

Following an extended meeting on the morning of Thursday 18th July we can be clearer about the current situation regarding local primary school provision, following our earlier posts.

On the platform were key Enfield Council (LBE) officers and councilors including Assistant Director of Education Clara Seery and Cabinet Member for Children's Services Cllr Rick Jewell; representatives of Enfield Learning Trust, including Trust Chair John West and Bowes headteacher Effie Demetriou; and Peter Travis, headteacher of Broomfield School which was hosting the meeting. Also present was Bambos Charalambous MP. The audience was a large group of concerned parents.

Back in 2014 the first 'Southgate Green' class was set up on the Broomfield site with the stated intention of becoming a permanent school on a new site, identified as the Grovelands Park site. However in early 2015 the DfE made clear that any new school could only come through a free school application, which would need to include a strong justification of basic need, or by the local authority identifying a need, a site, and then in effect running a competition among potential providers to run the new school. LBE drew up some early site plans and talked with Historic England, who in a detailed letter of 29th October 2015 said that the public benefits of a school would not in their view outweigh the likely damage to the historic Georgian landscape of the park. LBE at this point passed the whole idea over to the DfE and gave up on any plans for a permanent site for Southgate Green. DfE say they are 'still in the very early stages' of looking at the Grovelands site.

Meanwhile Southgate Green certainly looked and felt like a school, with its own headteacher, school uniform, PTA, website etc. But in reality it was only a series of 'bulge' classes funded by LBE as part of Bowes Primary. Now in 2019 this has become a crisis. There are spare places at Garfield School, recently rebuilt as a larger 3 Form Entry (90 pupil) school, and so it is impossible for LBE to fund another 'bulge class' in the same area for 2020. This left the option for Bowes – Enfield Learning Trust – to decide for itself to offer a class as at present. They have decided not to. The lease on the classroom space at Broomfield will run for another 5 years but then Broomfield may well need all their space as their secondary numbers are growing rapidly, and all the primary children would have to be accommodated on the main Bowes site. Also if Bowes continued offering a class it would be taking a financial risk if in fact the class was undersubscribed.

LBE officers talked through the difficulties of predicting future pupil numbers while parents pressed them on current need, the number of young couples moving into the area, and future housing developments in the area such as Montmorency Park and the 150 family units on the Arnos Grove car parks. The officers agreed to conduct a thorough review of predicted numbers and share it with parents early in September as a new baseline for planning. Clara Seery offered that in her view Garfield could take up all the slack until 2022 but by 2025, if developments went ahead on time, it could not.

At the moment the Southgate Green provision will not appear as an option for parents in the next round of admissions this coming autumn. Southgate Green will slowly disappear. Young children from the 'black hole' covering much of the FLDR area will be expected to make their way to Garfield.