**Bell Primary Q&A for Infrastructure **

**Capping enrolments**

**Why is there not a cap to enrolment numbers?**

The State Education Department reviews the potential student capacity of a school based on a number of factors. One of these factors is ground space. At this time The Department views Bell as having ample space for growth in its student numbers.

A child of compulsory school age may be enrolled at any government school if there is sufficient accommodation for the child at the school. Bell Primary is unable to refuse a legitimate application for enrolment. A case to place a cap on a school’s student numbers must be approved by the Regional Director.

**Existing Facilities**

**Why can’t the second floor be used?**

The second floor consists of one classroom and two very small rooms which could be suitable as offices. It is in a dilapidated condition including collapsed ceilings and damaged floors and walls. To make this space fit for purpose and safe requires installation of a fire escape along with significant renovations. This would provide the school with one additional classroom at a cost that is likely to be considered less cost effective by the Education Department than a portable classroom which would provide two classrooms.

At this point in time the Department will not fund the works and the school would need to find funding.

**Why can’t they just remove the old canteen and shelter sheds by the basketball court and put any new buildings there?**

The canteen and shelter sheds provide valuable storage space for all Bell PS equipment etc. Removing these buildings would require additional buildings to be built. The Department does not currently consider removing old buildings to be cost effective when it considers that there is adequate open space that can be used for portable classrooms.

Using this site would also take up a significant section of the basketball court, which has significant use both for learning, playtime and after hours use by the community.

The Masterplan Process will explore this type of option as well as look at the optimal site for facilities such as the uniform shop and the gardens shed.

**How will enrolment growth at the school impact on the curriculum?**

There will be little impact on the school’s curriculum programs as a result of the increase of enrolment. Staffing and all other facilities will grow accordingly. The school will continue to work on how classroom clusters can be accommodated within the facilities to provide cooperative learning spaces.

**Relocatables**

**Is there a ratio of permanent buildings to relocatable classrooms for a school?**

The Education Department considers that the school has an appropriate ratio of relocatable classrooms to permanent buildings. Decisions on the funding of permanent buildings vs relocatable classrooms are made on a needs basis by the Education Department.

**Will it always be portables that are provided to meet our growing needs or will a permanent structure be considered? Does the School and the Department differ in their stance on this?**

Funding for permanent infrastructure is generally provided on a needs basis. The intent of the Masterplan process is to identify the needs of the growing school community and to inform decisions on the location of both temporary and permanent buildings and support business cases that can be made to achieve future funding.

**How much notice do we get about the delivery of relocatables?**

The allocation and timing relates to when a need is identified and a portable becomes available. In short when a school drops in enrolment, the relocatables are moved to schools with a corresponding increase in enrolment. It is a reactive rather than a proactive program responding to the fluctuations in enrolment.

In the past the school has been notified after the August School Census when the Principal predicted enrolments for the coming year are made. The school was given less than four weeks’ notice of the arrival of the latest portable.

**Why are there not facilities like walkways, blinds and other ‘extras’ provided when the relocatables are installed?**

Each portable comes with a grant of $6,600. The cost of student tables and chairs for 50 students, teacher desk, filing cabinet and chair and cabling and phone lines quickly absorbs this money. It is up to the school to provide any further infrastructure. To date this type of spend has not been prioritised by the School Council due to other pressing needs.

**Can we have double story relocatables like at Preston West P.S.?**

Two story portables are more expensive and are prioritised for schools that have exhausted the spare space in their grounds. Bell Primary is able to access this type of portable when the Education Department considers that our enrolment and remaining ground space indicates that it is required.

**How do the teacher’s and student’s feel about working in the relocatable buildings?**

The buildings are completely renovated when they are handed over to us. They are fresh and clean and the split system air-conditioning makes for a very comfortable environment even in the hot weather. In planning we endeavour to keep area levels as close together as possible as the school is getting very spread out. When the growth was first impacting on the school, it was decided to try to keep any incoming buildings to the northern play area to maintain the large open space at the Oakover Rd end of the school. The current Master Planning process will develop this further.

**Masterplan**

**What will the masterplan be used for?**

The Masterplan will inform future planning decisions at Bell Primary School. The current process has already begun to assess the current facilities and the projected future enrolments at the school to see where there are assets that are underutilised and what the school will need in the future. The second part of this is identifying where all of the facilities can be located to create an interesting and engaging education facility that suits the needs of students, teachers and the school community.

The school masterplan will assess the existing permanent and relocatable facilities and take into account the future needs of the school. The future needs will be based on relocatable buildings at this stage as this is the department policy on accommodating additional enrolments.

The plan is underway with a view to having a final plan presented by the end of the 2015 school year. Between now and then there will be a number of occasions for community input into the plan and to comment on the draft plan presented.

**What is the plan for portable classroom location in the future - what is the measurement used to cap portable delivery and use?**

The Education Department does not have a set ratio of relocatable classrooms to permanent buildings. At this stage we will continue to receive portable classrooms as school enrolments grow.

The Masterplan process will create a clear vision for the school and its buildings, both temporary and permanent buildings.

**Will staff facilities and amenities be considered in the Masterplan Process? What is the measurement/required numbers of students for these facilities to be provided?**

Yes, all facilities within the school are assessed as part of the development of the Masterplan including teacher amenities, ablutions, storage areas and teaching areas. The process is being conducted in accordance with departmental guidelines.

The Education Department does not have a set ratio of relocatable classrooms to permanent buildings. At this stage we will continue to receive portable classrooms as school enrolments grow.

**What statement of Commitment can we have from the Department and the School that play space will be preserved for a growing number of students. Even if this guarantee of space provision cannot be provided - I would like to see a transparent statement that outlines this inability.**

The school is working through the Masterplan Process to identify ways to maintain and to develop interesting, safe and engaging play areas in conjunction with the gardens and ground committee.

The intent of this is to identify the most appropriate location of temporary and permanent buildings while also developing the utility of play areas.

**Does the Masterplan consider the impact of increased student enrolments on the surrounding streets for drop off and pick up times?**

This is outside the scope of the Masterplan, however, the outputs from the Masterplan will be presented to the Darebin Council as it may impact their plans for Oakover Road, Scotia Street and the surrounding area. There is potential that the outputs can be used to inform the development of additional infrastructure including pedestrian and bike access to the school, signage etc.

**Who do I contact to find out more?**

Please contact the school directly bell.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au or email planningbell@gmail.com