



## Gesamtelternvertretung der Quentin-Blake-Grundschule und der Biesalski Schule

[www.quentin-blake-europe-school.de](http://www.quentin-blake-europe-school.de)

Förderverein Friends of QBES

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Berlin, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2013

Dear Parents of the Biesalski School,  
Dear Parents of the Quentin Blake Europe-School

The Steglitz-Zehlendorf School Authorities have decided to install a **regular German primary school stream** (potentially from Years 1 through to 6) in our school buildings. This is referred to as a '**Regelschulzweig**'. This could mean that an additional 180 pupils will need to be accommodated in the buildings which make up Hüttenweg 40. For this purpose, probably around 10 rooms (including 6 classrooms, recreation rooms and preparation rooms for staff) will either be divided up or removed from the available set of rooms in which our children are currently being taught.

**The Music Room, the (maths) Sinus Room and the English Library in the QBES are all, according to the latest planning proposals, up for negotiation.** The recreation rooms are also up for discussion as rooms to be used for the future regular German school stream. As for the Biesalski School, no particular areas have been designated by the School Authorities just yet. But Herr Weese (the School Authorities' planner) has already indicated that in his opinion, the Biesalski School has very large rooms (up to 90m<sup>2</sup>) which could easily be divided up.

The **background** to the School Authorities' decision is obvious. All around us there are construction cranes. The combined building sites of Fünf Morgen, Metropolitan Gardens, Campus Oscar-Helene-Heim, together with further building projects in the Park and Forest districts, **create housing for more than 10,000 people; all within the vicinity of our school building.** According to relevant legislation all children have a right to be educated within walking distance of their homes, if at all possible. But so far, **no new school is planned to accommodate these new children to the area;** nor have the investors been asked to change any of their plans. Instead, the general idea is to cram the incoming children into the surrounding schools. This tactic was also used ten years ago in relation to the construction of the "Schweizer Viertel"; and to this day, continues to give rise to new crises and shuttles routes for the children.

**Without any structural expansion, it is clear that the addition of 180 children to our campus will lead to a significant deterioration in the current standard of education provided.** The QBES currently has 15 classrooms for 15 classes, together with 7 language (divided) rooms and 6 recreation rooms. If the (divided) language rooms are to be re-designated into rooms for the regular German school stream, the bilingual concept will suffer; if the recreation rooms are removed, the whole idea of a compulsory all-day school will be undermined. Of course, the quality of education at the Biesalski School will also be impacted should the rooms be reduced in size or removed for use by the regular German school stream.

From a legal perspective, we have no basis to challenge this decision, as the law does not stipulate a number of recreation rooms. The minimum size for a classroom with 24 pupils is stipulated by law and this is 55m<sup>2</sup>; some of our classrooms are however 90m<sup>2</sup> and this is exactly the basis on which the School Authorities argue their case against our campus. For schools with special educational characteristics, such as the Biesalski School, the size of classrooms and other rooms are not stipulated by law; this lies within the discretion of the School Authorities and they can decide how much room space is actually required.

During the last few months, **various parent initiatives from both schools have been pursued at district authority level in order to draw local politicians' attention to the consequences of their decision.** On various occasions, we have ensured that our concerns have been highlighted and discussed at the School Board (Schulausschuss) and at the District School Board (Bezirksschulbeirat), as well as insisting on a vote to ensure that the educational quality of both schools is not damaged by the integration of a regular German school stream. Unfortunately, we have not been able to obtain consensual agreement at these levels that a structural extension is necessary to maintain the existing standards of education (or that a new school is required for the people moving here).

We have obtained expert advice from architects about the **possibilities for an extension at Hüttenweg 40**. Structurally it would be no problem to build an extension in the rear of the grounds - be it a shared cafeteria or equally a shared building containing recreation rooms and an integrated English Library. In this way, the empty rooms could then be used for the regular German school stream.

In December 2012 we invited **local politicians** to the QBES Library Fest and the QBES Christmas Concert. The School Policy Spokeswoman for the SPD, which is not in power in the district, has shown full understanding for our concerns and has indicated that her goal would be to build a new school in the area of Truman Plaza. However, the CDU, which is in power, has argued that our school facilities are luxurious and no longer tenable in the future. The "Grünen", who are in a kind of coalition with the CDU in the district, think the fears of the parents are partly justified, but state that they do not know where the money should come from for a new school (approximately 20 million euros) or an extension.

It is true that the school budget for the district (5 million euros) would be overwhelmed by such a demand. The money would have to be assigned by the Senate. This means that School Senator Sandra Scheeres and State Secretary Mark Rackles (both from the SPD) need to learn of this situation and be persuaded that a school or at the very least an extension is missing on this site. Further, it **should also be drawn to the attention of relevant Berlin MPs** who sit in the Bundestag e.g., Mr. Wellmann (CDU), that **many parents are outraged by these construction projects as inevitably they are erected at the expense of their children**. If our pressure is successful, this could mean local politicians (including Mayor Kopp, Councilor for Construction Karnetzki and the District School Councilor Cerstin Richter-Kotowski) would have to **adjust their investment and education planning** for the next five years and demand money from their central budget for school building projects around the Truman Plaza.

**This will only happen if we, the parents and staff of the QBES & Biesalski Schools,  
protest loudly and make effective use of the media!**

**Please support us and get involved!**

A large **meeting** is planned for **18th April in the gym @ 7.30pm**

for all the parents and staff of both schools in order to discuss and organise next steps and actions.

The following will be considered:

1. Letters and emails to relevant political leaders who are responsible at District, Senate and Federal Level
2. Letters to newspapers
3. Contacting journalists and informing them of the problem
4. Approaching politicians at the local Bundestag elections
5. Demonstration
6. A **Petition** aimed at the local population which seeks support for our request at district level ('**Einwohnerantrag**'). If we can collect 1000 signatures from people living in Zehlendorf, we may be able to force the district's BVV to agree to a new school or an extension. This **proposal will be presented to all in detail at the meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> April**.

Yours Sincerely,

Chairman GEV QBES  
Franz Pfeifer

GEV Biesalski Schule  
Gudrun Streit

Chairperson Friends of QBES  
Kathrin Finke

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We have set up an email address: [agregelschulzweig@friends-of-qbes.de](mailto:agregelschulzweig@friends-of-qbes.de) Your feedback is highly welcome as well as your r.s.v.p. **for the meeting on April 18**. A website on the matter is being prepared, too.