

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST JUNIOR AND SENIOR BOYS NATIONAL SCHOOLS

BUILDING BULLETIN

7th February 2011

This is the first in a series of updates which we will be giving parents. Let's start with the great news that on Friday the Department of Education authorised the schools to issue the letter of acceptance to Midland Construction Limited – we have a contract!

Midland is mobilising and engaging its subcontractors. The architect has served the commencement notice on Dublin City Council. We hope that work will start on site during the forthcoming mid term break.

A Building Site

Having a building site right beside two schools generates lots of challenges. We considered moving somewhere else but that was not feasible. Our energies in recent months have been devoted to achieving the best outcome while staying in Seafield Road. Safety will be particularly important. The main person in charge of the project in Midland is also their safety officer for the project.

No matter how many mitigation measures are taken, we will need the tremendous community spirit for which Belgrove is renowned to make this work. Doubtless there will be noise, vibrations, dust, distractions, traffic diversions, furniture moves, class relocations, changes to assembly and dismissal arrangements and general inconvenience, although hopefully not all at the same time! There will be difficulties but we will try our best to overcome these with good humour, a positive attitude and a co-operative spirit.

Phase 1 of the Project

The project will take place in three phases. The focus of this newsletter is on the first phase, which includes:

- The demolition of the prefab buildings which are on the left when one comes in through the Junior School entrance off Vernon Court;
- The demolition of the small permanent building located to the right of the front door to the Senior School. This houses a resource area and some toilets for the Junior School;
- Ground works in part of the Senior School yard near the astro, which will reduce the size of the yard for the duration of the project;
- Relocating prefab Rooms 11 and 12 from the Junior School yard to the Senior School yard; and
- Constructing a two storey ten classroom block at the corner of Seafield Road and Vernon Court.

Timeframe for Phase 1

Midland is entitled under the Department of Finance drafted contract to decide how to achieve the contractual completion date of August 2012. We are happy to report that we have found Midland to be alert to the practical requirements of operating a school beside a building site and that it is well aware of the key dates for mid terms and school holidays. The ideal start date would be at the end of June but, having obtained Department funding, we have to press ahead now.

We will be meeting Midland regularly and we have been getting a good hearing thus far. This type of interaction is essential to minimise disruption to parents, teachers and pupils but the process does take time and also means that we do not have certainty at this stage on many details. That's a good thing as the alternative is having to cope with whatever suits the builder.

Midland envisages finishing the first phase in October 2011. Say a prayer for fine weather and perhaps the work might proceed quickly enough for a late August finish! Phase 2 includes major work to the Senior School and Phase 3 will see the refurbishment of the current Junior School permanent building.

Impact on Junior School

As well as these changes, during Phase 1 the current plan is that:

- The Vernon Court entrance to the Junior School will remain closed;
- Junior and Senior Infants will assemble and be dismissed from the Hall;
- 1st and 2nd Classes will assemble and be dismissed from the Senior yard (through Vernon Court);
- Resource will continue to take place on the campus but in another location. We are discussing the options with Midland;
- Rooms 11 and 12 will be in the Hall while their prefabs are being relocated (which will take c 2 weeks); and
- The Junior yard will be closed. The boys will get yard time through use of the Senior yard. Astro usage is a possibility.

Impact on the Senior School

We envisage further changes during Phase 1, namely:

- The entrance from Vernon Court leading to the front door of the Senior School will remain closed. Midland's site office will be there; and
- The Hall will be closed to general use while Rooms 11 and 12 are there.

Traffic management

Midland and Dublin City Council are discussing the impact of construction traffic. Deliveries might be directly from Seafield Road into the Junior School yard. We believe this would reduce disruption for all (neighbours as well as the school community). Dublin City Council will decide on this shortly. This is an example of how project details will evolve over time, with many elements to be considered.

Please make a special effort to walk to school and to leave Seafield Road West and Vernon Court free of school traffic if you can. Some parents have suggested car pooling so that the driver could drop off passengers on Vernon Avenue or Castle Avenue and another adult could walk the children the rest of the way.

Parental Support

Your support will be vital and here are a few examples:

- Please discuss the project and the need for safety during construction with your son. The more he understands, the better.
- We will need help moving furniture and classroom equipment.
- Some parents with relevant skills have come forward.
- If you live nearby and could allow a teacher to park in your driveway during the project, that would be much appreciated.

New Schools

So what's all the fuss about? For many years the schools have been campaigning to get modern facilities. The existing structures were built more than 50 years ago, are too small and becoming dilapidated. We still have more than 200 boys in prefab classrooms. We have asked the Architect for a set of plans of the new schools so that we can display these for you. We have enquired about a soft copy of the plans for the websites.

When this project is finished we will have 21st Century accommodation including 24 full size permanent classrooms which will be equipped with interactive whiteboards (largely paid for by the parents) and a bright learning environment suitable for our boys, as well as off street parking for teachers. Finally we will have buildings which match the aspirations of the school community.

As we start on this great adventure, we remember the hard work done by many over the years to bring us to this happy day. We would like to mention previous Chairs Mgr Devine RIP and Ken Moriarty in particular.

Kevin Hoy Tim O'Mahony Frankie Byrne John O'Sullivan