

The Heights Primary School

The new Free School for Caversham Heights is moving closer to confirming its opening in September 2014. A new Head Teacher has now been appointed. Karen Edwards, currently Head of The Sacred Heart Primary School, will take up her post on 1 April 2014 but is already increasingly involved behind the scenes preparing the ground. On 15 January, the application process for Reception places in September closed. Parents had to decide by that date, which schools to list and what preferences to express.

The process for opening new Free Schools is very rapid with a series of key dates in the process. A consultation closing 26 January asked, *'Do you agree that The Heights Primary School should open in September 2014, which would involve The Heights Primary School Trust entering into a Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State for Education?'* This funding agreement should be formalised in March. 16 April is the 'National Offer Day' informing parents of places allocated.

The question foremost in everyone's mind is where the school will be located and at the time of writing, no decision has been announced. The Education Funding Agency (EFA), part of the Department for Education, is responsible for identifying and securing the school's premises. From a surprisingly long list, they are now focusing on a few shortlisted options for both permanent **and** temporary accommodation. Again surprisingly, it is not uncommon for there to be continuing uncertainty at this stage and many Free Schools have started with temporary accommodation not being in place until July/August.

On Tuesday 7 January, a consultation evening was held at Mapledurham Pavilion. The hall was packed, with people standing all round the hall and in the entrance lobby. Prospective parents were keen to know more about plans for opening and what kind of education would be available for their children. Local residents were particularly concerned about possible locations and there were many questions about potential use of Mapledurham Playing Fields. This land is held in Trust and, if it were to be selected as a site for the school, a lengthy process would follow which could not be bypassed by the EFA. Whichever site is selected by the EFA and confirmed by the Minister for Schools, an application will have to be made for planning permission.

Whatever the outcome, there is no doubt that Caversham urgently needs more school places and there is a projected shortfall of 50 Reception places for September 2014. One thing very much on our side is the highly committed team of parents who have worked incredibly hard to bring progress to this stage. For more information and any subsequent announcements see www.theheightsprimary.co.uk/

Sharing our Streets

On 12 November 2013, CADRA and the Caversham Traders Association held a joint meeting to consider if a 'Vision' for traffic measures in the centre of Caversham is needed. The meeting was open to everyone and over 100 people attended, including five local Councillors. A report of the evening featured in the last edition of Caversham Bridge and is available at www.cadra.org.uk. Following the meeting, 83 people took the time to set out their views on the problems facing Caversham Centre and potential solutions to those problems. Their views have been gathered together and a summary produced. This is available in full at www.cadra.org.uk but the main points are set out here.

Firstly, **everyone** who responded to the questionnaire would like improvements to the centre of Caversham.

The problems most commonly identified were:

1. Poor pedestrian facilities;
2. The street scene and how the roads are used;
3. Traffic levels through the centre;
4. Poor provision for cyclists and cycling on pavements
5. Heavy Goods Vehicles passing through.

Among the wider solutions set out, the dominant theme was for a more village like appearance with a better balance between motorists and pedestrians. This might include reduced or improved street furniture, raised tables, speed humps and shared areas. Many people would like to see control on speeding or aggressive driving as well as better cycle facilities.

Foremost among the common issues where local people could potentially achieve change are:

- Improved pedestrian crossing facilities;
- Improved street appearance and junction layout;
- 20mph speed limit possibly enforced by raised crossings or speed humps;
- Improved cycle facilities.

The on line questionnaire remains open at www.cadra.org.uk and both CADRA and the Caversham Traders Association are keen to hear your views as they embark on discussions with local Councillors and Council Officers.

