

**INSIDE CATCHMENT AREA: £795,000**



**Geography lesson:** the four-bedroom terrace house in Lauradale Road, left, is in the catchment area for Fortismere secondary. It is on the market for about 25 per cent more than the four-bedroom semi-detached home, right, in Winton Avenue, outside the catchment area

**OUTSIDE CATCHMENT AREA: £629,950**



**MIRA BAR-HILLEL**  
Property Correspondent

HOMES in the catchment area of a top London state school are selling for up to £165,000 more than similar properties a few streets away.

Fortismere Secondary School in Muswell Hill is one of the best in the capital and has huge demand for places.

Parents can expect to pay between £750,000 and £1.2million for a four-bedroom house in the catchment area.

Similar-sized properties outside the area sell for £600,000 to £1 million.

Andrew Hunt, of Kinleigh Folkard & Hayward estate agency in Muswell Hill, said: "We're selling a four-bedroom terrace house in Lauradale Road, in the Fortismere catchment, for £795,000.

"On the other side of Muswell Hill, by the golf course, we're selling a four-bedroom house in Winton Avenue which is semi-detached and has a garage for £629,950 — a 25 per cent difference.

"We see young families moving from Zone 1 areas, such as Highbury and Islington, to live within the Fortismere catchment area. The majority of activity is in the spring as families want to move early to be settled for the start of the school year in September."

Lucian Cook, head of research at agency Savills, said: "Access to good schools is a fundamental component of high house prices, especially in the suburban areas preferred by families.

"Buyers are increasingly likely to have read the Ofsted reports for local schools before they start their search. Areas immediately surrounding the

# School adds £165,000 to the value of homes

We moved to get our son into 'fantastic' Fortismere



**Renting:** Amy Alexander and Max

ONE of the lucky pupils to have secured a place at Fortismere School is Max Alexander-Church.

Max's mother, Amy Alexander, had wanted the 11-year-old to go to Fortismere almost since his birth.

Ms Alexander, 36, a physiotherapist, is delighted they moved last year — from within Muswell Hill but, crucially, outside the catchment area — even though it meant she could only rent a flat a few streets from the school.

"The prices are absolutely crazy," she

**KATHARINE BARNEY**

said, "but we were so desperate for Max to attend this school we're happy to rent. People are punching each other to get their children into this school. It's always had a fantastic reputation and, so far, it has lived up to it in every sense."

Max said: "It's great living here and going to the school. I've lots of friends, the performing arts is really good and I want to stay through the sixth form."

top 25 per cent of secondary schools carry an average house price premium of 13 per cent over the average for the area. That premium exceeds 20 per cent in 31 per cent of cases."

The same trend has been seen in other areas. Estate agent Steve Millis of Snellers in Teddington said: "A three-bedroom terrace I sold in 1996 for £180,000

has tripled in value to £540,000. It is near the popular Collis School and what I call typical Caps — Catchment Area Parents — made an offer without even viewing it, just to be near that school."

In Lower Clapton, two excellent primaries — Rushmore and Millfields Community — have attracted creative workers with young children, helping

the area to shed its crime-ridden image and become more family friendly. Prices of some nearby properties have soared to as much as £500,000 — considerably more than in other parts of Hackney.

■ SIXTY-FOUR per cent of Fortismere pupils scored at least five Cs at GCSE including English and maths last year, against a Haringey borough average of 37.4 per cent. The school gets about five applications for each place.

Since head teacher Aydin Onac took over in 2005, the school has become a battleground. Mr Onac, who was paid a £40,000 "golden hello", wanted the school to opt out of council control and raise entry grades for its sixth form from five Cs at GCSE to five Bs.

A campaign of teachers and parents, Keep Fortismere Comprehensive, tried to stop him. So bitter did the dispute become that local MP David Lammy — an education minister — urged Mr Onac to defy government policy favouring independence and to stick with Haringey council.

The then-education secretary Alan Johnson ruled the attempt to raise the sixth form entry grades was illegal.

**Dominic Hayes**

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