

Statement from the Diocese of Guildford

05/07/2020 Use of the buildings at the former Ripley CE Primary School Site

The Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) have carefully considered and reviewed all the developments regarding the use of the buildings at the former Ripley CE Primary School site.

As part of this review, the DBE considered a number of factors including:

- The safety and risks to children and staff who would use the buildings, as well as the suitability and condition of the buildings including statutory checks, safety certificates and safeguarding
- The Department of Education (DFE) guidance for all schools in England including the most recent guidance issued on Thursday 3rd July
- The alternative offer of accommodation which were made available by Esher High CE Secondary School
- The requests from The Raleigh School and the South Farnham Education Trust (SFET)
- Correspondence from parents, children and residents in Ripley
- The legal advice given to the DBE and the responses from the Charity Commission
- The purpose and objects of the Trust for which the land was given
- Communications from the site trustees and their managing agents

Having considered all of these factors very carefully, the DBE has now come to final decision.

“The DBE recognises that the impact of the pandemic and lockdown period on the mental health of all children across the diocese including the Year 5 children at The Raleigh School and the 22,000 children who attend Church schools in Surrey, Hampshire and Kingston.

It acknowledges that the offer of the buildings at the Ripley site to The Raleigh School and the SFET was well intentioned and made in good faith by the site trustees and its agents.

Having carefully considered all the different factors outlined above including the safety inspection provided by the agents and the DFE guidance for all schools in England, the DBE believes that the temporary use of the buildings would not be responsible given that it would contravene the government’s continued guidelines which state:

*“Primary schools should only welcome back additional children where they **do not** require*

*additional funding, staff **or classrooms** to do so. If schools have access to space on other school sites (for example, local secondary schools, if that is feasible alongside the secondary offer) they may use this, taking care to ensure children stay in allocated groups. However, other community buildings (such as village halls) should not be used to expand capacity this term, while they remain closed in line with the government's roadmap" (Guidance issued 1st June)*

*"We do not consider it necessary for schools to make significant adaptations to their site to enable them to welcome all children back to school. **We also do not think schools will need to deliver any of their education on other sites** because class sizes can return to normal and spaces used by more than one class or group can be cleaned between use" (Guidance issued 2nd July)*

For this reason, the DBE does not agree or consent to the temporary use of the buildings and has written to the Department of Education and the Charity Commission to confirm this.

The DBE shares in the disappointment that the children and parents will feel as a result of this decision and regrets that the children, staff and parents have been drawn into a situation not of their making.

The offer of the four classrooms and facilities at Esher High Church of England Secondary remains if The Raleigh School wishes to take up this opportunity to allow the year 5 children to return to school before the end of term.