

BRISTOL FREE SCHOOL PERMANENT SITE ANNOUNCED

7TH October 2011

The Bristol Free School Trust has today confirmed the permanent site for Bristol Free School will be at Burghill Road and not the former St Ursula's school site.

DTZ, an independent planning consultancy commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the viability of both sites, has now reported its findings and conclusions back to the DfE. The report is understood to identify "considerable planning risks" with the former St Ursula's site. This follows a meeting with Bristol City Council's Planning Department last week that identified a number of planning constraints that could limit the extent of any new build development on the site. Highway issues associated with the St Ursula's site were described as "potentially an insurmountable barrier to achieving planning permission" in the report. On this basis the DfE has decided only to pursue Burghill Road as the permanent site for Bristol Free School.

The Burghill Road site, where we opened in September, will now be fully developed in order that the school has capacity for 750 students. We also plan to apply to open a Sixth Form facility here.

We recognise this news will come as a disappointment to many parents who have campaigned for Bristol Free School to be permanently at St Ursula's. The community have always favoured the St Ursula's site and this was identified as a clear preference in our consultation exercise. However, we respect the decision of the DfE which has been made on independent, expert advice following the meeting with Bristol's planners. We also acknowledge that a decision has been taken, as we requested, before the end of the current admissions round which will enable parents and carers to take informed decisions when considering Bristol Free School.

We wish to reiterate our guarantee of 120 from 150 Year 7 places every year to families in our Neighbourhood Partnership Area of Henleaze, Stoke Bishop and Westbury-on-Trym. The Burghill Road site, which is only a few hundred yards outside of BS9, is within walking distance for many. We already know this site is fit for purpose. Most importantly, we have opened a school that is already establishing an excellent reputation due to its high standards evidenced by the strong local interest at our recent open days. It is the secondary school that our local children have deserved for so long.

BFST is bound by its published Admissions Policy so this will remain unaltered for 2012 admissions, with 80% of places being allocated by distance to St Ursula's School. We then plan to consult on a new Admissions Policy for 2013 onwards, that will replace St Ursula's with a new central point within the Neighbourhood Partnership Area, with the remaining 20% of places allocated by distance from the Burghill Road site.

Should you have any questions regarding this, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Clutterbuck

Head teacher

Blair King

Chair of Governors