



Building an image: Andy Yarrow, far right, the headmaster of Chelsea Academy. An artist's impression of the planned building, above and left



Head's master plan

EXCLUSIVE BY ALEX WELLMAN

PARENTS will be told exactly what is expected of their children before they enter at a multi-million pound new school.

In an exclusive interview with the *Times* Andy Yarrow, the newly appointed headmaster of Chelsea Academy, in Lots Road, Chelsea, outlined his plans for the school including uniforms, teachers and students. The plans include making the parents of prospective students aware of the standards and behaviour expected from their children before they even attend the Church of England school.

Mr Yarrow said: "This school will be open to all children from all backgrounds. It is about making sure the school is going to be truly comprehensive. It is not always a level playing field.

"The school will not dictate the background of the students at all. What we will do is stress to parents and students our expectations of them from the very beginning of their time with us."

Energetic Mr Yarrow, 39, who is married with two young children, speaks with the enthusiasm of a boy starting at his new school.

Having began his teaching career in 1991 he rose to the role of head at Hornsey in 13 years.

He served his apprenticeship in large and small schools in Brent, Slough, Berks, and Haringey, and brings a wealth of experience to this challenge.

Mr Yarrow said: "I was recruited as head of

Hornsey with the specific task of making a good school outstanding. That was my mission, that is what I did.

"Every school is different with a different ethos. What I try to do is find gaps and think what things would make a different."

Tradition, competition and high achievement are reoccurring phrases, when talking to him.

He said: "I am all for competition. A lot of the inner London boroughs have been through a phase of throwing the baby out with the bath water.

"Competition is a very good example of that. Competitive sport, prize givings were considered to be a bit elitist. I think the most effective schools have now recognised their value.

"Everyone can achieve something but celebrating that is part of the school community. There will definitely be competition in a high profile way."

Relations with the students are high on the agenda as he talks about the need to see everyone as an individual.

He said: "I am very passionate about personalised learning in education. You need to realise that every student is different and has different interests and learning styles.

"The schools making a difference now are those who recognise that not everyone needs the same educational diet.

"We all agree that everyone needs to learn, English, maths and science, but it is equally important for young people to choose what they learn so they have more ownership.

"We want them motivated and excited about

learning rather than having to endure the lessons wishing they would end."

A school uniform is some way off being decided, but Mr Yarrow is in no doubt that it will be a smart one reflecting the values of the school.

He said: "The school will have a smart, formal uniform and it is going to have to be an exceptionally good one, since a school's uniform says a lot about its aspirations. The school children have to be proud to wear it."

Teachers will be recruited in the year prior to its opening and will be expected to go that extra mile in teaching.

He said: "The most important thing is that they will have a passion for learning which is contagious.

"Obviously, we will be looking for teachers with excellent subject knowledge and qualifications, but they also need the ability to inspire, excite and challenge people to realise their potential."

A link up with Imperial College London is still being considered and the school will embrace the international arena with trips abroad and email studies with foreign students.

When asked where he saw the school in 10 years' time Mr Yarrow did not flinch.

He said: "One of the most high profile high achieving schools in London. Top of the table for achieving.

"I am not interested in it being very good, but unquestionably outstanding. I am absolutely convinced we will get there."

Few would bet against him.

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