

One View on Transferring to The Heights

A few months ago, we asked one mum her views about transferring her child to year one at the Heights and this is what she said:

Why I am thinking about transferring my child to the Heights

As a parent living in Caversham Heights, the lack of school places in the area is a major concern to me. I have two children, my oldest is four and the youngest is two. My four year old started school in September, she is in Reception at our 4th choice of school. Whilst we were happy with the school that our daughter was allocated to, we aren't happy with travelling in the car 3 miles to get there each morning. Plus we pass 3 primary schools on our way (our first 3 choices). We are in catchment for Caversham Primary but we live one mile away and I believe only those who lived within 0.5 miles of the school got in.

It is clear there is a shortage of schools in Caversham Heights and I do think it is ridiculous that the council didn't anticipate this and that they hadn't thought of a solution before now. A new school in Caversham Heights is vital and a no brainer to me. Children should be able to walk to their local school and if anything this is to also reduce the number of cars travelling through Caversham and parking dangerously by existing schools.

I think I am 90% sure I am transferring my four year old to The Heights. Firstly, we are out of catchment for the school where my daughter is currently so I am not sure if my youngest will get in for the 2015 intake. We got in on a bulge year and rumour has it that there will be no more bulge classes. I am also not completely happy with my daughter's school after her first year there in Reception as they have just had an Ofsted inspection which highlighted that the school "requires improvement". Whilst other parents are fully supportive of the school and its improvement plan, I feel I have another opportunity in The Heights. My child will be in a smaller class size at The Heights which is so important. She will go from one of a 90 intake to one of 25. I would also love for both my children to walk to their local school. I believe this calms them and you can enjoy extra family time which is not overlooked by negotiating Caversham's rush hour or subsequent parking issues.

I have faith in The Heights. I am fortunate to know personally a couple of the members of the Trust (the group who are spearheading the project). I respect these people greatly and I believe that they are doing their very best to open a fantastic school for our area. I am encouraged that The Heights teams are working closely

with Caversham Primary as this is an outstanding school. I really liked Caversham Primary when I visited it and I know many families who send their children there who are very happy. The fact that they have support from such a great school speaks volumes to me. I know that the head teacher interviews took place last week and I'm excited about learning more about the new head. Once I know more about the head teacher and the team they recruit to support them I will make my decision.

It still must be said that I do of course still have concerns about sending my children to an unknown school, with an unknown location and no teachers as yet! It's natural to be concerned about these major issues. I am in a lucky position that my child is already in a school in Caversham, and we can keep her there, we don't have to transfer her but I would like to. I believe The Heights will find a location. It's looking like a temporary location to start but when you take on a huge task like this, it takes time. I have spoken with parents of All Saints School which was one of the first free schools to be set up, they said that they started at the back of a church hall and it has recently been achieved 'Outstanding' status by Ofsted.

I do feel that parents of children for the 2014 intake are very lucky that they have a new choice in The Heights. Parents in Caversham heights are now guaranteed a school in their catchment. Last year, this was not the case so my child went to a school without any of her friends. When it comes to school places, I don't think anyone actually has a choice about which school their child goes to as the council decides based on the admissions criteria and it doesn't allow parents to choose really, unless they buy a house right next to the school. The Heights team are doing their best to give parents all the information they have but I believe they have no say on the location, they are waiting on the council.

It is a big decision to send your child to The Heights but they have already appointed the head teacher so everything is going in the right direction. The Heights has to work, existing primary schools cannot continue to take bulge classes. As a community we have to get behind and support The Heights. This started off as a group of very concerned parents trying to find a solution to getting their child into a good local school and look how it has grown, getting ready to open its doors in September 2014.