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MADE IN CHELSEA

Francis Holland Junior School in Belgravia is relocating to a new premises in SW3 – it's also getting a new name. **Suzy Dixon** explains the move, as well as the rich educational provision the school will continue to offer

At Francis Holland Schools, we believe that when girls feel truly known, loved, supported, and valued for their individuality rather than achievements, they go on to achieve extraordinary things. During the first crucial seven years of a child's education, it's essential that they have the strong sense of belonging that comes from working together as a community. As Head of Francis Holland Junior School, I've had the privilege of leading one such community of 170 four-to-11-year-old girls in Belgravia for the past five years.

From September, our junior school will be relocated to an iconic Victorian Grade II-listed building, just off the King's Road, and renamed

scoot!) into school every day in eager anticipation of interesting lessons, taught by inspiring teachers. A prep school's promise is surely to take a four-year old's natural curiosity and feed it with fundamental foundations and lively learning that enable every pupil to transition into secondary education; arriving there with a deep love of learning and a still-growing imagination, not thwarted by examination preparation.

Preparing pupils for any change is incredibly important. Human beings are at their most vulnerable during periods of transition; most people feel discomfort, and some upset, at change, particularly if it's change they cannot control. Pupils have sometimes been lucky enough to be at their prep school for so long that they can hardly



Suzy Dixon is Headmistress of Francis Holland Junior School in Belgravia, London

THE CONSTANT CORE IS HAPPINESS: SCHOOL MUST BE A PLACE *where a child's curiosity is inspired, nurtured and nourished; where they* RUN (OR SCOOT!) INTO SCHOOL EVERY DAY IN EAGER ANTICIPATION

Francis Holland Preparatory School. Francis Holland Prep will take over the impressive 20,000 sq ft site, which is currently the home of The Hampshire School, Chelsea at 15 Manresa Road, SW3 6NB. The building, which dates back to 1890, combines heritage with modern learning spaces. Its wealth of impressive facilities includes the old Chelsea library, a spacious school hall with staging, a specialist science lab, an art room, and an extensive outdoor play area.

The prep will maintain its close relationship with FHS Sloane Square Senior School, and specialist staff will continue to teach at both. The new location provides an outstanding platform for entry into FHS Sloane Square and other leading senior schools, including FHS Regent's Park.

Moving a school to new premises oscillates the mind between the most pragmatic of decisions to wonder at the richness of education. Ours is a strong community that loves to work together, but which needs careful, conscientious passage to the new site. Curiously enough, the more queries that arise about the move, the more focused I become on the pupils, their education and our ethos.

The constant core is happiness: school must be a happy place where a child's curiosity is inspired, nurtured and nourished; where they run (or

remember how they came to belong there – they just do! It's their comfortable happy place.

At school and home, we can make a difference by helping children build resilience; giving them challenges; developing their organisation skills – all of which is excellent preparation for their transition to senior school. However, what's most important is meeting these young people's emotional needs at a time when they're not really sure how to tell you what those are, or even how to recognise them themselves.

Parents must be vigilant; willing to delve gently into whatever might create anxiety; ready to listen patiently; and remaining alert to any changes in behaviour. Try to minimise any other changes in their lives and, while your pre-teen needs to be able to develop independence in their walk to school or journey on the school bus, they also need the same protective comfort of that adult they know best.

They may wish to appear too cool to need your reassurance and protection, but they do. This is a transition that's essential to get right, because it will be this transition that enables them to cope with future changes that come along later on.

Perhaps this is why so many people find change tough. Let's work together on getting it right. 🍷