



# School offers prove need for more choice, say campaigners

By Cathy Halstead

The team behind the campaign to set up a new free school, The Archer Academy, claims this year's first round of offers of secondary school places provides further evidence of the need for a wider choice of schools in Barnet.

According to Barnet Council's figures, 36.5% of children weren't offered a place at their first choice school, with 6.6%, a total of 223 children, being allocated to a school that they hadn't even named on their application form.

Local Schools for Local Children spokesperson Avis Johns said: "I've lost count of the number of people who have told me that even the first choice on their form isn't their school of choice at all.

"Parents are being forced to put faith schools, or single sex schools, on their application forms, because there aren't any other realistic options. All they want is a good, mixed-sex, non-denominational school that their children can go up to with their friends."

### Expansion

Barnet Council has recognised the need for more secondary places in the borough, and is working to find solutions, such

as expanding well-regarded schools. The Compton, Christ's College and Cophall schools are scheduled to expand from September 2013, providing 90 extra places.

But in a report at the end of last year, the council's Scrutiny Panel stated that the projected shortfall in secondary places will rise to around 720 by 2020/21. So a wide range of solutions, in addition to the planned expansion, will need to be found if that demand is to be met.

Avis explained: "We know that The Archer Academy alone isn't enough to address the long-term issues around secondary education in Barnet but it would significantly widen choice for local parents, and help avoid the disappointment that hundreds of families experience on offers day."

**STOPPRESS:** As we went to press, the team were notified that they have got through to the interview stage and they will be

seeing the Department for Education on 28 May. A beaming Avis said: "We're absolutely ecstatic to be called for interview and are really looking forward to putting our case to the DfE. We need support like never before and we need parents to register that support at [www.thearcheracademy.org.uk](http://www.thearcheracademy.org.uk) before 20 May, so the DfE can be in no doubt about the strength of local feeling for our school." The team can be contacted by email at [localschools@live.co.uk](mailto:localschools@live.co.uk).

# Could you live on £1 a day?

Here, local resident Esther Grieder explains why she will be living on £1 a day for five days this month.

**Could you live on £5 for five days? This is the challenge that thousands of people, including myself, will be taking on from 7-11 May when we Live Below the Line for Restless Development.**

This innovative campaign involves people across the UK, US, Australia and New Zealand, and asks them to spend just £1 per day on all of their food and drink for five days. It aims to raise awareness of the 1.4 billion people across the world who live on this amount every day.

### Lack of choice

If, like me, you find it hard to imagine surviving without your morning coffee, then living on £1 a day will seem pretty incomprehensible. And that's why Live Below the Line is such a powerful campaign. By living on this limited budget, I hope to get a personal, albeit tiny, insight into the lack of choice and opportunity that is a key part of living in extreme poverty.

Sometimes we think that "£1 per day goes much further overseas", but that's simply



Esther Grieder plans to live on just £1 a day.

not the case. Those 1.4 billion people around the world have to make this sum cover everything: food, healthcare, rent, travel, and education. I am worried about going without coffee for a week, but I can't imagine being in a situation where you have to choose between food for your family and medicine.

By being sponsored to Live Below the Line, I am raising vital funds for Restless Development to support the crucial work they do with young people across Africa and South Asia. Restless Development works with young people to tackle the issues that affect them most, including the HIV/AIDS crisis, unemployment and extreme poverty.

If you'd like to sponsor me, please go to [www.livebelowtheline.com/me/esther](http://www.livebelowtheline.com/me/esther). Next month I'll update you with how I got on. To find out more, or to take on the challenge yourself, please go to [www.livebelowtheline.com/uk-restlessdevelopment](http://www.livebelowtheline.com/uk-restlessdevelopment).

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