

West Lodge Middle School Governing Body



19th November 2007

Heather Clements Director – Schools and Children’s Development Group
London Borough of Harrow
Civic Centre
PO Box 22
Civic Centre
Harrow
HA1 2UW

Dear Heather

Re Amalgamation of West Lodge First and Middle Schools

As you are aware West Lodge Middle School Governing Body has been considering whether it would be in the best interests of the children of West Lodge to amalgamate the two schools.

At its meeting of 13th November 2007 a decision was taken by the Middle School Governing Body that it is not in the best interests of the children of West Lodge to amalgamate at this time. Our decision is primarily based on educational matters but we have also had regard to the impact of such a change on the staffing of the Schools. We have considered and discussed the findings of the Steering Group’s feasibility study and have taken its findings into account. We have also weighed up the views of all stakeholders. Whilst the response to meetings and the questionnaire from parents was good, the majority of parents did not express an opinion at all, and some parents expressed concerns about the size of an amalgamated school. Pupils were consulted and there was no overwhelming support expressed by the pupils either for or against amalgamation.

I set out our reasons briefly below but obviously we will be happy to meet with you and/or Paul Clarke to discuss further.

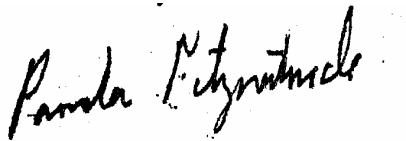
Summary of reasons

- Governors were not convinced that there were educational benefits if amalgamation took place sufficient to warrant major organisational change.
- Both schools are high achieving – much of the evidence about the benefits of amalgamation is based on schools with dissimilar i.e. lower standards of achievement.
- A much larger school may mean a loss of the currently highly individualised culture in the Schools e.g. the Headteacher of a larger school being familiar with few of the pupils
- Curriculum continuity between years 3 to 4, which already produces a high level of pupil learning and achievement, can also be further enhanced by greater liaison without the need for amalgamation.
- There are strong concerns that valuable Middle School staff may be lost or suffer a loss of morale as a result of amalgamation. This would be detrimental to the children and their education. Overall the staff group does not support amalgamation.
- Perceived benefits to school site would not be forthcoming due to expense – larger hall, dining room, new entrance and offices.
- Continuing building work – disruptive to education of children.
- No firm commitment from the LA of where money for site improvements would come from.
- The Governing Body was not convinced that the LA would provide sufficient support during any amalgamation either financially or otherwise. This is based on our experience of the support offered during the period of consideration of amalgamation and our experience at the time that the school flooded.
- Many of the stated benefits such as wider age range assemblies can be obtained through better communication between the schools – amalgamation is not necessary to achieve this.
- Harrow plans for the year 7 transfer to secondary schools remain unclear but as three form entry schools we are already amongst the largest in the borough.
- The issue of amalgamation had been considered three years ago but the First School staff at that time was very much against amalgamation. Middle School Governing Body had respected their wishes and agreed not to take the matter further.

We will be notifying parents by letter of our decision and calling a meeting to address any queries by parents.

I emailed you on 14th November asking for a meeting with you and Paul Clarke; I have not heard back from you and would be grateful if such a meeting could be set up as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pamela Fitzpatrick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

Pamela Fitzpatrick
Chair of Governors
West Lodge Middle School