



Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign

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Dr Vince Cable MP
Constituency Office
2a Lion Road
Twickenham TW1 4JQ

7 October 2011

Dear Dr Cable.

Firstly, thank you for forwarding me a copy of Michael Gove's response of 1 Oct to your letter of 26 Aug. We have now had confirmation from DfE that they have received *"two section 10 requests from the Diocese of Westminster for consent to publish proposals outside of a school competition for a secondary and primary school"*. The significant news that a Catholic primary is also proposed along with the secondary will, of course, further enflame the situation.

It is interesting that the Secretary of State will take into account "If any interest has been shown by an Academy or Free School proposer..." when the DfE recently turned down a proposal for a Richmond Free School. And of course, no-one has sought Academy proposals - and a positive response from providers is unlikely - given that the Council is set on the current course.

We have also been advised that church policy is not to consider new Catholic Academies/Free Schools because of the 50% maximum faith based selection rule, hence the focus on Voluntary Aided. A compromise solution enabling a good proportion of places to be set aside for local children on a non-denominational basis therefore appears to be problematic.

Meanwhile our petition asking the council *"to ensure that every state-funded school opening in the borough from now on is inclusive, so that no child can be denied a place in a good local school because of the religion or belief of their parents"* now has well over 2000 signatures, and we recently delivered a further 250 paper signatures that have yet to be added. A glance at the Richmond & Twickenham Times letters pages will underline that the issue has become hugely controversial.

We are therefore requesting a full, fair and meaningful consultation with all borough residents on what to do with the Clifden Road site, to take place before any further moves are made towards a Catholic VA school. We note that Cllr Stephen Knight has made a similar request. It seems the only fair way forward.

A consent from Michael Gove, while not making the final decision, will effectively start a formal process that will pre-empt this wider consultation. **Any further action you can take to secure a refusal of consent, or at least a delay to give the opportunity for this wider consultation to take place, would be very much appreciated.**

Yours sincerely,

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Attached for information a letter for consideration by Council Education Scrutiny Committee challenging the Council's decision-taking process. This letter and attachment to be copied by email to Joan Bennett.