

# Test Valley Pool 05/2021

Dear Colleagues, Parents, Carers and pupils,

I wanted to thank all of you for your support of Test Valley School over the last year. The school really has made significant strides forwards in the past twelve months, this despite the restrictions of COVID. We have a clear vision of Test Valley as a small, rural, high achieving school and a clear pathway to ensure this vision is the reality on a day-to-day basis.

To live up to our vision and ensure we provide the best possible learning experience for our pupils, we need to maximise our resources and energy on the core business – the education, safety and security of our pupils. To be a small rural high achieving school we need to invest our time and money in quality teaching and learning and curriculum innovation. We need to invest our money wisely at a time when budgets in education are particularly tight, which includes carefully assessing our current investments and recognising where these may need to be adjusted to better support our vision for our school.

In light of our vision and financial priorities, Governors have reviewed the current and future viability of the swimming pool and have concluded that it is not possible to continue supporting it. After careful consideration, we have made the decision that the pool site would better serve our school community as a covered outdoor performance arena, to improve our cultural provision for our young people. The swimming pool has been a part of the school since the 1960s and this has been a difficult but necessary decision to make, which we understand will come a disappointment to some. We know you will have questions and have tried to answer some of these in the Q and A section at the end of this letter.

The health and wellbeing of our young people and those in the wider community remains a high priority for us as a school. Prior to COVID, the direct correlation between arts and wellbeing was well documented. Since COVID hit, the arts as a vehicle for promoting wellbeing and social interaction has increased in importance even more. By repurposing the pool site into an outdoor performance arena, we will be able to provide an all-year learning space for our departments to use both in lessons and for wider cross curricular activities, while also supporting a stronger financial position for the school and its future. It will form the centre stage for the acclaimed and loved Stock Fest. Alongside this, it will provide a venue for the

community to come together for performances. We have already talked with Stockbridge Amateur dramatic society and The Andover musical theatre company, both of whom would be keen to utilise this space. We want to involve all stakeholders in the delivery of this plan for our future and so in order to do this we will be organising a working party to begin making this a reality. We would be keen to hear from anyone who would like to join us in this mission.

As Head Teacher and Chair of Governors, we will be hosting a presentation via Teams on Thursday 13th May 2021 at 6pm, which we encourage you to attend. In this presentation we will talk through the decision and vision in more detail. There will be an opportunity for questions at the end of the session.

Whilst we know that the pool is part of the legacy of Test Valley, we hope you will join with us to support the new legacy which we are confident will provide benefit to our school and our wider community for years to come.

Toni Wilden and Hazel Lankaster

Head Teacher and Chair of Governor

Questions and answers

What would be the cost to maintain the pool during the Summer 2021 term?

The outlay costs to use the pool for this summer would be £28,233. This includes the need to train staff to lifeguard the pool as all qualifications have lapsed. This cost is commensurate with the annual salary of one Newly Qualified teacher or two Learning Support Assistants or fifty laptops.

What are the ongoing year on year costs for the pool?

Between 2018 and 2020 the yearly cost was approximately £15K per year for general maintenance and chemicals. As this is an ageing pool, the costs would rise exponentially as things begin to wear. As this is an unadopted pool, we do not receive any funding from the Local Authority for its upkeep. The PSA has done a sterling job at working with the local community to fund raise for the pool but the level of funding needed year on year is not sustainable for them.

What are the educational benefits of the pool?

Swimming is not a national curriculum requirement in secondary schools.

As the pool at Test Valley is an outside pool, it can only be used for 3 months a year at best.

At Test Valley our KS3 pupils have 6 lessons each per year to develop water skills. The cost per lesson per child based on the cost of the pool at £15K upkeep a year is therefore £10.50 per lesson - £63 per child. This summer the cost per lesson would be £19.50 per session, £117 per child.

The pool was historically used at lunch time for social swim. Given the reduction in lunch time to 35 minutes this is no longer viable.

Was outsourcing the pool for community and commercial use considered?

Yes, this was considered but determined to not be a viable option. This is because the pool sits at the heart of the school, which means it is not possible to access it without having to go through the main school building. It therefore means that, for safeguarding reasons, the pool cannot be outsourced during the school day.

We explored whether the pool could be outsourced in the evening but the costs of this would be significant. Three lifeguards would be needed each evening to staff the pool from the time of opening to the time of closing.

The changing facilities lie within the school and therefore there would be an additional cost of site security before and after the sessions.

The cost of modernising the pool with suitable outdoor facilities would be close to £1.5 million

In addition, there are modern pools at Andover and a new pool being built in Winchester which the local community can easily access at a far cheaper rate.

When will the pool be decommissioned?

The pool will be fully decommissioned during the spring or summer term of 2022.

Why was a covered outdoor performance arena chosen, instead of other possible educational facilities?

As explained in the letter above, the health and wellbeing of our young people and those in the wider community remains high priority for us as a school. Prior to COVID, the direct correlation between arts and wellbeing was well documented. Since COVID hit, the arts as a vehicle for promoting wellbeing and social interaction has increased in importance even more. This, along with our desire to enhance the cultural capital of our young people, has driven our decision to use the site of the pool to create an outdoor performance arena. This arena will provide an all-year learning space for our departments to use both in lessons and for wider cross curricular activities. It will form the centre stage for the acclaimed and loved Stock Fest. Alongside this, it will provide a venue for the community to come together for performances.