



SOUTH WEST ESSEX COMMUNITY EDUCATION TRUST

Dear parent / carer

I am writing to provide some important updates regarding Orsett Heath Academy (OHA) ahead of the start to the new school year.

We are delighted to confirm that the new building, providing 7 classrooms, including an additional Science Lab and a Food Technology classroom, is fully commissioned and ready for use on Monday. This significantly increases our capacity to deliver new subjects as well as enhance our current provision.

The Alternative Grass Pitch (AGP) is also ready for use and provides an unrivalled facility built to exacting World Rugby and FIFA standards, suitable for international rugby or football. No other secondary school in Essex has a facility of this kind.

Most importantly, OHA is fully staffed for the academic year with a dedicated team of exceptional teachers and support staff - the most important element of any school.

The school is planning opportunities for parents to visit the school in the coming weeks to see how the new facilities have further enhanced the site. Details will follow in due course.

In relation to the main OHA site, the main contractor McAvoy are due to commence works imminently after finally agreeing contractual terms with the Department for Education (DfE). This has been an extremely frustrating period as this process is not in the Trust's control, but once underway, progress will be rapid. It has become clear in meetings over the summer, that providing even partial handover of the new school building for September 2023 (to accommodate pupils moving into year 10) will be challenging and to do so would delay the handover of the whole site further.

Given the above, and in line with assurances given at the last parents' meeting, the Trust have written to the DfE and Local Authority to inform them that OHA will not be accepting an intake for September 2023.

Our priority is to ensure exceptional provision for our current pupils in year 7, 8 and 9 and the decision to have a 'gap year' allows the school to plan with certainty. It also means that we can move all pupils and staff into the main school site, together during the 23/24 academic year.

We are of course aware that this decision may impact those families with siblings going into Year 6 this year. Please contact the school office if your family is in this position so that we can develop a clear picture in this regard.

Returning to the current school site at Thurrock Rugby Club, further funding from the DfE and Trust has been secured to ensure continued investment in resourcing and facility enhancement. This further investment will be targeted in relation to Key Stage 4 (KS4) option subjects and will secure a full KS4 offer and help ensure a seamless transition into the main school site when the time comes.

We will hold a further Parents' Information Evening later in the term to outline details of the curriculum and resource enhancement (including regular use of William Edwards sports hall), and outline the build programme and timetable for the main site. An invitation for this meeting will be with you shortly.

Finally, can I thank you for your continued support of OHA and wish you an excellent start to the new school year.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Munday
Chief Executive Officer