



New Primary School for Paignton Consultation FAQs

Q – Why do we need a new primary school in Paignton?

A – The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there are enough school places to meet demand. Torbay, like other Local Authorities, is experiencing an increase in the demand for school places as a result of increased housing, high birth rates and people moving to the area.

The National Audit Office recommends a surplus of between 5% and 10% of places to allow for parental preference and choice. A recent programme of primary school expansions has meant that the Council has been able to meet this duty and current projections show an expected surplus of up to 3% in Torquay, 3% in Paignton and 5% in Brixham until 2020. However, the surplus in Paignton and Torquay is very low and this presents problems for the Council when placing children moving into the area during the school year and when considering parental preference.

In addition there is no capacity for any unforeseen growth following the completion of the South Devon Highway or any increase in housing targets as set by regional government. There are no longer any viable and affordable options for future expansions of existing school so if numbers continue to rise the only way the Council can meet its statutory duty is by opening a new school.

Q - Why in Preston?

A - Data from the Council's Schools Admission Team, shows a high demand for places in the area of Paignton where we are proposing to open the new school. In 2016 the two closest primary schools (Oldway Primary and Sacred Heart) to the proposed new school were significantly oversubscribed (further information can be found in the consultation information pack). This means that a substantial number of parents from this part of Paignton are not getting a place at their preferred local school. The number of first preferences for these schools reflects parental choice but preferences are also rising because of demographic growth and demand in this part of Paignton is forecast to continue to rise for the foreseeable future. Torquay faces a similar pressure with a low number of surplus places and another reason for choosing the Torbay School site for the new school is the expectation it will serve both towns.

Q - What will be the impact of the new housing developments on the outskirts of Paignton – White Rock and Collaton?

A - White Rock Primary School has recently been expanded by 210 places to meet the initial demand arising from growth in that area. The Council is also forecasting a further need for extra places in that area in the next five to 10 years in recognition of the amount of new housing planned for the west of Paignton. This is in addition to the need for the new primary school proposed for Preston which is a more urgent and immediate need.

Q - Is the increase in numbers sustainable and not just a blip in birth rates?

A - The rising birth rates across Torbay reflects the national trend. It can be difficult to predict trends in birth rates we have to base the requirement for places on the current upward trend.

Q - Where will pupils come from?

A - It is anticipated that pupils for the new school will come from central Paignton, Preston and Livermead. Given the size and geography of Torbay, the additional capacity of the new primary school between Torquay and Paignton should reduce the pressure for school places across Torbay as a whole.

Q - Is the site and building suitable for a primary school?

A - Yes. The existing building is substantially bigger than the recommended floor area for a 210 place primary school. There are currently nine classrooms and the new school requires a minimum of eight. There will need to be some minor remodelling but the cost of altering it is minimal compared to the cost of building a new school anywhere else. Once the Council owned Brookfield site is added to the school site, the total site area will be 7300 square metres. This is lower than the Department for Education recommended minimum. However it is greater than the site area of over three quarters of the other 210 places primary schools in Torbay; with seven of those nine schools having less site area than that being provided at this proposed site.

Q - When is the Council proposing to open the new school?

A - It is proposed that Torbay School will vacate the site in July/August 2017. This allows one year to develop the site and establish a new primary school. The target opening date is September 2018.

Q - What other sites have been considered?

A - A full report was provided to Council in February 2016, setting out 13 alternative sites that have been considered. The report included a full list of the advantages and disadvantages of each site. The majority of sites were rejected on the basis of being too small, having very poor ground conditions or being too expensive.

Q - A new primary school in that area will have implications for traffic and highways. What will the Council do to minimize this impact on the local community?

A - The new entrance and access will be designed to take account of the increase in pupil drop off and pick-ups. There is likely to be some alterations needed to the existing highway. These issues will be considered in more detail as part of the planning application process. The school will need to adopt a Travel Plan to try and minimize any potential issues.

Q - What happens next?

A - The Council is required to follow a statutory framework when consulting on changes to schools. This consultation forms part of that process. The responses will be collated and a report presented to the Council where a decision will be made.