

## ORLEANS INFANT SCHOOL: THE CASE FOR AN ADDITIONAL CLASS

### The borough-wide position

The total number of applications for the borough's reception class places has increased from **1,896 last year to 2,126, with 1,937 places available**.

The pupil forecasts that we compile did not show that an increase on such a scale was likely, particularly within St Margarets, and we can only conclude from the intelligence received that the success of the schools has meant that more parents than ever before who would otherwise have opted for the private sector have made their choice the maintained sector.

It is also the case that recent years have seen many large houses converted into flats and many new small developments, and it is very difficult to obtain or estimate data as to the number and age of children who move into these dwellings, how many of those children would be privately educated, and the parents' preferred choice of school should they opt for the state sector. The age of the children is particularly relevant as we do have spaces in all junior age-groups, as evidenced at St Stephen's.

We have provided 250 extra permanent reception places since 2000, including 30 at St Mary's Primary, 30 at Collis Primary and 10 at Trafalgar Infant. Demand has been managed over the last two years but is now increasing again.

This year, in order for the authority to fulfil its statutory duty to offer an alternative school place to as many in-borough children without a preferred school, four schools – Darell Primary, Heathfield Infant, Holy Trinity Primary and Lowther Primary – have all kindly agreed for the Authority to over-offer places. We over-offer in the expectation that some parents will turn down the places in favour of the private sector and that the number on roll at each of the schools will, by the end of Year 1, be no higher than their published admission number. This is a high-risk strategy, as we would be required to provide an additional class were the number not to come down in that way. However, without us being able to over-offer places at those schools, the number of children without offers would have been 61 higher than at present. The numbers of in-borough children currently without offers are given in Table 1, below. Since the initial allocations, the Governors of Holy Trinity have kindly agreed to take a full additional class for September, which will boost their reputation as an improving school.

From a longer-term perspective, our forecasts, which we will now need to revise to take account of the factors mentioned above, show a consistent small shortfall over the next eight years and we will be re-examining all our options in regard to providing additional permanent places. As the Governors will no doubt recognise, such expansion is absolutely dependent upon the Authority receiving funding from the Government. A guide to the costs of expansion is Collis, where providing an extra

form of entry cost £5million. Unfortunately, there seems to be a perception in Government that providing financial resources to Richmond upon Thames is a very low priority for them. We will continue to submit bids in every bidding round to obtain school expansion funding, but the next round may not be until the autumn or possibly as late as 2008, and we will therefore have to consider other short-term contingencies for 2008 and the next few years after that. The shortage of land and its prohibitive price whenever some becomes available mean that building more new schools in the Borough is highly unlikely without Government funding. The cost of a plot of land on the Brunel site, for example, would have been £17million, with an additional build cost of £10-11million for a small school.

Table 1: In-borough children without offers at initial allocations, 19 March 2007.

<b>Postcode / area</b>	<b>On-time appns</b>	<b>Late appns</b>	<b>Total appns</b>
<b>TW1:</b> Central & East Twickenham	45	4	49
<b>TW2/3:</b> Whitton & Hounslow	2	8	10
<b>TW4/TW12/TW13:</b> Hampton/Hanworth	0	9	9
<b>TW11:</b> Teddington & Strawberry Hill	15	6	21
<b>Total for Middlesex side of the River</b>	62	27	89
<b>SW13:</b> Barnes	0	9	9
<b>SW14:</b> East Sheen & Mortlake	17	5	22
<b>TW9:</b> Kew	3	8	11
<b>TW10:</b> Richmond & Ham	1	4	5
<b>Total for Surrey side of the River</b>	21	26	47
<b>Total for borough</b>	83	53	136

## The Orleans Infant position

Demand for places at Orleans Infant has increased by 35 children from last year, as Table 2, below, shows

Table 2: Orleans Infant application data for 2007/2008 and 2006/2007 entry.

	2007/2008	2006/2007
<b>Applications</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup> preference	111 *	93
2 <sup>nd</sup> preference	74	42
3 <sup>rd</sup> preference	21	34
Total	206	169
<b>Offers</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup> preference	82	83
2 <sup>nd</sup> preference	8	6
3 <sup>rd</sup> preference	0	1
Total	90	90
<b>Waiting list</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup> preference	30	Not recorded
2 <sup>nd</sup> preference	22	Not recorded
3 <sup>rd</sup> preference	9	Not recorded
Total	61	Not recorded

\* Including 6 late applicants.

Of those on the waiting list, we have not been able to offer a place at any school to 43 in-borough children – 25 1<sup>st</sup> preferences; 12 2<sup>nd</sup> preferences; and 6 3<sup>rd</sup> preferences. The attached map shows the location of those children, most of whom are concentrated between the school and the River or in the triangle above the Chertsey Road. Orleans Infant is the nearest school for all but a few of those 43.

**This exceptional demand is more concentrated within St Margarets than it is in any part of the borough and the need for additional places for 2007/2008 entry is therefore greater there than elsewhere. We do not believe that this demand will dissipate before September unless additional places are provided.**

We therefore feel that providing an extra class at Orleans Infant is the right thing to do, as it would meet the excess demand more fully than any other school could. We have considered providing an extra class at The Vineyard Primary or at Chase Bridge Primary but neither would meet the needs of the unplaced children, either directly or indirectly, as well as Orleans Infant could. Having an extra class at Chase Bridge would largely serve to enable more Hounslow resident children to obtain places. Trafalgar Infant have put themselves forward to take an additional class and we have investigated the possibility, but the first 30 children on their waiting list have already been offered other places and would not help to alleviate the problem to the extent that providing extra places at Orleans Infant would do. St Mary's is not an option as there is insufficient room on the infant site to accommodate a demountable classroom.

We are sorry that we have approached the school at such a late point, and we can assure Governors that we would have discussed contingency plans much earlier had we believed that there would be such a shortfall of places. We also acknowledge

that having an additional class would inconvenience the school in many ways and will be unpopular with some parents of children already attending, or who have been offered places at the school; however, there is no evidence, from the extensive experience within the borough, to suggest that taking an additional class would cause the educational standards within the school to be lowered.

We are confident that, were an additional class provided at the school, any children from the cohort who, in three years' time, could not be offered places at St Stephen's could be accommodated at other schools, including The Vineyard and Chase Bridge. However, St Stephen's would welcome additional children to ensure that they are able to budget for the high quality education they provide. The school currently has a falling roll, with 40 vacant places, which is a significant issue for the school and their children.

With regard to what will happen when applications come to be made on behalf of siblings of this year's intake, it is the case that all those children would have been living in the area anyway and would therefore have needed places at the school even if they hadn't had older siblings already at the school.

**From a longer-term perspective, our pupil forecasts predict a consistent, but small, shortfall of places in St Margarets over the next eight years, but those forecasts will now have to be revised to take account of the clearly much smaller 'drop-off' to the private sector. The Authority will therefore reconsider the possibility of expanding Orleans Infant to a four-form entry school. Although they were specifically asked last year to look into the feasibility of changing the school into a 420-place school, the fact that IID's architects felt that there was room for such expansion means that there should be room for expanding the school into a 360-place infant school instead. We will advise the administration that this expansion appears now to be essential, subject to securing funding from the DfES.**

To conclude, we contend from a community viewpoint that the 'Every Child Matters' agenda and the Authority's statutory duty to provide places for the children of all its residents who want them clearly demonstrate that providing an extra class at Orleans Infant will be for the greater good of the community in St Margarets. We are extremely grateful to the Headteacher and Chair of Governors for considering this initially and thank you for meeting with us to discuss the additional allocation of places.