



THE PARK SCHOOL

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Why has the School decided to make these changes?

Like all successful schools we regularly review our strategic options as part of our commitment to providing pupils with the best possible education. Whilst we constantly strive to develop and improve all aspects of our provision, we have for some time been frustrated from realising some of our ambitions by the inescapable constraints of our site. Restructuring the School and moving the younger pupils to a new site will enable us to achieve our ambitions for the whole School. These include smoother transitions, more space, improved facilities, and the many benefits that ensue, whilst safeguarding the aspects of The Park School we all hold dear.

Q: What are the benefits of the change?

There are many benefits to this move for pupils, educationally, developmentally and socially. All pupils, whether based at the new Junior and Middle School site or at the Senior and Sixth Form site, will benefit from the enhanced facilities for sports, such as tennis courts, sports pitches, an athletics field and a large gymnasium.

The parkland setting and age-specific play areas at the new site will afford Junior and Middle School pupils much more space and fresh air in which to play, relax and let off steam. It will also enable us to develop sport, outdoor education and a Forest School, all hugely valuable educationally for this age group but impossible with our current site and set up.

Middle School pupils will also benefit from additional opportunities for personal development in Year 8. As the most senior pupils on our new site, Year 8 pupils will hold newly created positions of responsibility and leadership such as prefects and Heads of Houses.

Our existing site will become a dedicated space for Senior and Sixth Form pupils aged 13-18, offering a more spacious environment in which to focus on the academic rigours of the GCSE and A level years. These pupils will access the sports' facilities at the new site, and will still be able to enjoy the independence that comes from a town centre location, increasingly important as they transition through school towards university.

From September 2017, home for boarders will be the recently refurbished, purpose-built, modern boarding house at Chilton Cantelo, with bus services running between the sites for Senior and Sixth Form boarders.

We envisage that the benefits to the whole school community, parents, staff and pupils alike, will also be significant, as the space will permit us more easily to gather together for events.

Q: How will this affect my child?

The changes will be effective from September 2017 to ensure that we have sufficient time to plan successfully for the new school year. Pupils currently in Saplings – Year 7 will move to the new Junior and Middle School site from the autumn term next academic year. The current Year 8 pupils will remain in Yeovil as they transition into the Senior School.



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Q: How was the decision made and why was it not made sooner?

The Governors and Senior Leadership team have taken this decision together following a lengthy period of consultation, reflection and due diligence. Discussions were opened up last year when Cognita announced it would be closing Chilton Cantelo School, but we needed sufficient time to consider the move on our own terms and be certain that this was the right step for our community. Having since had the opportunity to scrutinise, plan and seek professional advice from Veale Wasborough Vizards, legal specialists in the educational sector, and Chester's Commercial, the local Chartered Surveyors and Valuers, we are confident that this is an advisable and advantageous move for the School's long term future.

Q: How is this being funded?

Our obligation as responsible school leaders is to use the School's resources in the ways that have the most positive impact on educational outcomes for pupils. The School has carried out detailed financial planning as part of our due diligence and the financial implications have been carefully scrutinised alongside the educational case.

The purchase of the new site is being funded by the sale of some of our current assets, namely the current Saplings, Junior School and Sixth Form buildings. Saplings and Junior School pupils will be located on the new site. Sixth Formers will remain in the current Sixth Form centre until it is sold and their new space is ready. We will involve them in the plans for the new Sixth Form facility once the timeline is known.

We have negotiated very favourable terms for the new site, which will strengthen our asset base. We anticipate that there will be much interest in the sale of our properties and that we will be able to secure a favourable price. The new site will allow us to maintain the family essence so prized by the entire community whilst further developing the educational offering to grow the School roll, thus increasing our income from both day pupils and boarders.

Q: How many pupils will there be in the School in the future?

The Park School has always been a close-knit community and it is our intention that this important feature of our School will remain. Our long-term aim is to have 300 pupils across the two sites, with some of the growth coming from boarders, thanks to a larger boarding house on the new site.

Q: Will class sizes go up?

We are committed to maintaining the small classes and individual attention, which are a hallmark of The Park School. Our aim is to strike the all-important balance between being small enough to ensure each child is known and catered for as an individual and large enough to enable valuable classroom discussion and debate.

Q: Location was a big factor in choosing the School; will I still be able to drop off in Yeovil?

You will be able to drop off and pick up at whichever site is more convenient for you; we will arrange the transfer between the two sites for you, just as we will ensure that Senior and Sixth Form boarders get safely to and from 'home' in Chilton Cantelo to 'school' in Yeovil at the start and end of each day.

We are currently working on bus routes to both sites and will be seeking parental input as we move into planning the finer details. It is likely that the teaching day will start later to allow for those travelling from a distance; pick up times will be similar to the present arrangements.



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Q: Will this change the School's aims, ethos and values?

We cannot stress strongly enough that the much-loved aims, ethos and values, underpinned by our Christian foundation will remain unchanged. We know from talking to parents that our warm-hearted, family culture is highly valued. The real strength of our school lies in the strong sense of self-belief we nurture; this move will not alter that. We prepare our young people for the world beyond school by giving them the confidence to share and discuss their opinions, by developing in them enquiring minds and the courage and compassion to make them effective members of society. Confident, courteous children who are well mannered and considerate of others will continue to be an integral part of The Park School long into the future.

Q: How will this impact on academic standards and results?

As a non-selective school The Park School achieves extraordinary results, thanks to our focus on making learning an adventure and teaching each individual with pride and passion. We strive to ensure that the children grow in confidence, develop a love of learning and make the very most of their abilities. This move is about providing an even better environment for pupils' learning adventures, thus helping them to achieve the very best results of which they are capable.

Q: What facilities will the new site provide us with?

The new site already has many facilities from which Junior and Middle School pupils will benefit such as Science Labs, an Art room, Design Technology workshop and Food Technology suite, as well as the facilities for sports and music, which all pupils will enjoy. Our intention is to spend from now until September preparing the areas and spaces that will be required straight away; other areas of the new site will be developed over time as we expand into them.

Q: What about facilities on the existing site in Yeovil?

The existing Senior School site will also be refreshed as part of the on-going development plan for the School as a whole.

Q: How will sports be affected?

Our strong track record in sports will be bolstered by the improved sports facilities at the new site, which will be available to all pupils throughout the School. The space gained will also enable us to host matches and entertain parents and visiting schools in a way that is not possible currently. Indeed, we intend to start using the sports facilities and tennis courts next term.

Q: What about the extra-curricular provision, how will that be affected?

The extra-curricular provision contributes greatly to the stimulating and inspiring environment at The Park School and provides many additional opportunities for the children to shine. Our existing programme of activities and clubs will be strengthened by the additional options provided by the space and facilities at the new site e.g. outdoor education, additional sports and enhanced Design Technology thanks to the very comprehensive DT workshop already in existence on the new site. We also intend to develop a new Forest School provision, using the extensive woodland areas.

Q: How will pastoral care be affected?

Pastoral care has always been a great strength of the School and we will continue to nurture in the same way, regardless of location. Maintaining our happy, caring, family feel is very important to us.

Form Teachers / Tutors will continue to be the main pastoral figures in the Junior and Middle School whilst the current Head of Pastoral Care, Alex Briggs, will continue to look after Senior and Sixth Form pupils in Yeovil. The tutor programme will continue in the same way and each site will have a Safeguarding and Deputy Safeguarding Officer nominated from existing staff.



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Q: What about boarders, what will the move mean for them?

From September 2017, home for boarders will be the recently refurbished, purpose-built, modern boarding house at Chilton Cantelo. Set apart from the teaching areas and overlooking beautiful parkland, the boarding house has modern study bedrooms, newly installed shower rooms and bathrooms and a large multipurpose common room. The common room is the heart of the house with a spacious kitchen-diner as well as a comfortable area in which to relax. There is also a separate 'snug' room.

Bus services will run between the sites for Senior and Sixth Form boarders in the week to ensure they get safely from 'home' to 'school' and back; shuttles into town will also be available at the weekend. Other than a new house and more space indoors and out, little will change. The boarding family will continue to be looked after by Lorna Johnson and Debbie Harris, and enjoy a varied programme of activities, trips and excursions as well as time to relax with their friends in improved surroundings.

Q: Will there be an impact on the learning environment?

Today's exceptionally high standards will remain in place, and will be enhanced by the additional facilities and space created for everyone by the move. Careful timetabling will ensure staff teaching both Middle and Senior school pupils will switch sites in the middle of the day, but moves will be kept to an absolute minimum for staff and pupils.

Q: How will we maintain a sense of one community?

Once a week, on Fridays, the Senior School and Sixth Form pupils will join their Junior and Middle School counterparts at the new site for a whole school assembly, lunch and timetabled lessons in the afternoon, such as PE, using the facilities on the new site.

Q: Will this move have any impact on fees?

To mark our on-going commitment to ensuring The Park School is accessible to as much of the local community as possible, day fees will remain fixed at this year's levels for the next academic year. International Boarding fees for Years 9-13 will increase by just £300 per term from September 2017 to reflect the significant improvement in the boarding environment and facilities on the new site.

Q: How will you manage to maintain two sites?

We have been a two-site school since the dual carriageway was built in the 1970s, so we are already well versed in managing two sites. Palmer and Howells will provide catering services across both sites, each of which has a well-equipped kitchen, and we will employ additional support staff to serve the new site. The finer details surrounding switchboard routing, for example, are still being ironed out but we will publicise new contact details and arrangements for contacting staff as soon as they are finalised.

Q: How will you safeguard the School's traditions?

Just as a family's traditions and customs continue in the new home after a house move, so The Park School's will be preserved when the Junior and Middle School move to a new site. The four houses will remain unchanged and the competition amongst pupils to win the Stunt Cup and the Academic Shield for their house will doubtless be as fierce as it is now. Sentimental items or those with heritage, such as play equipment kindly donated by the PTA, will move with us or be replaced in discussion with you.

Equally, just as a new family home can give rise to additional rituals pertinent to the space, so new traditions may also evolve as befits the School's new location or to mark this next chapter in its history. We hope that you will be involved in shaping these. The first opportunity to come together as a whole community on our new site will be this summer's speech days, Thursday 14th and Friday 15th July.

Q: Will the uniform change?

The uniform will remain the same.



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Q: Why was this news not shared sooner?

It is the Heads' and Governors' responsibility, as custodians of The Park School for future generations, to set the future strategic direction of the School. Our plans needed to be researched, agreed and finalised before they could be shared. We are delighted to be in a position to share this good news now that the legalities of the purchase are in order.

Q: Who will lead the new School?

The School as a whole will continue to be led by the Head and the Senior Leadership team. The Head, Jane Huntington, Bursar, Vanessa Gates, and Deputy Head, Dominic Grass, will divide their time between the two sites to ensure that there is always a senior presence in each location.

Q: Will staff be affected?

Having a talented, motivated and passionate staff has always been a central tenet of the Park School. It is our intention that the School will remain a warm-hearted community providing an attractive working environment for its staff. Junior School staff will relocate to our new site with their pupils, and staff who only teach Years 9 and above will continue to be based at our current site. Some staff teaching both Middle and Senior school pupils will teach at both sites; time will be built in to staff timetables to enable a move between sites in the middle of the day.

We have recently reviewed and restructured our Junior School staffing with a view to having the structures in place to improve the transition from KS2 to KS3 at age 11. Now that this process is completed and we have appointed a new Coordinator for Junior and Middle School, we are confident that we have the right structures and staffing levels in place for the next chapter in the School's history.

Q: Why do you think you will be successful when Chilton Cantelo School closed due to falling numbers?

We have confidence in The Park School's strong academic provision and healthy fees: staff salary ratio, both of which are critical factors in the success and financial health of any school. Our recent restructure and review of staffing means that the School is in good shape to enter this next phase in its history.

Q: Who can I talk to if I still have questions?

Current Parents

As always, the Head, Jane Huntington, will be happy to answer any questions you may have. She can be reached on 01935 423514 or by email thehead@parkschool.com. In addition to appointments this week, she will also be available at the start of the holidays next week on Monday 3rd, Tuesday 4th and Wednesday 5th April.

Additionally, we are hosting parent forums before the Junior School production tomorrow and Wednesday in the Hall, to give you the opportunity to ask any questions straight away. You are welcome to join these meetings, even if you are not attending the production.

Tuesday 28th March 18.00 – 19.00

Wednesday 29th March 18.00 – 19.00

There will also be an opportunity to see the new site at a coffee morning to which you will be invited. Further details will follow in due course.



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Prospective parents

Please contact Jane Whear, Head of Marketing and Admissions. She would be delighted to answer any questions you may have. She can be contacted on 01935 423514 or admissions@parkschool.com.

Staff

Opportunities to discuss all this have been arranged over the coming days but you are also very welcome to arrange to meet one-to-one with members of the Senior Leadership team.