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Ask for Richard Hancock

Direct Line 0161 342 3354

Date 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear Parent

**Re: Additional classrooms at Hawthorns School**

We are writing to provide an update on plans to expand provision at Hawthorns.

Please be assured that the Council takes its responsibility for all its pupils as one of its highest priorities. We cannot tell you how disappointing it has been for all of us that we haven't managed to take this project to completion. Many of the delays have been due to factors beyond our control but despite these challenges, we are clear that this scheme should have progressed much more quickly. We are sorry for this delay. We would also like to apologise for any anxiety this has caused for parents and children at the school.

As you know Tameside Council has worked with the school, which is an academy, over a number of years to develop additional accommodation to support more pupils on a permanent basis. Plans had been developed to add additional classrooms across both Hawthorns and Aldwyn and work on this was progressing until the appointed contractor, Carillion, went into administration in January 2018. The resultant issues from the collapse of Carillion took up all the Council's project resources until 2019.

However, we have managed to deliver some temporary space within current accommodation at Hawthorns School and Aldwyn Primary School have taken delivery of demountable classrooms and were working with our new preferred suppliers to continue to design the scheme and get it up and running.

Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic inevitably slowed plans earlier in the year as contractors were initially unable to access the site due to the lockdown. Furthermore it was unclear when the lockdown would be lifted and what delays and additional costs may be incurred. These were factors that were beyond the Council's control. We are sure you will understand that with limited budgets, this was a very large risk for the project and so a decision had to be made to pause the work on the permanent accommodation whilst the lockdown continued.

With such a focus on the project, it became abundantly clear that the scheme for Hawthorns was no longer fit for purpose. The number of parents wanting their children to attend Hawthorns has increased significantly and this is evidenced by the number of children currently accessing the school. When plans were first drawn up, there were 72 children in the school in January 2015 as

compared with 113 in January 2020. The school is an outstanding school and remains incredibly popular. One additional classroom in 2015 would have been sufficient but that is not the case now.

We know however, that the educational needs of our children are paramount and so plans were quickly made with the school to design a temporary solution for September. This has led to a significant development which is that we have been able to double the allocated budget to Hawthorns School to provide temporary accommodation. The Council and Hawthorns have agreed £300,000 to support the delivery of four temporary classrooms for 2020/21. This will provide far more accommodation than the original plan for Hawthorns and will enable the school to meet the needs of all the current pupils at Hawthorns and additional pupils in September.

This pause in the commissioning cycle has given the school and ourselves the time to reflect on and review the old plan but also think about the future of Hawthorns and specialist provision in the borough. Now we are reassured that temporary accommodation is there to provide for our current children, a decision has been made to drop the one classroom extension project in favour of coming up with a new project plan. We know we need to work quickly to make this happen and the school and ourselves are fully involved in thinking about what Hawthorns needs in order to meet the needs of our children as we know them to be today.

Over the summer we will be working with the Newbridge Academy Trust to further develop our plans for the next phase of the expansion of Hawthorns School. We would like to assure families that the funding required to complete these works remains available. We want to be able to involve parents and other stakeholders in planning this new project therefore we will organise an open meeting for parents to discuss these plans in September. We will ensure families receive at least two weeks' notice of this meeting. Directors from the Council and Elected Members will attend the discussion.

We will personally ensure that progress towards the new project happens quickly. We hope we have reassured you that the Council takes its responsibility towards all pupils and especially those at our special schools as one of its highest priorities and we will make progress as quickly as we are able.

Yours sincerely,

**Richard Hancock**  
**Director of Children's Services**

**Jayne Traverse**  
**Director of Growth**