

ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE.  
WESTMINSTER, LONDON, SW1P 1QJ

31 October 2013

Mr Jeremy Rodell  
8 Morley Road  
Twickenham  
TW1 2HF

Dear Mr. Rodell,

Thank you for your letter and the copy of the report from Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign (RISC) – *Faith-based discrimination in Richmond primary school offers 2013*.

Whilst I share the passion of RISC to ensure that every child has access to a good school, I am afraid that I am unable to agree to your proposals.

The Catholic Church has made successful representations to the government, going back the 19th century, in support of governing bodies' control of admissions. Since the 1944 Education Act, up to the recent 2010 Academy Act, the Catholic community has sought and secured rights in law which safeguard and promote state-funded schools of a denominational character. Currently, Catholic schools follow a voluntary aided or converter academy governance model. Both these governance structures allow for control over their admissions, which is fundamental to guaranteeing their Catholic character.

Retaining full control over admissions' criteria, alongside governance, ownership and employment of staff is central to the success of Catholic education. The Catholic bishops have a duty laid down in canon law (c.796) to ensure there is an adequate supply of Catholic school places for Catholic parents seeking a Catholic education for their child. The control over admissions has enabled local dioceses to ensure that this need is met and that parental choice for Catholic parents wanting a Catholic school for their child can be exercised. Our schools welcome other children when there are sufficient places available and so are inclusive and welcoming of all.

Your letter refers specifically to St Richard Reynolds School in Richmond. Catholic parents in Richmond have had a long held wish to open a secondary school in Richmond and this was made possible through the partnership formed between the Local Education Authority and the Archdioceses of Westminster and Southwark. These parties worked together to ensure their respective needs were met in the founding of St Richard Reynolds. The school therefore has both primary and secondary provision and although, as you correctly state, some of the primary places are allocated on a community basis so as to meet the needs of the Local Authority, the Catholic bishops have also fulfilled their duty (c. 796) to create more places in a Catholic school. Whilst agreement was reached in this particular case, we hold to the principle of being able to open schools which prioritise Catholic children and in which we have control over admissions.

Yours sincerely,  
+ The Blemington

**The Right Reverend John Sherrington**  
Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster