

700 new places as Birmingham free school grows

Sikh community-backed centre is one of the most over-subscribed primary schools in the city

price which connects the school to the parental pay



An artist's impression of the new Nishkam Secondary School planned for Great King Street North, in Newtown

Birmingham's first free school is set to expand with a new secondary school campus for up to 700 pupils.

The Sikh community-backed Nishkam School Trust opened the school in a row of converted terraced houses in Soho Road, Handsworth, in 2011.

It has since become one of the most over-subscribed primary schools in the city and was followed last September with the opening of a small scale secondary school at a disused factory site in Newtown.

Now the Trust has won planning permission for a new three-storey school building on the Great King Street North site with sports and community halls and a focus on adult education.

Although backed by the Sikh-run trust and teaching with a Sikh ethos, the school is open to pupils of all faiths and backgrounds. It has been hailed as a flagship for the free school movement.

Principal Ranjit Singh Dhanda said: "It is amazing, we are bowled over at the support we have received. "This has been a long time in development, since 2006, and we are another step nearer."

Building work is expected to take at least 16 months, opening by September 2014.

He added that, through a combination of community fundraising and voluntary work from local traders, the school would be able to design and construct a better quality building than might otherwise be the case.

“We want to have something which will help lift the children and lift the local area,” he added.

Planning committee members were full of praise for the school building plan.

Coun Mohammed Azim (Lab, Bordesley Green) said: “I welcome this project. It means there will be less pressure on local school places.”

Coun Peter Douglas Osborn (Cons, Weoley) added: “This school seems to be going from strength to strength.

“The primary school has been very successful and I am sure this will also be.”

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