

INTRODUCTION

Riverhead Infants' School ('the School') is eager to promote a safe, healthy, responsible and environmentally friendly approach to travelling to and from the School premises. The School aims to be proactive in this respect and to review on an on-going basis, ways in which good practice may be encouraged amongst pupils, parents and staff and to pinpoint potential travel-related improvements which may benefit both the School and the wider community.

The existing Travel Plan ('the Plan') pre-dates the relocation of the School from its old site on Amherst Hill and was drawn up in the year 2000 in anticipation of the construction of the new school at its present position on Worships Hill.

The Plan made various proposals concerning the management of anticipated transport issues arising from the new site and many of these proposals have been pursued and implemented successfully by the School. A strong 'Walk to School' culture has been fostered and walking initiatives are now a firm part of the School Development Plan and complement the Healthy Schools' Initiatives which are being introduced.

However, the original survey for the Plan related to the travel patterns to and from the old site. Having relocated in September 2002, the School now has had over two years practical experience at the new site and adequate time in which to review and assess actual travel-related matters affecting the School today.

Furthermore, whilst huge efforts have been made already to discourage the use of the car for the school runs, it is recognised that further decreasing the number of vehicles and thus the congestion in the immediate vicinity of the School, will undoubtedly enrich the lives of all those connected with the School, either directly as pupils and staff, or indirectly as neighbours and fellow road users.

Considering all of the above, it has been decided that it would be appropriate to undertake a major review of the travel issues facing the School today and to produce an updated Travel Plan relevant to the current environment.

DESCRIPTION OF RIVERHEAD INFANTS' SCHOOL

Location

The School is sited in a beautiful green setting on the outskirts of Riverhead Village which is just over a mile from the prosperous commuter town of Sevenoaks in West Kent.

It is situated on the south side of the A25 on the crest of Worships Hill, just opposite Amherst Junior School. The A25 is constantly busy, particularly during the morning rush hour. The A25 is the main feeder route for the region to the M25; Junction 5 is only a mile away to the west.

The School moved from its original Victorian site in the heart of Riverhead Village to a striking new building which opened in September 2002. The School is located on a reasonably flat site and shares its boundaries with Holmesdale Cricket Club, the Riverhead Parkland and fields that can be used for grazing which lead to a lake owned by a local angling club.

Characteristics of the School

The School has 270 pupils on its role (as of 20th January 2005) which is larger than other similar schools. The School is for infants only, having classes for Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. It has three forms of 30 pupils for each year group. There are two intakes each year with the children who have birthdays between 1st September and 31st December starting in the autumn Term and those with birthdays after 1st January starting in the spring Term. Therefore the School is full for the spring and summer Terms of each year.

The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is very low, at less than 1%. A few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and a few have English as an additional language. These children are mainly from European families. The pupil population is fairly stable with very little movement in or out of the School.

The number of staff working at the School include twelve teachers and twenty five support staff.

The majority of families at the School live in Riverhead Village or have Sevenoaks addresses; most living within one mile. The catchment area is in flux. In 2003/2004 the School was heavily oversubscribed and the catchment area dropped to less than half a mile. Currently there is a national drop in birthrate and, although the School is full, the catchment area has extended to 4.5 miles to include neighbouring villages.

The School continues to be popular because it is recognised to be a very effective school which achieves high standards and encourages a good attitude to learning. The School is very well managed by highly committed staff and governors who are constantly seeking to improve the learning experience of the pupils. Ofsted has recognised this and in May 1996 the School was awarded a 'Certificate of Excellence.' The School was also awarded 'Beacon School' status for two consecutive four year periods where staff were encouraged to demonstrate good practice to other schools.

TRAVEL FACILITIES AT RIVERHEAD INFANTS' SCHOOL

Driving to School

The School site allows for 40 car parking spaces of which staff occupy roughly half and families at the School use the rest. The car park is not large enough to accommodate all School families. To park at the School families must apply for parking permits. Informal use of the car park probably occurs during difficult situations eg ill children. However, the School has recently installed a new barrier across the entry and exit lanes for the School and this has made parents less likely to use the car park. It also prevents other unauthorised users eg dog walkers and commercial vehicles from gaining access to the car park.

Most of the other families who drive tend to park in the neighbouring roads, particularly Witches Lane just outside Amherst School.

Walking to School

Families walking to School use two major routes;

- **The Hole in the Wall** – used mainly by families in Montreal Park, Brittain's Lane with Sevenoaks addresses
- **Witches Lane** – serving families from Chipstead Village direction, Chesterfield Drive and Tesco housing development. There are several feeder routes to Witches Lane namely Bullfinch Lane and Chipstead Lane.

There are two other routes which are also popular;

- **Worships Hill** ie along the A25 or through the Riverhead Parkland. Many families park in the Harvester car park with the full permission of the Harvester management.
- **Westerham Road** ie along the A25 used by families from Bessels Green and Sundridge.

Bus Service

The nearest bus stop is on Chipstead Common. It is used by one member of staff and occasionally one family. The bus service for the area is not very convenient for families at the School and buses are not that easy to use in cases where the family has several young children.

Cycle Racks

The cycle racks already installed are very well utilised. The School's children are generally too small to cycle, but scooters are very popular. The racks are used by children from the linked Key Stage Two School, Amherst Junior School, also. Some of these are able to cycle if their journey is safe enough.

Before and After School Care

The School has a successful Breakfast Club operating every morning from 7.50 am. On average 8 children attend allowing their parents to catch trains to London just after 8 am. Similar numbers of children attend after school care at different centres around Sevenoaks; they are collected by taxi or walk to the venues.

There are a number of after school clubs that take place at the School including Football, Tennis, Cricket, Art and Ballet clubs. The car park accommodates all parking required for these clubs.

School Trips

Coaches can park easily and wait on the turning circle in front of the School. Therefore school trips do not interfere with traffic flow on local roads. Amherst Junior School also occasionally uses the car park for coaches returning from school trips to reduce traffic congestion during the late afternoon.

School Events

The PTA holds a series of social and fundraising events throughout the school year. The car park usually accommodates all the parking for evening social events. The Summer Fair is the largest fundraising event held on site, attracting people not only connected to School, but also from the local community, with most families parking in nearby roads or the local car parks.

Local Community Use of the School Car Park

At weekends, the neighbouring churches use the car park to reduce the parking congestion on local roads. The car park is used for conferences and concerts at the two local churches. Occasionally, weddings are held locally, either at residents' homes or at the churches and guests park in the School car park if permission is sought beforehand.