

The Cavendish School Newsletter

December 2018

The Cavendish School will be a special free school dedicated to young people with autism spectrum condition (ASC) built on the site at Impington Village College (IVC). The school will serve families across Cambridgeshire, offering places for children with an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in Years 3 to 13.

Dear supporters of TCS

It has been two years since we first submitted our plans for TCS to the Department of Education. We learnt of our success and approval to open the school in April 2017; unfortunately with a number of issues at governmental level and changes to the project team at the DfE and other related agencies, it has been a frustrating delay to our original timescale. The delays were such that we met with Lucy Frazer, MP, to voice our concerns about the workings of the DfE. Whether our direct approach worked or not, but shortly after this, we have had a number of on-site meetings and the new DfE project team is cautiously optimistic that we can design, submit plans, build and open the school for September 2020. That indeed would be an excellent outcome.

TCS came about because I read an article in the Cambridge News that indeed IVC had contributed to at the end of 2015. The article by Jon Vale (who has subsequently forged a distinguished career as a journalist writing for The Independent) was entitled 'A very modern scandal' and exposed the poor provision for and treatment of children with autism in Cambridgeshire. It inspired me to find a solution and TCS was born as an idea.

Sadly, children with autism are still finding life in our schools a challenge. Ambitious About Autism, a charity dedicated to promoting positively those with autism, conducted a survey and found that there had been a 59% increase in exclusions for those with autism since 2011. The full details of their work can be accessed here: <https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/understanding-autism/exclusions-of-pupils-with-autism-rocket-in-england-new-data-shows>

This clearly underlines the need for provision such as TCS. Once built and opened, it will be a school that is following a small number of pioneering establishments who provide specifically for children with autism. This year I have visited three such schools: The Rise School in Hounslow, Limpsfield Grange in Surrey and The Wherry School in Norwich, each demonstrating wonderfully what can be achieved with the right resource, provision and expertise. They have been inspirational visits and I can't wait to get TCS ready and open!

Kind regards
Robert Campbell
CEO, Morris Education Trust

Latest News

Outline Timeline

We continue to work with the Department for the Environment (DfE) on the plans for our new school. Progress has been fairly slow over the last few months due to personnel changes at the DfE and their contractors. However, we now have a new DfE project manager and following a round of site visits the project is again picking up momentum.

The DfE will shortly put our project out to tender with the intention of selecting a contractor in the New Year for the design and build of the school. We will work closely with this contractor to ensure that we have the best possible school for our prospective students. The project will apply for planning permission in Spring 2019, with the aim of starting construction in Summer 2019, with the school opening date of September 2020.

Our CEO, Robert Campbell, attended a recent Histon & Impington Parish Council meeting to speak to the Councillors about our plans for the new school and to answer their questions. Robert has also met with members of the HI Neighbourhood Plan Team to ensure that TCS is included in their plans and designations for the area.

The DfE procurement process for the purchase of the IT equipment for the new school is gathering speed and the Trust's Director of IT is working closely with the DfE to ensure that we receive the best allocation of resources.

Discussion Forum

We were delighted with the response to our Discussion Forum in October looking at 'Educational environments for children and young people with autism', which over 80 delegates attended. The event brought together researchers, professionals and the local community for a successful and inspirational afternoon of sharing ideas, investigating the latest research and sharing our plans for TCS. Some of the presentations and summaries of them all are on our website under 'Events' along with a summary of the Q&A sessions. We plan to hold more events so please sign up to our mailing list to find out more at <http://www.thecavendishschool.org.uk>.

Friends of TCS (FoTCS)

We are very fortunate that Julie Bailey, our designate Chairman of the TCS Local Governing Body, is working closely with the local community to form a Friends of TCS group with a focus on fundraising for the extras at the school. At this stage, prior to opening, the Friends group will comprise of individuals without a direct connection to the school but committed to providing the best possible education for the community. Once the school opens families and staff will be invited to join.

We are delighted that the FoTCS has been chosen as one of the recipients of the fundraising from the Histon and Impington local Open Gardens event on 9 June 2019. The first project that the group is looking to fund is a Family and Visitor Garden near the front of the new school.

If you would like more information about the group, would like to get involved or can suggest a source of fundraising please contact Amanda Hartwright ahartwright@tmet.org.uk.