

Friday 7th July 2023

Dear parents / carers,

I trust you are all well and are looking forward to the summer break.

Allow me to introduce myself, my name is Phil Hannah and I am the Headteacher at The Whitley AP Academy in Calderdale. The AP Academy is a school commissioned by the Local Authority to provide places for some of the most vulnerable young people across the borough. Our school takes pupils from Year 3 to Year 11, and supports them to re-engage with their education, with the aim of returning the children to mainstream education.

We believe that the work we do to support young people who have been Permanently Excluded from mainstream education is a vital part of the school system in Calderdale, I am sure you will all agree that all children deserve a second chance, and that is what we provide.

In the past few months, we have been in discussion with colleagues from Calderdale Council about the number of places we offer at the AP Academy. Due to an increase in Permanent Exclusions across the borough, we have been asked to increase our capacity from eighty to ninety pupils from September 2023; specifically, we have been asked to increase numbers in Key Stage 3.

During regular communications with Paul Tinsley, the Interim Assistant Director for Education and Inclusion, it has become clear that the Local Authority would also prefer our primary aged children to be placed at a site more appropriate to the needs of the Key Stage 2 pupils in our care.

Based on this expansion of places, we have been exploring our options in terms of relocating our Key Stage 2 provision to another Academy in the Trust. Following visits to the other Impact academies in Calderdale, we determined that the former Nursery provision at Lee Mount would be the best setting for our children.

Lee Mount is the closest academy in the Trust to the main site at Whitley – being just a five-minute drive away. It is also no longer in use due to the Lee Mount Nursery children being moved into the main building, and it is the best site in terms of teaching space and outdoor environment.

Having visited the site it soon became clear that if not in use the building and the grounds around it would fall into disrepair and would quickly become an eyesore. There were also concerns that in the future it would cost a significant amount of money from the Lee Mount budget to remove the building and repurpose the grounds around the building.

We think that relocating our Key Stage 2 provision to an existing primary school will provide us with many opportunities to improve the offer we provide for our primary aged pupils. Some of the benefits include:

- The opportunity to work with mainstream colleagues to develop teaching and learning practice.
- Bespoke classrooms designed around the needs of the pupils; this is not the case currently.
- An outdoor space just for use by our pupils, this includes a garden which will be used to grow fruit and vegetables throughout the year.

- Being able to incorporate successful Whitley pupils into some mainstream lessons at Lee Mount, this will then hopefully support us in returning more pupils back into mainstream.
- Our Key Stage 2 pupils having their own site, away from the influence of secondary aged pupils.

The space we occupy will be classed as a satellite provision of the AP Academy, we will not formally be part of Lee Mount – we will simply be co-located on the same site, operating completely independently.

Our Key Stage 2 provision will continue to provide places for just sixteen pupils, all of the pupils will be aged between seven and eleven. The pupils will be in two teaching groups, lower Key Stage 2 (Years 3 & 4) will be called Ash and upper Key Stage 2 (Years 5 & 6) will be called Beech.

We are also introducing a new staffing model in the Primary provision from September; there will be three full time teachers on site – all of whom are very strong classroom practitioners, pastoral staff on site will include a Behaviour for Learning Lead, and four Behaviour for Learning Mentors. All members of the staff on the site are highly skilled and very experienced. Members of the Senior Leadership Team will also be on site throughout the school week, this includes the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and our two Phase Leaders. The ratio of staff to pupils will be 1:2, this is very high compared to other settings and ensures we can manage pupils well in the provision.

We believe there are several positive aspects regarding the relocation to Lee Mount:

- We will support Continuing Professional Development in Academies in the Trust; this will include delivering Team Teach training to staff to support effective behaviour management of more challenging pupils.
- We are developing a brand new Key Stage 2 curriculum, which will be focused on experiential learning and working with external partners; we are very happy to allow other primary Academies to access these learning opportunities and our resources.
- We are the lead Academy for Safeguarding within Impact; this means that we will continue to support all Trust Academies in developing best practice regarding keeping children safe at school.
- From September we will be offering 'Preventative' places to schools for pupils at risk of Permanent Exclusion, this was removed from our Service Level Agreement with the council last year, but we have had this reinstated. This means that when a school is struggling to manage a pupil, we can provide short term places for pupils to support them and their schools in developing more inclusive practice – this will certainly include other schools within the Trust.
- We are working towards developing partner schools across the Local Authority to support pupils returning to mainstream education, this will include Academies in the Trust.

The relocation of the AP Academy Key Stage 2 provision to Lee Mount represents a significant investment of capital funding in the Lee Mount site. We will be redeveloping the existing building and surrounding space to a high standard.

Over the summer we are going to be completing significant works to ensure the site is suited to our pupils and provides the best learning environment possible. The works being completed include:

- A complete redesign of the outdoor space to create two playgrounds for pupils, one at the front of the building and one at the rear;
- Preparation of a garden which will be used as our allotment / gardening project all year round,
- Creating a picnic area to be used at break and lunch times.
- Installing a new roof, fascia and guttering to the site to ensure it is in excellent condition.
- Redesigning the classroom spaces, including building an additional Interventions room – this will be used every day to provide even more support to pupils.
- A complete refit of the site's security to ensure that pupils are fully safeguarded; this includes new fencing, electronic locks on all main points of access and the installation of CCTV.
- A complete rebrand of the site to ensure that it is visually stimulating and promotes good attendance and behaviour for learning.

I hope that you will all agree that this is a move which will be very positive for our primary pupils, if you have any questions or concerns, please do contact the AP Academy and ask to speak to myself or my Deputy Headteacher – Rachel Adams.

Yours faithfully,



Phillip Hannah
Headteacher
The Whitley AP Academy



Emme Ford
Headteacher
Lee Mount Primary School



Lesley Heathcote
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