

Provision of primary school places in the St Margaret's and Central and East Twickenham areas

A message from the Director of Children's Services and Culture

Dear parent/carer

1. Background

As you may know, demand for primary places in London has grown in an unprecedented way over recent years. This has partly been driven by demographic changes, and partly by the economic recession, with a number of parents who may otherwise have selected private education opting for the state system instead.

The increase in demand has been particularly acute in south west London and not least in Richmond upon Thames. Across the borough as a whole, 2,100 more permanent primary places will be needed to meet the increased demand. This is equivalent to five new two-form entry schools, and would constitute an increase in capacity equivalent to 13.5% of currently available spaces. If the switch from private to state education is a long term feature, then we could need a further 700 places.

2. Funding

This clearly presents a huge financial challenge. Despite sustained lobbying by the Council, central government has not allocated sufficient funds to meet this increase in demand for school places. In 2008 we received an extra £11.3m, and, last year, although we were one of the hardest hit councils in London, we only received an extra £3.3m. Last year we announced a £32m programme to provide 1,050 extra permanent places – about half of what is required. A programme for phase two is currently being put together.

Richmond Council receives very low levels of government grant, and would be likely to face a cap if it sought to fund new primary places through an increase in rates of Council Tax. It is against this very difficult financial backdrop that the Council has been pursuing innovative potential solutions to the current challenge. One of these is to purchase part of the St John's Hospital site in Strafford Road, Twickenham, and convert it to provide additional school places.

3. Local demand for places

In the St Margaret's and East Twickenham area, demand has grown steadily in the last few years. The Council previously took action to meet demand, with the expansion of St Mary's to two-form entry. But further action will be needed to meet the full scale of increase we are currently witnessing.

4. Options

You may be aware that, in co-operation with the schools concerned, we had formulated plans to meet that additional demand by converting both Orleans Infant and St Stephen's Junior into two-form entry all-through primary schools. That plan would have provided an extra form of entry in the area.

After a period of reflection the governors of St Stephen's have decided that they cannot agree with the scheme that we proposed to them, as they believed that the funding available would not fully meet their needs in becoming an all-through primary school.

While the Council does not accept that the funding was insufficient and is disappointed by that decision, we have looked at other options and have developed a solution which we believe will, in some ways, be better.

The new solution will be able to provide two extra forms of entry instead of one, ensuring greater choice for parents and future-proofing the area against further growth and the need to provide places in 'bulge' classes.

We are now proposing one of the following:

Option one

Orleans Infant to stay as a community infant school, but be expanded to four-form entry, from its existing three-form entry provision. This requires the building of three extra classrooms, but we will reserve space for a further two classrooms so that we will have the flexibility should we ever want to reinstate the idea of converting the school (and St Stephen's) into a two-form primary school.

St Stephen's to remain as a three-form entry junior school. Due to the expanding numbers in the area this school should be full and should avoid some of the financial difficulties that led us into early discussions with the governing body.

St Mary's infant provision to remain two-form entry and to stay at the Amyand Park Road site.

St Mary's junior provision to be relocated to the current St John's Hospital site and to be increased to three forms of entry, from its current two-form entry provision. This will correspond to the extra provision at Orleans Infant.

This will increase the choice that parents have when deciding on junior provision and will decrease the distance that some children have to walk from central Twickenham to their junior school.

The current site of St Mary's junior provision, at Richmond Road, will be converted into a one-form entry, all-through community primary provision.

These proposals would mean that two extra forms of entry would be provided in the local area, rather than the one that had been proposed in the previous scheme.

Option one continued

The forms of entry are shown in this table:

	Infant	Junior
Orleans Infant	4	0
St Stephen's	0	3
St Mary's Primary - Infant at Amyand Park Road	2	0
St Mary's Primary - Junior at the St John's Hospital site	0	3
New primary (on the current St Mary's Junior site)	1	1
Total	7	7

For Year 2 children moving on from Orleans Infant there would be more choice than is currently available, in two popular and successful schools. For each of the last two years, a third of the children initially allocated places at Orleans Infant were living closer to the St John's Hospital site. The Council believes that for parents living nearer Central Twickenham, having junior provision at the St John's site would be both helpful and attractive to them.

Option two

An alternative approach would be to pursue Option 1, but with the following adjustments:

St Mary's junior provision would stay as it is on its current site and the St John's Hospital site would become the new community primary, with one form of entry at infant and an additional form of entry at junior. This would lead to the distribution shown in this table:

	Infant	Junior
Orleans Infant	4	0
St Stephen's	0	3
St Mary's Primary - Infant	2	0
St Mary's Primary - Junior	0	2
New primary (at the St John's Hospital site)	1	2
Total	7	7

For Year 2 children moving on from Orleans Infant there would be more choice than is currently available: St Stephen's, already a popular choice, or a brand new primary school.

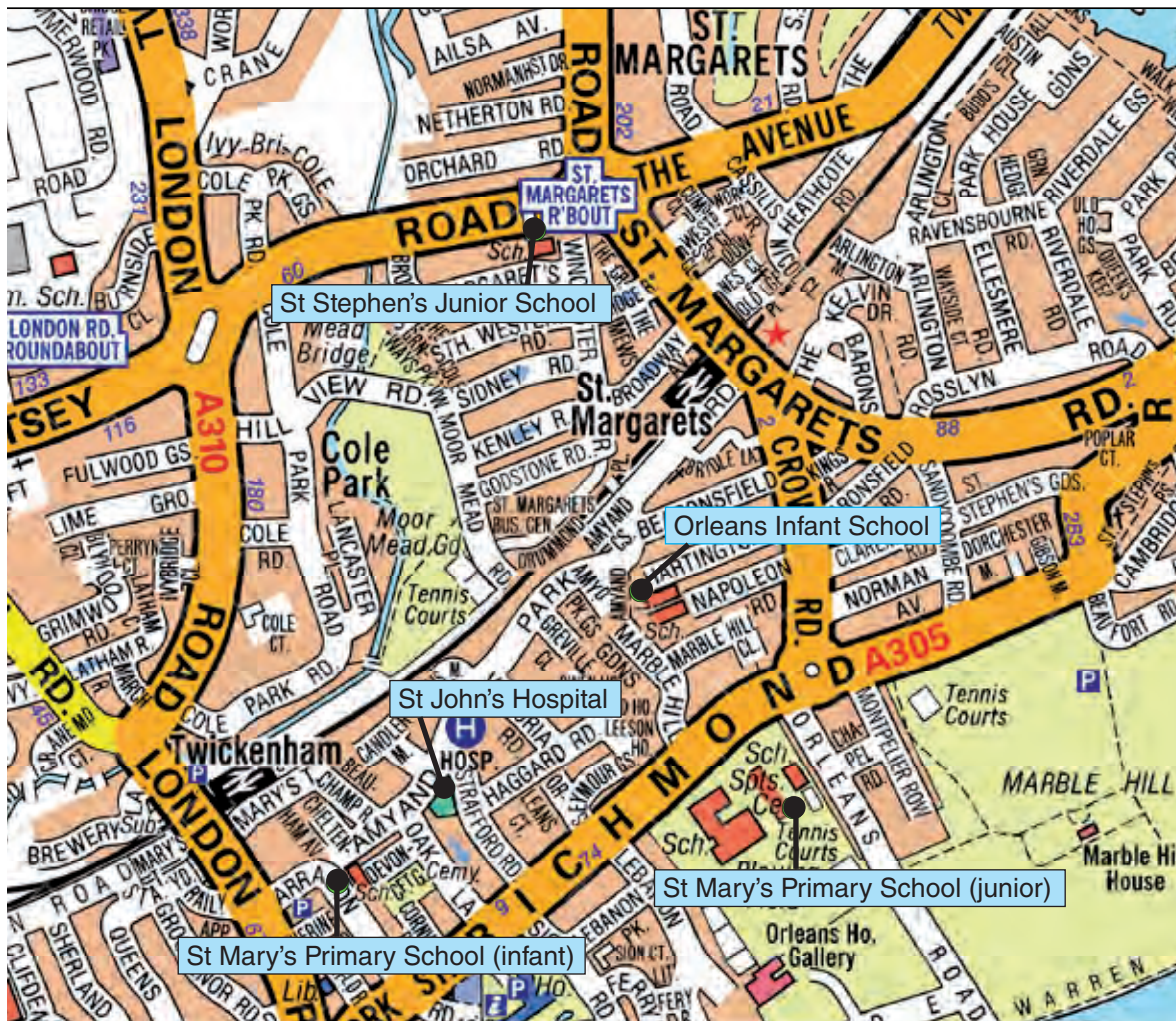
These proposals would, in due course, be subject to the publication of statutory proposals and full consultation, to which parents and other local residents would be invited to respond, before any final decisions would be taken.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the headteachers and the governing bodies who are working so hard to allow us to reach a resolution of this difficult set of issues.

Yours sincerely



Nick Whitfield
Director of Children's Services and Culture



Reproduction by permission of Geographers' A-Z Map Co. Ltd. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. 100019441 2010

Contact for more information:

Matthew Paul
 Deputy Head of Commissioning, Delivery and Service Improvement
 Children's Services and Culture
 London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
 Regal House
 London Road
 Twickenham
 TW1 3QB
 Email: m.paul@richmond.gov.uk
 Phone: 020 8891 7588

Please contact us if you need this leaflet in Braille, large print, on audio tape or in another language. Phone: 020 8891 7500
 Minicom: 020 8891 7539.