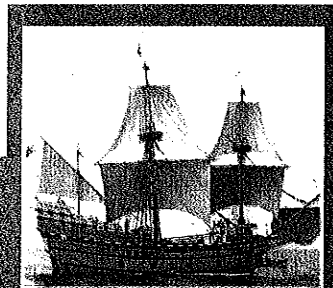


# SCHOOL'S Herald

IN ASSOCIATION WITH  
**e SWEB**  
 ENERGY

Tuesday, March 14, 2006

Special Edition



## PILGRIMS ON SONG

VOYAGE OF THE MAYFLOWER - THE MUSICAL AT A THEATRE NEAR YOU - PAGE 2

WRITTEN BY PLYMOUTH SCHOOLCHILDREN FOR PLYMOUTH SCHOOLCHILDREN

### Headteachers fear they will be left high and dry by pool closure

# WHERE WILL WE SWIM?



**IN THE COLD:** (below) West Park pupils look glum as they prepare for one of the last lessons at Seaton. Right: Sarah Cavanagh and Matthew Cordy quizzed council school chief Pauline Purnell about the closure

by SARAH CAVANAGH, MATTHEW CORDY, WILLIAM WATRIN-CATTRALL and CHLOE WATSON

West Park Primary School

**HEADTEACHERS** and parents are worried that the city council will struggle to fit swimming lessons into its remaining pools once Seaton Pool is closed next month.

The schools have been told that all lessons will continue - but cannot guarantee that the intensive tuition favoured by some schools will go on. At the moment pupils at several schools swim once a day for three weeks in Seaton Pool.

The pool at Derriford, which is used by children from 18 city schools for swimming lessons, is due to close because of the cost of running the facility and need for substantial investment, according to the authority.

The council said: "The city council has a revised programme for Central Park which will accommodate all the schools being displaced from Seaton. There will be a full programme of swimming lessons using the three pools."

Campaigners have reacted with anger to the decision to close the pool, which is owned by the South West Regional Development Agency.

Now headteachers, parents and pupils at schools which use the pools have voiced their concerns too.

George Muirhead, headteacher of Woodfield Primary School in Whitleigh said: "I'm very concerned. Ballard's pool, which schools used, was closed some time ago. Now the Seaton pool is to be lost. All this will make our school's



Picture: John Allen EAA23560\_USA\_001

swimming programme very difficult to deliver."

Current Year 5 pupils at West Park Primary school began a three-week intensive swimming course at the pool when they returned to school following their half-term holiday. They will be

among the last Plymouth schoolchildren to benefit from the facility.

Head John Percil is worried about the pressure that will be put upon Central Park and Plympton pools by the number of schools requiring swimming lessons. Swimming is part of the National Curriculum in schools.

He said: "An intensive course, where children swim once a day for three weeks, is more suitable. Once a week for a term would not be so good. Will there be enough sessions available to provide this?"

Parents are also worried that their children will miss out.

Michaela Short, mother of West Park Primary School pupil Matthew, aged 10, said: "The message at the moment is that people should do more exercise."

"Swimming is one of the best ways to exercise. Seaton should remain open. Swimming exercises your muscles and makes you stronger."

David, a 10 year old pupil at West Park said: "When I started swimming at Seaton in Year 4 I could swim 50 metres. After three weeks I could swim 100 metres."

Jodie, also aged 10, added: "I couldn't swim at all at first. After three weeks I was able to swim 10 metres."

"If you're out at sea and your boat tips over, how are you going to get to a nearby island or boat if you can't swim?"

Cllr Pauline Purnell, council cabinet member for children's services, told children at West Park Primary: "Seaton Pool hasn't got the facilities that we want you to have as young people. The council doesn't own the pool and we want to spend our money on a pool that does belong to the council."

But she insisted that a full programme of swimming lessons would continue.

She said: "Before we took the vote in council, we said we wouldn't vote unless we were assured that all the children who had swimming lessons at Seaton could be placed somewhere else. Every school that went to Seaton has been offered swimming somewhere else. We said we couldn't close it until that was done. That's very, very important."

But when asked about the availability of three-week intensive swimming courses for children, Cllr Purnell admitted: "An intensive swimming course is better. We're working towards being able to do that in the future, but it may not be possible for years to come. Any swimming is better than none."