



22nd June 2018

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am sure you will now be aware of the plans to refurbish the infant and senior toilets over the coming months. This refresh was noted in the most recent school newsletter and I am aware that the nature of that refresh, which will allow gender neutral provision, has caused some debate and raised some questions. I hope that I can respond to some of those questions in this letter.

Our toilets are in need of refurbishment and I am delighted that the Council has provided funding to begin that process. The toilets being refreshed are typically used by P6/7 and P1/2. The toilet provision across primaries 3, 4 and 5 will remain gender specific as they are not being refreshed at this time. The contractor is confident that one toilet provision, most likely the P1/2 toilets, will be complete by the time school returns in August and they will work to complete the P6/7 toilets by the end of September. It has been indicated to me that there may be an opportunity for the P3, 4 and 5 toilets to be refreshed next summer, resulting in us having gender neutral toilets throughout the building. I must stress that this has not been confirmed yet; a decision will be made in the next financial year.

The brief for the toilets was that, in common with Eastwood and Barrhead High schools and Calderwood Lodge/St Clare's Primary schools, toilets should not have main doors. Urinals and troughs will be removed. New individual cubicles, including cubicle doors, will be ceiling to floor to deliver privacy and soundproofing. Each cubicle will be independently lit and ventilated. The benefits of such a provision are that it significantly reduces the likelihood of inappropriate behaviour in school toilets, increases levels of privacy and creates safer spaces for children and young people to use. These benefits have been demonstrated in the schools mentioned above.

The only difference from the schools listed above is that there will be no gender specific signage, which allows us to advance the Scottish Government's equality agenda. This has been agreed at Director and Department level based on government good practice guidance. Indeed, many schools in Scotland have introduced gender neutral toilets. I am confident that all young people will feel comfortable and safe using these facilities. I offer you my reassurance that we will reinforce with pupils the need to respect the new facilities and the importance of cleanliness and good behaviour. We will make every effort to monitor the use of the new facilities and assess their impact on pupils' experiences. I am confident that we will be able to do this more easily given the design of the new toilets.

I recognise the pace at which these changes have been communicated. Our colleagues in the Environment Department have worked under pressure since budget was agreed to deliver a design plan and place tenders which have only very recently been agreed. As soon as tenders confirmed that the proposals were affordable, plans were shared with me and I shared them with the Parent Council and wider parent community at the earliest opportunity. I am sorry that in this case it has not been possible to engage more widely with parents and children; it would be our normal practice

to ensure we bring the school community with us with such changes and I regret we have not done so in this case, given the tight timescales.

In spite of the tight timescales I have been in conversation with pupils regarding these changes, using the Pupil Council as a way of gathering the views of the wider pupil forum. Pupils have expressed to me that they welcome these changes with a few reservations. They view the upgrade as a very welcome one, given the state of the current toilet provision. However, they have expressed concerns that they are not used to gender neutral facilities and have suggested that it will take a little time to get used to them. Pupils were very positive about the new provision leading to improved behaviour in the toilets and about the cubicles affording them complete privacy – something that they expressed they don't always experience in the current toilets.

I recognise that there are some families who have reservations. I ask for patience as we navigate our way through these changes. If there are any specific issues that you would like to discuss, please contact me directly and I will do everything I can to provide clarity and allay your concerns. We are determined to continue to listen so that we can progress in a positive manner. At the beginning of the new session, when the work has been completed in the P1 toilets, I will share photographs to let you see the changes. If you want to pop into school on the in service days to take a look first-hand, please be in touch.

I'm sure you will welcome the news that, in addition to the toilet refurbishments, there will be other upgrades to the fabric of the school building over the summer. Sixty three panels of windows will be installed, our nursery and our primary two classrooms will be painted, the Nature Lab/outdoor classroom will be resurfaced and all classroom and reception lighting will be upgraded to LED. I am confident that you will notice an improvement to the school building as a consequence of this work.

Thank you for your continued support of the school. I would like to wish you all a very restful and enjoyable summer break.

Best regards,

Bryan McLachlan
Head Teacher