

90 new places to be created at borough's primary schools

► Increased pressure on spaces is seen as a sign of the growing confidence of parents in the quality of the education provided in H&F's schools

LOUISE RAISEY

FOUR popular primary schools are expanding to cater for a large rise in the demand for places.

A total of 1,405 first-preference applications were received for 1,350 places in primary schools across the borough from September, leaving 200 children without a place in any school in the first round of admissions.

Ninety extra places are opening at Brackenbury, Old Oak, St John's Walham Green and St Thomas of Canterbury primary schools, subject to governing body approval.

As well as helping children without a school to go to, the extra places will mean more pupils will now get into their first-choice school, freeing places elsewhere.

Education officers say it will take some time to reallocate places because many parents have yet to decide which offers to take up.



The recession also has a part to play. It is curtailing parents' ability to pay for independent school fees

The increase in the number of applications is seen as a reflection of the growing confidence of parents in the quality of the education in local schools.

"Schools across the borough are

becoming more popular with parents and therefore more difficult to get in to," said H&F cabinet member Antony Lillis.

"The recession also has a part to play. It is curtailing parents' ability to pay for independent school fees and, with house prices falling, it may be that fewer people are moving out of London as their families grow up."

The council has earmarked £300,000 for building works at:

- St John's Walham Green, to expand from one to two entry classes, bringing forward a planned expansion by one year.
- St Thomas of Canterbury to expand from 45 to 60 new pupils in September 2009 and 2010, with a view to a longer-term two-class entry in the future.
- Brackenbury to admit an extra 30 pupils as a one-off 'bulge' year.
- Old Oak to take an extra 15 pupils with a view to a longer-term expansion to two-class entry in the future.

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UP WITH THE BIRDS:

The Lyric's Jessica Hepburn by the proposed extension site and (inset) a computer image of how the new learning centre wing might look. If you don't like it (or if you really love it) now's the time to share your views



HAVE YOUR SAY ON PLANS FOR THE LYRIC

THE Lyric theatre will invite public opinion on its new building extension plans during an open day for Hammersmith residents and businesses.

The King Street venue will unveil its blueprints for a £15million learning centre at the western side of the theatre during the consultation event on July 31.

A series of display boards will allow local people to view the early architectural plans for the new facility, and staff will be on hand all day to answer questions.

Executive director Jessica Hepburn said: "We would love as many people as possible to come along. We're

inviting everyone who lives or works in Hammersmith & Fulham to come and talk to us at this very early stage of the project."

The Lyric has already attracted £3million from the Department of Children, Schools and Families towards the learning centre, which will offer a new creative and media diploma to 14 to 19-year-olds and other qualifications including a creative apprenticeship.

The building extension is due to be finished by the end of 2011 and is likely to include a 60-seat cinema for film-making students, four large rehearsal studios, a computer suite, artists' greenroom and several

smaller rehearsal rooms. "The open day is an opportunity for people to tell us what they like in the plans, or what they think we're missing," Jessica said.

"We're also asking people what activities they would like to see in the new building. It's primarily targeted at young people, but we hope the wider community will use it as well."

Jessica said the July 31 event, which runs from 8am to 8pm, would be followed by another open day in September.

The Lyric will also consult hundreds of young people at the theatre in the summer, and is planning further consultation events in schools.