

Bishop of London helps to mark new phase in the history of Emmanuel CE Primary School, West Hampstead

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The Bishop of London, Richard Chartres, has joined Councillor Jonathan Simpson, the Mayor of Camden, and teachers and pupils at Emmanuel CE Primary School, West Hampstead, at the grand opening of the school's new buildings. To mark the occasion, the Bishop blessed an icon depicting the school, specially commissioned from icon artist Fr Regan O'Callaghan.

The new buildings are a proud milestone in the history of the school, which dates from 1845. The project was enabled through collaboration between the London Diocesan Board for Schools and the London Borough of Camden. The partnership will see Emmanuel School double in size from half a form to one form of entry per year, eventually reaching 240 students. This builds on earlier expansion in 2012, when the new main building of the school first admitted children and Emmanuel was able to accept an extra reception class of children to respond to the need for extra primary school places in the area.

The new icon unveiled at the event depicts Christ holding the school's new Omega Building in his hands with the rebuilt Alpha Building, which will house the Early Years' Unit, in a circle on one side and Emmanuel Church on the other. Pupils from Years 4 & 5 helped Fr Reagan to design the icon and careful observers will notice that it even shows Gandalf, the grey and white Vicarage cat, in the grounds of nearby Emmanuel Church.

As part of the celebration of the new building, a service was held at Emmanuel Church where those present enjoyed music from the school's choir and brass ensemble and had the opportunity to view an exhibition about the history of the school.

Kathryn Fitzsimmons, Headteacher at Emmanuel Church of England Primary School, said:

"It has long been a dream to see Emmanuel Church of England Primary School increase from a half-form-entry school to a one form, meeting the needs of our local area. To finally have a school with state of the art facilities that will enhance the curriculum now and for many generations to come is extremely exciting for pupils, parents, staff, governors and the local community."

Mayor of Camden, Councillor Jonathan Simpson, said:

"The new school is the realisation of plans that were made fifty years ago when land was first earmarked for the building. It's fantastic that we've been able to work in partnership with the Diocese of London to finally meet urgent local demand for primary school places. I know the new school will inspire everyone who learns and works there."

The Revd Jonathan Kester, Vicar at Emmanuel Church, West Hampstead, and Chair of Governors said:

"This is a huge milestone in the school's 168 year history, and we are most grateful to all those who have made this project possible as we continue to serve the whole community of West Hampstead for many generations to come. The expansion of the school has been an aspiration for over five decades and we are delighted that this vision has now been realised."

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