

Councillor [REDACTED]
London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames
York House
Richmond Road
Twickenham
TW1 3AA

11 September 2011

Dear Councillor [REDACTED]

Proposal for new Catholic Secondary School on Clifton site

I write in a personal capacity as a lifelong resident of the Borough as well as being the Chief Executive of the Catholic Education Service for England and Wales. I began my teaching career in the Borough at Twickenham Girls School, on the Clifton site. I want now to give my fullest support to the proposal that the new, agreed, Catholic secondary school be able to be located on the Clifton site. Indeed, I am very surprised that this is even subject to further debate given the very positive Council support for a Catholic secondary school earlier this year. There is urgent, long overdue need for a Catholic secondary school – a need which could be very well met by the Clifton site and its existing buildings.

Catholics are taxpaying members of the Richmond community, like any other constituent. They make up 14% of our local population so by any calculation it would be fair to expect that with 8 secondary schools in the Borough of Richmond Upon Thames, one of them should be Catholic. For too long Catholics have lacked their rightful secondary school, while the Church continues to provide excellent Catholic primary schooling in the Borough. The Borough's Catholic primaries are outstanding and contribute significantly to the Borough's educational achievement and hence its reputation. Our Catholic schools have a history of excellent partnership, working with other schools, both Catholic and Community, in the Borough. Our heads currently are involved in mentoring headteachers in community schools in the borough, extensively involved in charitable work and in numerous community projects. It would be a very mean spirited person who wanted to stand in the way of enabling this to continue into Catholic secondary provision.

EB on behalf of Oona Stannard
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Chief Executive and Director Oona Stannard MSc, HMI (88-99)
Chairman The Right Reverend Malcolm McMahon O.P., Bishop of Nottingham

For too long Catholic pupils have been unable to continue their Catholic education in the Borough. Your meeting of 21 July 2011 shows that incorrect arguments have been put forward to suggest that the new school would not contribute to the aim of greater choice and diversity. **Greater choice and diversity is exactly what it would achieve.** It would enable Catholic parents to have the choice of a Catholic secondary school in their own Borough - the choice that exists for parents in the vast majority of other London boroughs and elsewhere.

We already have examples of choice and diversity in the Borough, for example, single sex secondary education is available for girls and there is a Church of England secondary school. Whilst it is right to say that Catholic schools' admissions policies typically give preference to Catholic children, it is also the case that where the sufficiency of places enables all Catholic demand to be met, places are made available to children other than Catholic. In fact, nationally, almost 30% of all places in Catholic schools are filled by children who are not Catholic. However, it is probably realistic to say that the need for Catholic places in the Borough of Richmond Upon Thames is so great that the vast majority would be filled by Catholic children but this would then release places in some of the Community secondary Schools thereby helping to alleviate their over-subscription.

The argument for Catholic schools is strong in terms of the degree of diversity within them and in regard to their high achievement and contribution to community cohesion. Statistics provided by OFSTED and rehearsed in CESEW's publication '**Value Added: the Distinctive Contribution of Catholic Schools and Colleges in England**'¹ make clear that:

1. OFSTED inspection reports between 2005-9 showed that Catholic secondary schools were more often judged to be good or better for overall effectiveness, and for their collaboration with other agencies, than other secondary schools.
2. In terms of achievement and standards 24% of Catholic secondary schools were judged outstanding compared with 16% across all schools.
3. Catholic secondary schools were almost twice as likely to be outstanding in terms of the development of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (56% outstanding in Catholic schools compared with 30% of all schools) and their behaviour (44% outstanding in Catholic schools compared with 24% of all schools).
4. Of particular note is the fact that Catholic schools were judged outstanding in terms of contribution made to the community; 51% of learners in Catholic schools made an outstanding contribution to the community compared with 38% all schools.

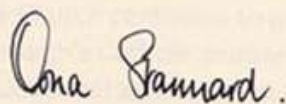
¹ *Value Added: the Distinctive Contribution of Catholic Schools and Colleges in England*; Catholic Education Service for England and Wales; December 2010; ISBN: 978-1-903533-26-0.
<http://www.cesew.org.uk/standardnews.asp?id=10080>.

Our own annual census² and Government data also confirm that Catholic schools are more ethnically diverse than schools nationally: in 2009 26% of pupils in Catholic secondary schools were from ethnic minority groups compared to 21% of pupils in secondary schools nationally. Our profile is very close to the national average for free school meals ie we are socially diverse and do not select whether on ability or any social factors. I rehearse this to remind you that a Catholic secondary is of wide benefit and to share my confidence that such a school in the Borough would bring excellence which would be shared in many and various ways.

The signatories on the e-petition in support of a new Catholic school may be smaller in number than those on the petition calling for the so called inclusive school but for understandable reasons; I urge you please to be mindful of the circumstances of these two petitions. The local Catholic community understood that the debate and decision in Council earlier this year in support of a Catholic secondary school was inviolate. They expected honest and urgent endeavour by the Council. They put their faith in that process. They are shocked that the expectation of the first available and suitable site - the Clifton Road campus - now seems to be the subject of further debate and doubt. Like me, I daresay they trusted Richmond upon Thames Council. I very much hope that you will maintain that trust and not let the Catholic community down by permitting any impediment or delay to the setting up of a Catholic secondary school. I also hope that you will not let down the Borough as a whole by delaying the implementation of a new asset to contribute significantly to the Borough's educational standing ie a Catholic secondary school. Please help to ensure that we can continue the excellence of Catholic primary education in Richmond-upon-Thames into the secondary phase and, in so doing, give a boost to standards in secondary education. Please live up to choice and diversity in Richmond Upon Thames and respect Catholic parents and their children.

Finally, please remember that the Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights, Article 2: Right to Education, states that '*No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions*'.

Yours sincerely



Dr Oona Stannard
Chief Executive & Director

² *Digest of 2009 Census Data for Schools and Colleges*; Catholic Education Service for England and Wales; December 2010 (ISBN: 978-1-903533-25-3) <http://www.cesew.org.uk/standardnews.asp?id=10080>.