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The former Whippingham Primary School building

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Historic site preserved for education

A private school on the Island has agreed a sale with the council for the former Whippingham Primary School site, which is currently used by Queensgate Foundation Primary School.

An in-principle decision has been approved by the councillor responsible for property under delegated powers which would preserve the historic site for continued educational use.

The building was identified by the council as no longer being required for local authority educational purposes, due to Queensgate moving to the Osborne Middle School site by Easter 2012.

The former Whippingham Primary School site was built by Queen Victoria in the 1860s, and the Queen maintained an interest in the school all her life. It was originally built to provide education for the children of those who worked on the Osborne Estate, and later became a Church of England primary school, and then the local primary school for many decades.

Contracts exchanged

The offer to the council was been made by Priory School, currently based in Shanklin, and contracts have now been exchanged with Priory School moving to Whippingham in April 2012, ready for the summer term. The independent school is expanding rapidly and has been looking for new premises to accommodate its

growing pupil body, including its Sixth Form that opened in September 2010.

Isle of Wight Council cabinet member responsible for education, Councillor Dawn Cousins - also the local councillor for part of Whippingham - considers that the sale of the former Whippingham Primary School site to Priory School will deliver significant benefits.

She said: "Not only will the sale preserve the tradition of education on the site and ensure that the buildings and their heritage are conserved and celebrated, it will help develop a school which contributes to the diversity of education provision on the Island.

"The Isle of Wight Council has a duty to provide an oversight for the welfare of all children on the Island, and therefore we take a keen interest in the work of Priory School - even though we are not involved directly. I am pleased that we are enabling them to relocate to a school site with suitable resources and facilities, which will help them in their efforts to contribute to improved education standards on the Island. We hope this move will strengthen the local authority's relationship with Priory School, as one of a range of education providers we work with."

Value for the tax payer

Independent valuations of the site have been carried out by two commercial surveying firms to ensure that open market value is paid, and arrived at independently of both the council and Priory School, to ensure value for money to the taxpayer.

Edmund Matyjaszek, Principal of Priory School, said he and his school were delighted to be able to move to such a well-resourced and accessible site, and looked forward with anticipation to being able to develop and enhance the education Priory School offers at its prospective new "home".

"It is a privilege to have the opportunity to inherit and maintain the tradition of education for the good of Island children established on this historic and much-loved site 150 years ago," he said.