

Dear Parent,



Welcome to the December issue of the Best for the West Newsletter. Since our last newsletter the formal consultation period on the closure of Hookergate School led to the decision by the Council's Cabinet to close Hookergate from end August 2011. This means that existing students will transfer to Ryton Comprehensive School on a phased basis between 1st September 2011 and 1st September 2012.

In light of this decision we thought we might try and answer questions you may have with regard to the Best for the West project.

How will Ryton cope with extra students?

Hookergate site will remain open for a further academic year (2011-12) to provide education for Years 8, 9 and 11 only. The site would be managed as part of Ryton School which will then have a new identity (name, uniform etc). From September 2011 there will be a need to increase the capacity of the Ryton site to accommodate the increased numbers of Year 7 students and the transfer of the Year 10 students from Hookergate. A considerable amount of work has been taking place regarding the potential accommodation issues on the Ryton site and discussions have focussed on the following key areas:

- New build to provide additional teaching spaces, more toilets and specialist teaching spaces.
- Extending the dining area to provide sufficient space for students to dine on site.
- Changes to the existing building to improve circulation around site.
- New receptions for students and visitors and additional perimeter fencing to improve security on the site.
- Enhanced outside social spaces for all students.

What if I have chosen Hookergate School as a first preference for my child for September 2011?

Closing date for returning admission applications was 31st October 2010. Parents who have chosen Hookergate School as their first choice will be contacted to discuss a change of preference to Ryton School. Admission may also be requested at other secondary schools which have places available.

All parents can seek advice and guidance about the application process from school admission staff in School Organisation on **0191 433 2756/2109** or from the School Choice Adviser Mrs Sandra Arkless on **0191 433 2446**. You can also contact Ryton Comprehensive School on **0191 413 2113** to arrange a visit or get a school prospectus at www.rytoncs.co.uk

Is Ryton changing its uniform?

The Governing Body at Ryton remain committed to developing a new identity for Ryton Comprehensive School. The school is consulting with parents from both communities on a new name and new uniform through initial parent focus groups. Everyone will get a questionnaire - including those children in the linked primary schools. The questionnaire will also be available on the Ryton/Hookergate websites seeking your views and the new identity will be decided by March 2011.

What are you doing to integrate the two schools?

In addition to the work of the Joint Governors Group, a considerable amount of work is being carried out by both schools to integrate the students and the wider community. Detailed below is a list of activities that have taken place to date: -

- All Year 10 students from both schools attended a Japanese music event in Ryton.
- All Year 9 students from both schools attended a Citizenship Day and attended workshops including; Your Justice - Your Word, Animals and the Law, Alcohol and the Law, I'm a Councillor - Get me out of here! Restorative Justice, Work of an MP
- Hookergate parents were invited to the Friends of Ryton Comprehensive School (FoRCS) meeting and those who attended were made to feel very welcome. For more details about FoRCS see their website at <http://www.rytoncs.co.uk> and click on 'Community'.
- Boys from Hookergate attended a Taiko drumming workshop organised by Ryton music department.
- School councils from some primary schools currently linked to Hookergate have attended a Ryton school council meeting.
- There has been joint working between the Headteachers, Senior Leadership Teams and teachers from both schools to discuss individual students and their needs, review of form classes, curriculum etc.
- Subject departments have been meeting regularly to ensure that courses and the curriculum are compatible.
- Year 7 Hookergate students attended Ryton to meet the Author, GP Taylor.
- Key Stage 4 students from both schools are currently studying Construction and Hairdressing together at Ryton School and Gateshead College.
- Senior teachers at Ryton have talked to Years 9 and 11 Hookergate students in assemblies.
- The 'options' processes for Years 9 and 11 have been fully integrated so that all the students in these year groups can start next year on an equal basis.

How will my child get to the Ryton site?

We have commenced a review of the transport arrangements from all areas of the Ryton and Hookergate School catchment. Meetings are underway with Nexus, the transport provider, and they have been advised of the potential numbers and locations of the students transferring to Ryton and the requirements for transport. We will be meeting again early in the New Year to discuss and agree changes to the timetables to ensure all students can travel to and from the Ryton site.



What happens next?

- The closing date for returning admission applications was 31st October 2010. Parents who have chosen Hookergate School as their first choice will be contacted to discuss transfer to Ryton School. Admission may also be requested at other secondary schools which have places available.
- Further meeting to be held with Nexus to discuss new routes and timetables for transport to and from Hookergate catchment area to Ryton Comprehensive School.
- Sketches and plans of the development of the Ryton site to be made available to all parents via the Council's website.
- Deputy Headteachers from both schools will be jointly attending cluster meetings at all feeder schools.

Stay informed

You have told us you want to be kept informed. These newsletters will go out to every pupil in Hookergate and Ryton schools and also every pupil in the primary schools linked to both Ryton and Hookergate.

- Read this newsletter
- pass it to others
- check out the Council's website for latest news
- let us know what you think
- any questions?

Contact: Sandra Punton on 0191 433 3384
www.gateshead.gov.uk/bestforthewest