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EDUCATION NEWS



■ Author and illustrator James Mayhew visited a school to read children their favourite bedtime tales.

James books in to open new school library

Children's author and illustrator James Mayhew stopped by on Tuesday to open a school library containing more than 1,000 shiny new books.

The author from Letchworth, who penned the much-loved Katie series, read stories to children at Broom Barns Community Primary

School in Stevenage who dressed in their pyjamas and brought their favourite bedtime books.

Headteacher Jayne Currant says the library – which also has an IT suite – has been her biggest aim since taking charge in September. “We wanted to create an inspiring educational environment

for our children,” she said.

“I really believe reading will help raise standards of attainment for our pupils.

“James last came to school in October and the children loved him. We wanted them to experience a positive role model in writing.”

Small minority to wait an extra month to be allocated a place 'Four in five children get first choice school'

This year 95 per cent of children in Hertfordshire have been allocated a place at one of their preferred primary schools – and 82 per cent have got their first choice.

Of the 15,133 applications for reception places, 14,320 were allocated a ranked primary school. The 82 per cent receiving their top preference represents a rise of one per cent from last year.

In Stevenage, 95 per cent of applicants were allocated one of their ranked schools, with 83 per cent getting their first choice.

The figures in Hitchin were slightly better, with 97 per cent getting a ranked school and 86 per cent their first choice.

In Letchworth 93 per cent got a ranked school and 82 per cent got

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their first choice, while in Baldock the corresponding figures were 99 per cent and 87 per cent.

Herts County Council's deputy director for education Andrew Simmons said: “We want all children to have access to a good education so they can reach their full potential, with the right number of school places in the right location, so I'm delighted the vast majority have been allocated one of their ranked schools.

“This is a significant challenge given there are 10,000 more children under the age of four in Herts than a decade ago.

“We are working to attract extra funding for more places where they are most needed.”

Where a significant number of children in a given area cannot be offered a spot at one of their preferred schools and the closest alternative is in another town or village, children will be offered places next month through the continuing interest process.

Mr Simmons explained: “I recognise this is always a difficult time for parents, but firmly believe that delaying allocations for a small number of families is preferable to allocating a place at a school outside the local area.”

Parents must respond to their allocations by Monday, May 2. For more go to hertsdirect.org and search for ‘after allocation day’.

'System so unfair to parents like us'

It wasn't good news for everyone on Monday, as a minority of parents received the bad news that their child had not been allocated any of their chosen schools.

These included a couple living in the north-east of Letchworth, who listed three schools in Letchworth and one in Baldock, but chose not

to list the one closest to them – and have now not been allocated a school at all.

They have been told they cannot change their choices, and must wait until after the first round of continuing interest allocations next month to maybe get a space at the school closest to them.

“We're in a situation where

we can't do anything,” said the child's mother.

“I am happy for her to go to any Letchworth school – even if they'd given us this one we didn't want, at least she'd have a school.

“I think it's just so unfair – my impression is they have no process in place for parents like us.”

Share your views on the school places issue - email news@thecomet.net

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