building will give us a 21st Century environment that will inspire our children to engage and learn. The specifications of the building have been designed for the needs of primary school children, and the layout of that space has been designed to the school's own specific requirements.

Relocating and rebuilding the junior school, and merging with the infant school brings many significant benefits, for example:

- We can make joint use of the new facilities in the new building, for the benefit of all our children across the whole school.
- It allows children to access aspects of the curriculum, through the use of these shared resources, that would otherwise be denied them.
- All staff can now work more effectively with all year groups.
- Older children can now be role models to younger children.
- There will be a seamless transition for parents and children from Reception up to Year 6.
- We can operate with one set of support services and facilities for both buildings and for use by the whole school, such as the: reception and office, kitchen area, IT suite, design & technology area, dining area, and a school hall big enough for whole school assemblies and other activities, including community use.
- All children will now have easy access to the middle field for recreational and team sports activities.

To launch the new school and mark the start of a new era of primary education in Send, we will adopt a new school name, a new school logo and a new uniform chosen by the children.

Longer term we want to bring the current Send First building up to a similar specification to the new building.

What does this give to the community at Send?

The idea of forming a single primary school on the Send First school site has been discussed for many years and at last we have the opportunity to achieve this, bringing a lasting legacy to future generations of children at Send.

This is a golden, once in a lifetime opportunity, funded by a multi-million pound investment in the community from central government.

Having a single school in a single location creates a focal point that enables us to re-integrate the school back into the heart of the community. There has been a school in Send since 1834, and we have many 3rd and 4th generation children here. We want that tradition to continue, we want the

school to flourish and for the community to have a full primary school that serves the village of Send.

Martin Digby is Chair of Governors at the Federation of Send CofE Schools, and Sue Sayers is the Executive Headteacher. If you would like to discuss the above article further, please contact us via the school office and we would be delighted to meet you. The email address is secretary@send.surrey.sch.uk

Postscript: At the time of writing, we are waiting for a decision from Guildford Borough Council about the DfE's planning application for the new build, and we are also waiting for approval from Surrey County Council on our proposal to merge Send First and St Bede's. Both decisions are due in April.