

Dear Grangewood Parents and Carers

## **Eden Academy free school bids**

Many thanks to those of you who were able to come to our Free School Meeting last week, where we shared the news of our successful bid to open two new free schools in Hillingdon.

For those of you who were unable to attend, we have outlined our most up-to-date information below:

- The Eden Academy will now be able to provide both primary and secondary provision (education and therapy) for all Eden pupils, wherever they live in the borough
- We will be opening a new primary school in the south of the borough for pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties
- We will also be able to provide secondary provision in the north of the borough for pupils with severe learning difficulties including those with complex needs and visual impairment
- Our new school in the north of the borough will be on the current Grangewood site, which will provide a brand new building for our new all-through school
- RNIB will be closing Sunshine House School and all staff and children will transfer to the new school on the Grangewood site

In terms of you, our **Grangewood families**, this provides a very exciting opportunity.

### **Benefits**

- ✓ Grangewood staff will remain the same and be joined by Sunshine House staff who bring even more expertise
- ✓ We will have two new, fit for purpose schools, in the north and the south of the borough
- ✓ All existing family services will continue and be enhanced
- ✓ Children will have significantly reduced travel times to school
- ✓ Parents will have more choice of schools

## **Location**

In order to build a new school on the Grangewood site, it is likely that we will need to find temporary accommodation for Grangewood children for an extended period (probably about a year). We are therefore exploring a number of different options including:

- finding space in an existing school in the north of the borough
- moving to the site of the new primary school in the south of the borough (if it is completed in time)
- establishing temporary classrooms on a selected site

## **Timing**

The timelines for this project are still to be agreed with the Department for Education, but our initial plans are to open both schools in September 2019.

This is clearly a very exciting development for your children and for us as an Academy.

We have attached the presentation that was made to parents last week, as well as details of the questions that parents brought up and our answers.

Once you have had a chance to digest all of this information, we are sure that you will have some questions. We will be holding another parent/carer information session just before or after half term, and will announce the date and time via the school's weekly newsletter.

If you have any further questions at this time, please contact Karen Clark, Head of School at Grangewood either by email [info@grangewoodschool.co.uk](mailto:info@grangewoodschool.co.uk) or by phone on 01895 676401.

Best wishes,

*John Ayres and Susan Douglas*

(Principal and CEO of the Eden Academy)

## Q&As for Grangewood parents 28<sup>th</sup> April 2017

### **What will happen to the staff and children when we have to move out of the current Grangewood building whilst the re-design and refurbishment happens?**

The EFA is now going to do a feasibility study on the Grangewood site. Once this has been completed and we have had the first meeting with the New Schools Network, we will be clearer about the timescales and building plans and will let you know about this as soon as we have further information. If the building schedule goes to plan, we are hopeful that the 80 place primary school in Harmondsworth will be ready by September 2018 and one option may be that the staff and pupils from Grangewood could transfer to this new accommodation but this is very much dependent upon how quickly the site can be made ready and the building can be started. If this is not the case, we will be having conversations with other schools both in the North and the South of the Borough who have unused accommodation in their schools. 70% of the Grangewood current pupil roll live in the south of the borough so it would make sense to look at accommodation nearer to where these families are currently living.

We will be setting up task and project working groups involving both parents and staff to help define what the new provision will look like and from their input we will put together a design brief for the EFA who will take this to their architects for them to design. Our experience with the EFA has been very positive and they will also work with us on a coherent plan to ensure that the provision during the building transition period meets the needs and challenges of our pupils. It will be our focus to ensure that the educational, therapeutic and family services provision will continue right up to the time the children transfer into the new free schools. The new school provision will be:

- 80 place primary SLD in the South of the Borough (a site has been purchased in Harmondsworth) and,
- An all age (4-19) 180 place school for children with profound and severe learning difficulties in the North of the Borough (on the Grangewood site)

This will offer families choice of a primary and secondary provision in both the north and the south of the borough where there is currently no choice.

**Will the Grangewood footprint be large enough to accommodate 180 pupils? How will we manage the increased need for parking on the Grangewood site?**

It is anticipated that the new building will be three storeys which will include a discreet provision for children with PMLD and VI (including the children who will transferring from RNIB Sunshine House). The two remaining floors will again, we anticipate, be for Primary and Secondary with clear definition and distinction between the key stages.

Parking and the management of the transport on the Grangewood site will also be something that we will be looking at when we are designing the plans with the Architects.

**Will class sizes be larger?**

Our application for the two new free schools included very specific information about what Eden considered offered the best provision for our children and the size of classes supported by the number of staff was key to our bid and this is what has been agreed by the DfE. We want to capture what is best about our schools and improve upon this.

**Do we anticipate that we will have issues attracting new staff to the schools as this has been a problem in the last year at Grangewood?**

There has been a national recruitment teaching crisis in the UK and we like all schools have experienced some problems in recruiting staff. However, our experience when recruiting for Pentland Field (the school that was built as part of the free school programme two years ago in Ickenham) was very positive and we received good quality applications for teachers and LSAs who were attracted by the prospect of working in a well resourced brand new school and the offer of working within an Academy that offered excellent training and professional development opportunities for staff. We believe that this offer will be improved and enhanced with the two new free schools that are being built. We are also delighted that we will be joined by the very experienced team from RNIB Sunshine House who will be transferring to Eden when Sunshine House closes in two and a half years' time.

**Will there be respite opportunities for the children?**

Unfortunately we will not be funded for respite care for our children and we do not have the expertise for this. However, we will be linking with agencies to ensure that our families are aware of where they can seek this support.

**How will you reach out to parents and include them in the planning for the new buildings?**

Today's meeting was the first of many information sessions and communications from us. We will keep our families informed every step of the way . The input of families in the planning and development of the new free school provision is very important to us and we will consult and engage you on the design of the buildings setting up working parties to ensure that you can tell us what is important for your child in our new schools.

We will be meeting with the EFA on the 15th May for our initial free school meeting and anticipate that we will be advised of timelines for the project during the discussions. We will keep families fully up to date with this information once it is available

We will be sending out a letter next week which will include a copy of the presentation you have seen today as well as contact details for you if you have any questions. You can also speak to Karen who will be happy to answer any questions you may have.