

18th May 2010

Dear Parents

School Development Plans and Invitation to Tender

Further to my letter of 26th February, I am writing to update you on where we are in relation to Senior School developments. On the evening of Wednesday 12th May, during the Annual Presentation to Parents, James McAlpine (Governor), Mrs Wallace (Business Manager), the Rector and I explained our thoughts on the next stages of our plans for the renovation of the Senior School and our hopes for an extension on land adjacent to the rear of the School at Milton Wood.

A Heads of Terms agreement with the Trustees of Duchal Estates is in place for the option to purchase land at Milton Wood. Any land purchase would be subject to detailed site investigations and the granting of planning consent by Inverclyde Council; ground investigations are due to commence this summer following the current period of consultation with the community.

If we are successful in building at Milton Wood, the Senior School would operate on both the existing site and on the Milton Wood site. Initial thoughts are to erect three buildings on the new site in addition to sporting facilities, including pitches, an athletics track and a pavilion. The first phase would include a new Science building and a car park for the use of staff and the local community. The Board believes that this is a wonderful opportunity for the facilities of the School to be developed in phases over the next 20 years or so.

The Board intends to appoint a firm of architects in the near future and would like to invite parents who are architects to submit a notification of interest by Friday 28th May, accompanied with a brief history of the company, with specific details of experience in educational buildings and campus work; the notifications should be sent to Mr James McAlpine at the Senior School. From these notes of interest, together with other notifications from a broad grouping of architects experienced in the education sector, a short list will be prepared for subsequent interview and financial consideration.

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I will write to you again next session to report on progress. If the results of the site investigations are favourable, outline designs should follow in the autumn of 2010 with a further period of consultation until the end of the year. To ensure that the local community is also fully briefed we have arranged a meeting with the neighbours of the Senior School and have already met with the Community Council and Civic Trust. Updates will also appear in The Advertiser and on the Development page of the school website.

In addition to the proposed extension, we are also undertaking the next stage of our Senior School refurbishment programme. During the summer the reception and office area will be renovated and a new telephone system installed. In addition the SI/SII girls' cloakroom area will also be completely renovated. Immediate plans for Junior School involve a permanent Nursery which will adjoin the Junior 6 classrooms. It will have its own entrance and will have sufficient space to accommodate 28 children. Building work will commence as soon as the necessary planning consents have been achieved with completion approximately 12 weeks thereafter. The Senior School refurbishments and new Nursery will cost approximately £500,000, representing a significant investment in improved facilities for our pupils and staff.

I am grateful to those who were able attend the Annual Presentation; it was useful and reassuring to hear your views. If you have any additional feedback please contact Nichola McKay at Senior School or email nmckay@st-columbas.org.

Yours sincerely

David R Ward
Chairman, Board of Directors

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