

RISC RESPONSE TO DIOCESAN PRE-STATUTORY CONSULTATION

Submitted to <http://www.rcdow.org.uk/richmondconsult/> on 13 Feb 2012 in response to:
<http://www.rcdow.org.uk/richmondconsult/Richmondconsult.pdf>

I am responding on behalf of the Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign. In reporting the outcome of this pre-statutory consultation we trust that views in opposition to the proposal will be fairly and properly recorded. On that basis, our comments on the proposals are as given below.

We would also point out that, as the associated Statutory Proposals were not made by 1st February 2012, the Education Act 2011 requires the Council first to seek to set up an Academy/Free School if it sees the need for a new school. We have raised this point with the Council and are awaiting a response.

PRINCIPLE

RISC supporters object to any new state-funded school in the borough applying admissions policies that discriminate against local children on the basis of the religion or belief of their parents. The Diocesan proposal is for two new schools, both of which will apply such policies. We think that is simply wrong, regardless of whether the church or any other body is running them.

SPECIFIC ADMISSIONS POLICY PROPOSALS

We were surprised to see in the consultation document that a proposed concession on admissions at primary level has been “spun” to give the impression that there will be a substantial number of community places across the two schools. This is not the case. Key pieces of information that should have been included are:

- the primary school will have 30 places per year, while the secondary will have 150 places;
- both schools will be filled one year at a time, with consequent implications for phasing of any “community” places;
- the proposal is only for “up to” one-third of primary places based on distance alone, so the actual quota could be less;
- the church will have a controlling interest in the governing bodies, which will be able to vary the admissions policies in the future;
- the calculation behind the “up to 150 community places” claim should be given, along with the relevant dates (see below).

Assuming the “community” quota (which will, of course, include children of Catholics living in the area – 1 in 10 on average) is the maximum of 10 children per year at the primary, the implication is:

- All the places at the secondary will be taken on the basis of faith-based selection until 2020 while the first “community” cohort works its way from Reception in 2013 to Year 6.
- Even if all 10 of these children then transfer to the secondary, they will comprise just 6.5% of the Year 7 intake of 150, and 1.5% of the school population of 750 overall (ignoring the 6th form).
- It will be 2025 before the cohort has reached Year 11 (GCSE), when the maximum “community” proportion of 6.5% overall at the secondary will be achieved. So the secondary is expected to be at least 93.5% faith-based in terms of admissions.
- Even at that point, 13 years ahead, and assuming no change in the admissions policies of either school in this respect, there will be only 7x10 “community” children at the primary, and 5x10 at the secondary – total 120. We cannot see how the 150 figure is justified.

We trust these points will be made clear in consultation on any Statutory Proposals.

Jeremy Rodell