

June 2015

Dear Parents and Carers,

Use of 'Gledhow Field' in the expansion of Gledhow Primary School

The School has recently become aware of some local concern about fencing the triangle of land as part of the proposed expansion to three form entry (3FE). This has led to the recent formation of a Group called Friends of Gledhow Field, who have set up a website (<http://friendsofgledhowfield.org/>) and undertaken a face-to-face and on-line survey and petition opposing the fencing and removal of the land from free public access.

The School hosted a meeting of those concerned with local Councilors, and this happened on 18 June, with Cllr Bill Urry (Chair), Cllr Christine Macniven and Cllr Ghulam Hussain, together with representatives of the School and Children's Services (LCC), Friends of Gledhow Field and local residents. The minutes of these, taken by Cllr Urry, are posted on the Council Facebook page.

We would like to take the opportunity to offer the School's perspective and our rationale. As I hope you agree, the School sees itself at the heart of the community – this is the sole reason for agreeing to consider the request for expansion to 3FE in the light of the critical shortfall in places. Children and parents in the local community were not getting places at their preferred school, and were being forced to travel considerable distances to get a place.

It is true that the expansion requires fencing most of the triangular 'Field' to accommodate this growth. With 50% more children, there is clearly a need for approximately 50% more playground and sports field if the quality of experience is to be maintained. As the proposed new buildings take up a large amount of the current playground, there will be new hard surface playground on one end of the existing sports field, and so a loss of existing grassed area – hence the School's need for the 'Field'.

The vast majority of Governors, staff, and obviously children and their families are part of the local community too, and while we sympathise with the view of the Friends of Gledhow Field, and it is regrettable that there are not more public spaces, we feel that some of the information being circulated is not accurate or is potentially misleading.

- The land is, and always has been, the School's. Going back to the 1980s (Mrs Burrows is helping us here!) the land around the whole School was enclosed with a chain link fence, but there was a lease for 'dual use' with the Rugby Club. After the tragedy of the Dunblane Massacre in 1996, the School (along with many others) realized it needed to make the grounds more secure. There was not enough money to fence all of the land securely, so the existing solid fence was built in its present position as a pragmatic response. Without this historical context, we can see why some might think the School was taking over the land, and the School has continued to pay for the upkeep and mowing of the 'Field'.
- There will still be wide paths around the fenced area to allow people to walk through to homes, shops and bus stops as before.

- There are no plans to reduce green space, build anything on the grass, nor to remove hedgerows (apart from possible small sections as access points). If anything, the wildlife value will be enhanced as the children will be planting trees, gardens and nature areas as part of the rich outdoor curriculum.
- The School cannot permit uncontrolled 'shared use' and access because of concerns over security, dog excrement and litter, including glass and needles. The Headteacher has had to report examples of inappropriate behaviour on the Field to the Police Community Support Officer. None of this is acceptable on a school playing field. In line with the School's Leasing Policy, we envisage that organised groups or holidays clubs etc would be able to continue to use the facilities outside school hours freely or for a nominal fee to cover e.g. the caretaker opening up and locking the premises. This maximises usage, but certainly is not driven by a profit motive.
- The statutory school expansion consultation process was formally managed by LCC, not the School, although obviously the School was used as a host for the several public meetings which took place.
- The Friends website strongly implies that the School is actively looking to build a floodlit all-weather pitch on the Field for commercial reasons, operating into the night, and provides pictures of what it might look like. This is highly emotive and not true. As I said in my letter of May 2014 (in the spirit of being open and transparent), the School had been approached previously by an organisation interested in this, but there have been no further developments. It is understandable that residents might have concerns, but any future plans (and I reiterate there are none at present) would have to go through a formal and separate planning process, with consultation. In fact, the School has received a number of informal enquiries over the years by developers wishing to purchase the land, but unlike many others has always declined, which is why it now has the capacity to expand for the benefit of children.
- The results of any survey are bound to be affected by the information presented to respondents, and we believe that inaccurate information may have affected this one, as comments on the website indicate many respondents understandably object to the thought of the land being built on or paths blocked.

We took the decision to expand to 3FE because of a crisis in school places and our sense of responsibility to the community, and regret that some of the School's land previously available to the general public will no longer continue to be so. I hope the above will allay some concerns, or at least show our perspective. As ever, the quality of education at Gledhow is non-negotiable, and you can be absolutely sure that the Governing Body would not agree to any proposal that did not enhance the quality of our provision of an inclusive and broad-based curriculum.

Yours sincerely



Dr John Willott

Chair of Governors