

Mayor hails fantastic moment for free school



Andy Preston meets youngsters at the new facility

MIDDLESBROUGH mayor Andy Preston has described as “trail-blazing” new high quality temporary facilities for Teesside’s first free school for those with special educational needs.

The mayor officially opened the specially constructed school accommodation ahead of plans to build a new school, Discovery Special Academy, in Middlesbrough by the 2021-22 academic year.

Middlesbrough Council has agreed the sale of land at Sandy Flatts Lane, Acklam, to the Department of Education for the construction of Discovery Special Academy, one of the Government’s flagship free schools.

Once built, the free school will provide a specialist educational provision for up to 84 children aged four to 11 with complex and significant learning, communication, physical and medical needs.

Part of Tees Valley Education Trust and representing Teesside’s largest primary special school, Discovery will help to meet an increasing demand for special needs facilities within the Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland local authority areas.

Mayor Preston, who was chair of



Mayor Andy Preston cuts the ribbon at the new facility

Tees Valley Education Trust’s board when the free school was first applied for, said: “As one of the government’s first free special schools, Discovery is blazing a trail not only for Middlesbrough and Teesside but the whole country.”

“For too long, we’ve had a sticking plaster approach, trying to make do as best we could, but Discovery represents a beautiful and groundbreaking solution to help solve a

really pressing need for children with a range of complex needs.

“Discovery have some outstanding people who have created a truly uplifting, inspiring environment for the children within the temporary facilities.”

Whilst plans for the new build remain on track, Tees Valley Education Trust say the move into the five temporary classrooms is an “exciting milestone”.

Located on land adjacent to its partner academy, Brambles Primary, on Kedward Avenue in Middlesbrough, the new accommodation will provide education and therapies to 60 primary-age children with complex learning and medical needs.

For the past 12 months, 30 Discovery children have been educated in a former Sure Start building at Brambles, but the five new temporary

classrooms mean the school can now accommodate up to 60 pupils.

The specially-enhanced provision employs 27 teaching and non-teaching staff while also hosting daily visits from therapists and health workers.

Tees Valley Education Trust has worked collaboratively with the free schools division of the Department for Education, the regional school commissioners’ office and local authority officers in both Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland councils.

Katrina Morley, Tees Valley Education’s CEO, said: “We are incredibly proud to be able to open the temporary accommodation for Discovery Special Academy as an exciting milestone.

“This provision has been purposely designed and built to support the development of the specialist curriculum offer for all of our current and future children, along with their families.

“The staff of the school, trust and all of our partners worked tirelessly throughout the summer in order to get the academy ready for the children and to create a really warm, welcoming environment, inside and out.

Tesco worker died from underlying heart issues

A TESCO worker who was left “shaken” after confronting a shoplifter and collapsed while on a cigarette break half an hour later, died of natural causes.

Hilary Simmons was working at the Tesco Express store on Corporation Road in Middlesbrough on April 30, last year when two men walked in.

One of them, Michael James Love, stole a bottle of wine and hid it in his jacket - despite being banned from the store for stealing on a previous occasion.

Mrs Simmons, 59, a shift leader, saw the theft and confronted Mr Love, who then left with his friend.

But the confrontation left Mrs Simmons “angry” and she told staff she felt like she was “going to have a heart attack.”

But tragically, within half an hour, the mum-of-two had collapsed while on a cigarette break and the emergency services were called.

She later died that same day at James Cook University Hospital.

Arrests were subsequently made, men aged 35 and 37 were arrested on suspicion of manslaughter and attempted theft from the shop but were released “with no further action”.

Two other men - aged 33 and 38 - were arrested on the same charges and released without charge.

Cleveland Police confirmed in May that the criminal investigation had been closed.

An inquest, held at Teesside Coroner’s Court this week heard that Mrs Simmons,

despite appearing healthy, had severe heart disease.

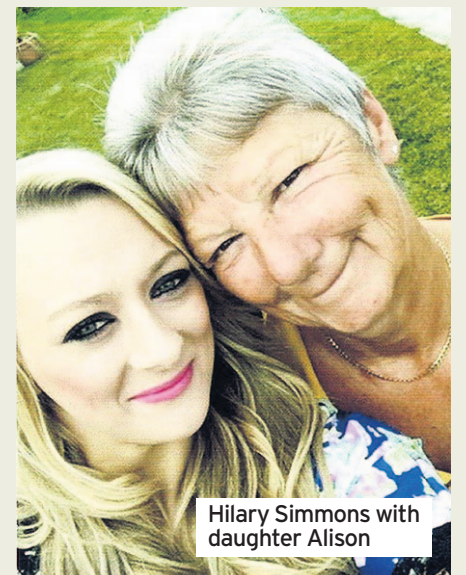
There was an abnormality in the rhythm of her heart with “extensive scarring” along with atheroma in her coronary arteries with “severe blocking”.

Such was the severity of her heart disease, the inquest was told that she could have succumbed to “sudden death” at any moment.

But a post-mortem found that death would be more likely “after a period of stress.”

Senior Coroner, Clare Bailey, concluded that Mrs Simmons died as a result of natural causes, contributed to by dealing with the stress of shoplifting.

Her medical cause of death was ischemic heart disease and coronary artery atheroma.



Hilary Simmons with daughter Alison