



Fr Jack Knill-Jones
St. Mary's & St. Peter's Primary School
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Copy of letter to Mr. John Logan

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17 September 2013

Dear Fr Knill-Jones,

The enclosed report from Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign (RISC) - *Faith-based discrimination in Richmond primary school offers 2013* - is intended to provide governing bodies with a new, evidence-based perspective on the impact of their admissions policies. It includes constructive suggestions for simple changes church schools can make to become, in the words of Vince Cable (a defender of faith schools) "more community minded", without challenging their status or ethos. We hope the governing body at St. Mary's & St. Peter's will consider the impact that the school's policy is having on the wider local community and give serious consideration to the suggested changes.

In preparing the report, we were encouraged by clear indications from the Diocese of London that its schools "*should be there to serve the community, so we're really encouraging schools to move towards [open admissions]*" and by the fully inclusive admissions policy adopted by St. Mary's primary in Hampton. This is especially important at primary level, when parents rightly expect to be able to find a good school, close to home, and especially when there is so much pressure on places overall.

In the case of SMSP, according to data provided by the school, after accommodating siblings, over 60% of places this year were offered on the basis of faith, with the cut-off distance for the 14 open places reducing to 303m. As the table on page 5 shows, SMSP's admissions policy is relatively unusual among the local Church of England primaries in that there is no upper limit on the degree to which faith-based priority applies. In the current environment, this inevitably favours some children from further afield over those living nearby, who are disadvantaged simply because of their parents' beliefs or religious practices. We know there were children in Twickenham and north Teddington who were not offered any of their 6 preferred schools, and were instead assigned places at schools up to 5km away.

We are calling for Church of England primaries that currently apply a faith-based admissions test to move to a model which would put a clear % cap – maximum 50%, but ideally below - on faith-based admissions for the remaining places after siblings have been accommodated. This type of model, albeit with an excessive %, is already in place at Archbishop Cambridge's Primary in Twickenham. There seems therefore no obstacle to its adoption by the Admissions Code deadline of 15 April 2014 in time for September 2015 entry.

This suggestion does not fully address our in-principle concern that *no* local children should be denied access to state-funded schools because of their parents' beliefs or religious practices. But we believe it is a readily achievable way in which your governing body could make the school's admissions policy more community-minded without impacting the school's status or ethos.

We look forward to hearing your views, and would be happy to discuss the matter further.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Rodell – for Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign