



St JOHNS DOWNSHIRE HILL - CURRENT SUNDAY ROOM USE BY CHILDREN'S GROUPS

Statement in response to comments received from L.B. of Camden, 15th October **Revision A**

The following table outlines the use of rooms on Sunday mornings

Group	Age range	Current numbers	Current room used and its area	Comments and issues	Ideal area required	Proposal and conclusion
Creche	0-2	Average numbers are 20 at present. Plus 4-5 helpers are required each week plus visiting parents.	One half of the undercroft: 75 sqm (net of circulation required through the room by others)	Good area, in best location as room is closest to WCs, can be easily reached by parents and does not need attached storage.	50 sqm.	Stay as is - area is close to WCs, can be easily reached by parents, is well sized for activities for 2 'year-olds', and provides some room for growth.
Scramblers	2-4	18 on the register. Plus 2-3 leaders are required each week.	Garden Room: 12 sqm.	No access to toilets is available, room is outside, room is far too small, and has no dedicated storage.	40 sqm. (i.e. typical school classroom standard, with access to storage).	Needs a much bigger room allowing space for children to move about, with attached storage, and WC nearby
Starters	4-7	23 on the register. Plus 2-4 leaders are required each week.	Board Room: 29 sqm.	Area is just about ok at present and has some storage. But location disturbs other activities when access to toilets are required.	50 sqm. (i.e. to a typical school classroom standard)	Stay where is and accept reduced area standard and any disturbance elsewhere when access to WCs are required.
Followers	7-11	33 on the register. Plus 2-3 leaders are required each week.	Other half of the undercroft: 80 sqm.	Area is ok at present, with storage available.	80 sqm. for two groups of up to 20 (i.e. to a typical school classroom standard with some spatial separation).	The group is now too big and needs to be divided into 2 smaller classes, though there is no separate room that allows this.

Pathfinders	11-14	20 on the register. Plus 2-3 leaders are required each week.	Caretaker Flat's Living / Dining Room 19 sqm.	Highly inconvenient but the only solution at present. Room is also too small given its main use, and there is no storage.	25 to 30 sqm. (i.e. typical meeting room standard) anticipating growth with this group from the rising years below.	Has to stay where it is as there is no other solution.
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A summary of issues arising:

5 distinct rooms / areas are used at present for Sunday groups; 2 of which are highly inconvenient (for the 'Scramblers' and 'Pathfinders'). To accommodate the 'Scramblers' a larger room must be provided somewhere to replace the Garden Room, and in a room that is attached to the building and has access to WCs. There is no obvious solution for the 'Pathfinders' without a further extension. This is not proposed, so remains a serious problem.

Two additional rooms / areas are therefore required because the ongoing use of the Caretaker's flat for 'Pathfinders' is an imposition that is inconvenient and uncomfortable, and relies on the good will of the current Caretaker, which may not last.

There then should be a sixth separate room / area to subdivide Primary School years 4 to 11. This age range is now too big and unwieldy to teach as one class, but is impossible to achieve in separate rooms at present.

There is also a need to anticipate growth in the oldest group 'Pathfinders' and this is noted because the younger year 'Followers' is a large group. But it is likely there will be growth in other year groups:

- The Design statement states that in the last 10 years that the congregation has increased from some 70 adults / 20 children to a current average of 130 adults / 70 children, at present. It is anticipated that this growth will continue, as there has been significant sustained growth over a 19 year period and the facilities completed 10 years ago have accelerated that growth.
- 19 years ago one family occupied a glass crèche at the back of the church (who soon left). There are now 40 or so families (with children). The initial need was for a crèche, but as time went on, and some of those children have grown (and the families have stayed), the need arose for older groups: crèche led to scramblers, led to starters, led to followers, led to pathfinders, led to anchored (which meets Sunday afternoon before the evening service). Inevitably, the existence of all these groups means the church now attracts families with children of all ages.
- There has also been growth over time in the staff team from one minister working half time to six full time members of staff and one half time member. This also sustains growth in attendance. The church also appeals, increasingly, to other nationalities. The discernible trends are now 1: numerical growth; 2: increasingly cosmopolitan; 3: international; and 4: high turnover.

Growth therefore does not mean there needs to be more than 5 groups on a Sunday morning; it means the numbers in these groups may rise and the church will need to accommodate this as comfortably as possible, within the constraints of the building and its site; and the church recognises that a limit to the developed footprint on this site is reached by the proposals.

Subdivision of the Hall

If 'Followers' needs to subdivide, the area this group uses (one half of the undercroft) has to suffice for now, but the room is big enough to be used in two halves and to comfortably accommodate 2 teaching groups - one half of the area for the 7 to 9s, and the other half of the area for the 10 to 11s. An indistinct separation (acoustic and visual) between the two classes is manageable for now given the suitable size of this space.

A subdivision of the other half of the Undercroft (for Creche and 'Scramblers') would not now provide enough area for the two groups. Some 90 sqm. is required with only 75 sqm. available. There is the added inconvenience of no storage at that end for the Scramblers. If a solution for the Scramblers was possible by a subdivision of the Hall and share of the space used by the Creche, there still remains no solution for Pathfinders.

A larger meeting room to replace the Garden Room is required firstly as the best solution for the 'Scramblers'. If this group did not use the room it would then be made available for the Pathfinders.

The application seeks to provide one additional meeting room (in the guise of the enlarged garden room) as this is perceived to be the maximum development that the site could sustain sympathetically. Notwithstanding that two rooms are ideally required.

Any further subdivision of the Hall would be to the detriment of existing usage and internal conditions, and would end up inevitably reducing areas that currently exist and are reaching or have reached their capacity limits. The Design statement has summarised other considered more technical reasons that further sub-division of the hall would be impracticable, and these are repeated and expanded below as follows:

1. 'Inner rooms' without natural light would be created, which are a sub-standard environments for the groups using the space and not wanted by the users of the rooms.
2. The inner rooms would further compromise escape routes and fire safety from the kitchen and Board Room (where both rooms become 'rooms within a room within a room' on one of their alternative means of escape).
3. Room ventilation is mechanical and utilises 3 supply ducts cast into the floor slab to provide sufficient fresh air for the large main spaces. This air is extracted internally at high level along the walls to the kitchen and WCs. The supply vents in the floor occur along the column line closest to the external wall but this is the natural line for any subdivision because there is structure above (though it is not known if this is strong enough to sustain the load of a good partition). Such a position will compromise air distribution to the internal rooms which being cast under the floor slab does not lend itself to adaption.

The proposal is a considered additional minimum level of accommodation that the church requires, that cannot be further compromised.