

## Statutory proposals to increase the age-range and admission number of Orleans Infant and Nursery School and of St Stephen's Church of England Junior School

### Consultation responses

Eight responses were received. Officers' comments on the responses are made, where possible, without repetition.

Ref.	Respondent's comments	Officers' comments
1	<p>I feel very strongly about this proposal. Orleans Infants has an incredibly high application rate compared to St Stephen's and St Mary's and this is I am sure a reflection not of different teaching standards between the schools, but because Orleans Infants offers the infants a fantastic special environment for that age group in the outside space. Exploring, discovering and imagination, and I think nature, are crucial to infants way of playing and the outside environment needs to facilitate these things and at present does so very successfully. This will be lost. The proposed changes will mean 60 more children, and a lot less playground. But most importantly of all this space will then have to cater to the very different needs of the older children at the cost to the younger ones. Once this green and beautiful space has gone it will never be brought back.</p> <p>Other objections are the transition from infants to St Stephen's is an important and positive experience. Being the eldest in your school and being ready for a new environment teaches them lots about responsibility and moving on, adapting, change, etc. Boredom will be a real issue as they will have the same playground, same school, for potentially 8 years! With not enough space to allow transition to different areas.</p> <p>Many people feel the "us and them" of having 2 same school providers will cause problems when they move onto Orleans Park rather than the cohesion that exists now.</p> <p>All the above points are so much worse when considering St Stephen's.</p>	<p>The application rate at Orleans is not significantly higher at Orleans than at St Mary's (in 2011: 376 for the 90 published places at the former compared with 324 for the 60 at the latter) and cannot be compared with St Stephen's in this regard as the latter does not currently have a Reception intake.</p> <p>All 4-11 age-group primary schools – of which there are already 28 in the borough – face these challenges. The designs for both schools would ensure that there is sufficient space for each separate key stage.</p>
2	<p>We live in Arlington Road, making Orleans our nearest school.</p> <p>I heard that for reception 2012, there are already 50 siblings who will apply for entry. Is this true or is it playground talk?</p>	<p>We anticipate that having 60 Reception places each at both Orleans and St Stephen's would spread the available places more equitably across St</p>

	<p>If it is true, then that leaves 10 places for everyone else - quite obviously not enough. As was mentioned at the [consultation] meeting, the extra 60 places at St Stephen's would be swallowed up by the children in north St Margarets who would gain admission ahead of my daughter based on their proximity to St. Stephen's. My worry is that east Twickenham would still be a black hole for school places, and that [my daughter] would have no wider choice of schools because the catchment for both will be so small given the high volume of children requiring places.</p> <p>I base this worry on fact – despite living about 500m from Orleans, [my daughter] failed to secure a place at state nursery this year, meaning we have to find hundreds of pounds each term to keep her in Kindergarten. But that's the subject of another email!</p> <p>Also, this year 120 places have already been deemed necessary in the area, and provided through bulge classes. The new proposals do not build on that number, although I accept that the places would be better managed through permanent forms of entry rather than bulges.</p> <p>So, much as it pains me to say it, while I can see that these 2 excellent schools will make a success of being all-through primaries, I find it hard to support something that will see my child no better off. In tandem with these proposals must be an urgent drive for a new school for east Twickenham.</p>	<p>Margarets and central and east Twickenham.</p> <p>However, we would monitor the admission patterns closely, particularly for east Twickenham children.</p>
3	<p>I am writing to object to the proposal to convert both Orleans Infants and St Stephens to 2 form entry schools. As a parent of children in both schools, and a resident of Twickenham for more than 40 years I am extremely dismayed by the proposals.</p> <p>The fact that local schools have been over-subscribed has been discussed and debated for many, many years. Rather than take appropriate action &amp; build a new school, the council have forced 'bulge' class after 'bulge' class, while allowing more and more residential properties to be built in every spare scrap of land in the borough. Where did the council imagine that children living in these new flats and houses would be educated?</p> <p>This situation has been developing for many years, while the council has taken an appalling short-term approach in their schools policy.</p> <p>Rather than grasp the nettle, and build a new school, the council now proposes to cram more children into 2 successful local schools. The effect of this will be to reduce the quality of learning in these schools, and make these schools over-crowded, while not actually solving the long term problem.</p> <p>I urge the council to re-think this 2 form expansion policy and put money into a new school, providing a long term solution to over-crowding in local schools, and to please, please not destroy our wonderful existing schools.</p>	<p>Throughout the last five years or so, the Council has been trying to find a permanent solution to the difficulties in the area, but there has been, and remains, no suitable site for a new school in the area – and even if there were, the cost of buying the land and then building a new school on it, would be completely prohibitive – so it can only work with the schools that already exist.</p>
4	<p>It is clear from the Statutory Proposal on Changes to the Age Range and Admission Number of Orleans</p>	

Infant School that the changes have been agreed in principle by the Governing Body of Orleans Infants. However, the Governing Body thought it would be helpful to provide a bit more detail explaining its views.

The lack of reception places in St Margaret's and Central/East Twickenham has been a concern for some years and the LA has been unable to identify and purchase a site suitable for building a further school in the area. The lack of places has now reached an acute stage with admission numbers predicted to increase even further. It is likely that the proposed changes will not completely solve the issue and additional places will still be needed, particularly given the continued level of house building in the Borough. Nonetheless, the Governing Body strongly supports the proposed changes to Orleans Infant School and St Stephen's Junior School for the following reasons:

- The need for places locally is clear. Orleans Infants has been asked to take a bulge class in 4 of the last 5 years. It should be noted that Orleans was asked in June 2011 to take a bulge class only when it became clear that even with bulge classes at The Vineyard and St Mary's and with an expanded Chase Bridge there were still not enough places for Reception children in TW1. Looking at the location and number of children in TW1 without places, governors strongly believe that Orleans and St Stephen's could both flourish and be full as 2FE primary schools.
- There are undoubted benefits to an all through primary. Children benefit from the experience of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 teachers and the easily accessible contact with a wider age-group of children. A 2 form entry primary school would provide continuity of education and convenience for parents in having siblings at the same school, as well as broader educational benefits brought by the increased subject expertise found in a larger staff.
- The proposals enable the building of necessary facilities. Orleans Infants will, from January 2012, have a bulge class in each of its 3 years. Although the work to expand the hall and kitchen and to provide one additional permanent classroom will have been completed by then, the School will still not have the teaching and learning space it needs for the number of children it accommodates. In the course of the last few years it has had a demountable installed on the playground and lost its ICT suite. The library is no bigger and the space that we have to conduct small group or one-to-one interventions (which we consider essential to giving the children at Orleans an outstanding education) has come under more and more pressure. Children in St Margaret's and Central/East Twickenham are being badly let down currently in terms of the facilities provided for them. The plans that have been approved by the Governing Body for a 2 form entry primary will provide the much needed facilities for the children.

Since the announcement of the proposals and in particular during and after the meetings held with parents and the local community, the Governing Body has heard the views of a good number of parents. While many parents (and in particular those parents who will be new to the school in September 2012 and beyond) are supportive of the proposals, we are aware of others who have concerns. The Governing Body has discussed those concerns and remains of the view that it strongly supports the proposals. I have set out below some of the concerns raised with us and the Governing Body's response.

- What is wrong with the status quo? The status quo involves bulge classes and no clear progression at Year 3 (since St Stephens cannot take a bulge class every year). The staff at Orleans have a very positive attitude and do not complain about the pressure of additional bulge classes and therefore parents may be of the view that bulge classes are "fine". However, as explained above, this is not the case; the School does not have the facilities it needs for the number of children it accommodates and this is not a long term solution. Furthermore, the lack of places for all children in every year at St Stephen's for junior level causes huge distress to children and parents.
- Why can't Orleans expand to a 4FE infants and St Stephen's expand to a 4FE juniors? Whereas Orleans has the space to accommodate 4 forms of infants (though building work would be needed to provide the necessary facilities), St Stephen's does not have the space to accommodate 4 forms of juniors. Furthermore, as described above, we believe there are undoubted benefits to an all through primary.
- The Local Authority should provide another school. As a governing body we have sympathy with this view; indeed, we have been pushing for this solution for several years. However, while this might be an ideal solution, the Local Authority has been unable to identify a site to provide a new primary school other than the purchase of part of the Amyand House site to enable the expansion of St Mary's Primary School. As noted above, the current proposal helps address the immediate crisis of excess demand but will not help with any future increase in demand (see below).
- The proposals will not solve the problem so should not go ahead. We share the concern that despite the expansion of St Mary's Primary School and the proposed changes to Orleans Infants and St Stephen's Juniors, there will still be families in the local area that have difficulty finding local primary school places for their children. Our expectation is that the Local Authority will continue to work to address this. However, we do not believe that this is a reason not to go ahead with the current proposals, since the school places are needed now and while they might not completely solve the problem of sufficient places, they will help alleviate it.

In this context, it should be noted that Orleans Primary will not be able to take any bulge classes since it will already have a large number of children on a relatively small site. It is therefore important that the community has assurances that the Local Authority will not require Orleans Primary to take any bulge classes in the future. The Governing Body is pleased that at the meeting with our Year 2 parents on 1<sup>st</sup> November you were able to give this commitment.

- Creating two 2FE primaries will split the local community. As a school, we have a strong sense of community and we would not be so strongly supporting the 2FE primary proposal if we felt that this split would have a detrimental impact on the local community. The fact is that the community is already “split” in the sense that some families choose the Orleans/St Stephen’s route and other the St Mary’s route for their primary children. It is also a fact that Orleans/St Stephen’s families that have friendships with St Mary’s families whether through NCT groups, brownies, cubs, ballet, football or just generally socially, continue these friendships despite the different schools. It is furthermore the case that strong friendships tend to be formed within a class rather than within a year group. This is perhaps particularly so in large (120) year groups, whereas in a 2FE context, friendships across a year group are more likely to be built. Both Orleans and St Stephen’s have expressed commitment to continuing strong links between the two schools.
- Orleans is a very special environment – changing it to a primary will spoil this. As a Governing Body we are extremely proud of Orleans Infants and particularly proud of the staff and the ethos of the school. We are constantly told by visitors what a wonderful welcoming atmosphere it has and how the enthusiasm and love of learning of the children is displayed brilliantly throughout the school. We believe that all stakeholders in the school will work extremely hard to ensure that Orleans Primary will continue to be a very special place for primary age children. As part of this, the School has worked with the architects to ensure that the plans for the school include sufficient “green space” to maintain the current character of the school.
- There is not enough space on the site for junior play. The Governing Body has worked hard with the School, architects and Local Authority to produce plans which we believe facilitate an excellent teaching and learning environment while maximising outdoor space. It is true that the proposals will mean a large number of children on site and of course, ideally, all schools and parents would like large grounds including playing fields. However, the Governing Body believes that the number of children on site will be manageable and staggered playtimes can be used to ensure all children from the youngest to the oldest will have sufficient effective playtime.
- Will Orleans be able to provide for junior children when it currently specialises in infants? The

	I hope this provides you with an insight into the views of the Orleans Governing Body.	
5	<p>I wish to formally oppose the council's plans to convert Orleans Infant and St Stephens junior schools into primary schools. I believe that these plans do not provide a long term solution to the problem, and will have a significant negative impact on the ethos and education currently provided by both schools. The council should come up with another solution that will solve the problem in the long term. I propose that you covert Orleans Infant into a permanent 4 form entry infant school and look further at ways to increase the capacity at junior level, by expanding the current St Stephens site or finding an alternative site such as you have done for St Marys.</p>	<p>From exploration a few years ago of the idea of using part of the Brook Road allotments, it was found that it would be very difficult to expand St Stephen's site. No alternative sites in the area have been identified; therefore we would have to implement the current proposals or Orleans would have to keep on accepting 'bulge' classes (against its will) with no certainty as to where the extra children would go at Year 3.</p>
6	<p>I live in Riverdale Road, East Twickenham, and have a child who needs a reception place in 2012. So I have followed this development with interest. I have been to the consultation on the 8th of November and read all the relevant documentation.</p> <p>I cannot see why it is continually claimed that a third geographical entry point is an unmixed blessing. It will obviously ensure places to people living in North St Margarets who previously struggled to get into Orleans infants using the distance criteria. However this is a much worse situation for people living in East Twickenham and Twickenham riverside. Previously many of us were close enough to Orleans to get places when it had 3 or 4 forms of entry. This will no longer be the case when it has 2 forms of entry and we are much further from St Stephens.</p> <p>The documentation says it is not possible to expand the schools as they are to 4 forms of entry as St Stephens does not have room for 16 classes. As Orleans seems more than capable of providing Year 3 education could they not just run two of the four Year 3 classes? This would give a split of 14 classes to each school without a fundamental change to the nature of each school.</p> <p>This change has been described of as a way to ensure more permanent places for local children. However looking at the detail of the admissions criteria for St Stephen's there are an unlimited number of faith places for the Reception classes. These are given out before places based on distance. This point was very much</p>	<p>Whilst the idea of having 14 classes per site sounds sensible, it would be unfeasible, as an infant school could not run two junior classes.</p> <p>In practice, very few parents apply under the criterion regarding attendance at St Stephen's church and, where they do, they tend to live within the local area.</p>

	<p>glossed over during the presentation on the 8th, the minutes reflect the failure to answer the question on reception faith places. I think it is a pity everyone could not be more honest and discuss the issue. There is also no firm proposal for admissions details after 2012. So Richmond council could fund this change at great cost only to have the 60 places allocated on the basis of attendance at St Stephen's. St Stephen's is a very popular church, especially with young families, this could easily lead to the much needed places being given to children from further afield.</p>	
7	<p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes to the age range and admission number of Orleans Infant School. As a local resident with a child who will be entering Reception in 2012 the decision is obviously important to my family.</p> <p>I would first like to say that my husband and I support the proposed plan to increase the number of permanent school places for children in our community. I think it's important that the borough has adequate permanent school places for its children.</p> <p>One concern I have at present is the degree of overlap between the 'catchment areas' for St Stephens and Orleans. As a resident of Napoleon Road, it seems crazy that we can live within 50 metres of the school and yet in the present system have a good chance of not getting into any school nearby, whereas other families living in-between Orleans and St Stephens have the choice of two schools.</p> <p>I understand that one potential solution is that a pedestrian school gate be made on Napoleon Road and we would wholly support this move.</p>	<p>Five Napoleon Road families applied in 2011 and all were offered places at Orleans Infant for their children.</p>
8	<p>I am writing to object to the proposal to convert both Orleans Infants and St Stephens to 2 form entry schools. As a parent of children in both schools, and a resident of Twickenham for more than 10 years I am extremely dismayed by the proposals.</p> <p>The over-subscription of local schools has been discussed and debated for many years. Rather than take appropriate action &amp; build a new school, the council have forced bulge class after bulge class.</p> <p>There will be more bulge classes needed in the future; the success rate of the schools across the borough encourages people to move to the area to educate their children, as the recession continues less parents will choose private education, and with new residential properties being built/converted in the area there will be further demand for school places. Where do the council imagine that children living in these new flats and houses will be educated?</p> <p>The council say there are no suitable sites for a new school. The old post office sorting office in Twickenham would be a perfect location for a new school.</p> <p>The council say they have no money for a new school, but the large amount of money needed to increase capacity at existing schools in the immediate future will be better invested in the long-term on a new school, and I know the council have reserve funds they could release, being one of the few London boroughs that didn't lose huge amounts of money in the Icelandic bank crash. What better reason to use that money than</p>	<p>The money required to build a new school would be at least double what the Council would spend on these proposals. It is also the case that there are no sites available within the area of need, i.e. St Margarets and east Twickenham. The Post Office site is not within Council ownership, would be too expensive to buy and is not close enough to the area of need.</p>

to create a new school and new jobs?

My question is: when will the council decide a cut-off point to future bulges? When will the schools in question be considered to be at maximum capacity?

The council proposes to cram more children into two successful local schools. The effect of this will be to make these schools over-crowded, with much of the outside play areas lost to buildings, and to mix up age groups that have very different needs. This will not tackle the long-term problem of future increases in demand for school places.

I believe that the council are being highly irresponsible to not see this as a very long-term problem.

I urge the council to re-think this 2 form expansion policy and put money into a new school, providing a long term solution to over-crowding in local schools, and not to diminish the brilliant service provided by the existing schools.