

The Pupil Support Assistants at Quarryhill have concerns regarding the proposed amalgamation with Bramble Brae.

- Present practices allow us when supporting our classes to be able to take a pupil out of the classroom when their behaviour becomes disruptive to the learning process. For this to be effective we need to retain the available space within the school to take a pupil, allow them the time and space to calm down, rethink their behaviour and enable them to re-join the class. This minimises the disruption it may have on the class and aids the efforts of the PSA's in getting it right for every child with the least impact to everyone within the school. It also allows the opportunity to focus attention on those pupils who may have quite complex needs, both educationally and/or socially. This facility may not be available if the amalgamation goes ahead as all current free space may be consumed for other requirements.
- PSA's supervise and support small groups of pupils in various tasks outwith the classroom, for example reading, project work, research. This less formal environment can encourage a greater level of input from pupils, enhancing their confidence and independent thinking. It also allows opportunities to develop and build upon relationships between pupils and the PSA in a learning environment. To lose this may diminish the learning experience for our pupils. Again this facility may not be available as all free space may be consumed by other requirements.
- At present we have a number of children on regular prescribed medication. The time allocated to supervising this is 15 minutes before lunch. Sometimes the children can be problematic behaviour wise, and /or un-cooperative which can give rise to difficulties in the dining room and playground. If more children are added to this list then further problems could easily occur.
- Within the school we have one hall. This is a multi-purpose room serving as dining room, gym hall and whole school assembly hall. We have 2 sittings at lunchtime. The P4-P7 pupils have lunch first. The time allowed for their lunch to be served, eaten and cleared away is 15 minutes. The infant pupils are served as quickly as is possible but in total are expected to take no longer than 20 minutes. There is no time available for children to enjoy the social aspect of eating, perhaps a chat to neighbours or sometimes to even learn to use cutlery and cut their own food. This is due mainly to kitchen staff having a very tight schedule for the cleaning and preparation of the hall in readiness for the afternoon gym sessions /activities. Alongside the daily supervision of all pupils in the dining room PSAs are frequently called upon to "keep an extra special eye on" children whose parent/teacher are concerned about their eating habit/behaviour. They are also on hand to change any child who has spilled yogurt etc or had a more personal accident. A greater school roll would, in our opinion, only exacerbate the above problems and would certainly not make for a pleasant lunchtime for anyone, be it pupil or staff.

- Another concern is the lack of space inside school that would be available for medical needs at a lunchtime. Head bumps, skinned knees etc are at present treated in our medical room, as are the fixing of minor playground squabbles and misdemeanours. This small room is already multi-purpose and often has to be vacated before the end of the lunch-break to allow access to music tutors and visiting specialists. Again we feel more children, presumably more minor accidents and less room to accommodate them.
- Quarryhill pupils and staff have whole school assemblies in the school hall every Friday afternoon. This is a very important part of the school week. We use the assembly to celebrate our children's successes, to award individual and team certificates and to take part in our recently introduced community singing with our voice coach and choir. Our assembly is greatly enjoyed by everyone and helps to create and encourage a very positive ethos within the school. Our concern is that the hall would not be deemed large enough and in turn safe enough to accommodate all children and staff at once.

In conclusion, we do not see the proposal to amalgamate the two schools as a positive step forward in getting it right for every child, be they at Bramble Brae or Quarryhill.

On behalf of all PSAs in Quarryhill.