

PS/Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools

From: XXXXXX
School Organisation &
Operations Team
Ext XXXXXX

Date: 9 December 2011

Copy: PS/Secretary of State
PS/Minister of State for Schools
PS/Minister of State for Children
and Families
PS/Permanent Secretary
& others at end

REQUEST FROM THE DIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER FOR CONSENT TO PUBLISH PROPOSALS FOR A NEW A NEW 3 - 11 VOLUNTARY AIDED ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Issue

1. The Diocese of Westminster has applied, under section 10(2) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006), for consent to publish proposals outside of a new school competition for a new 3 – 11 voluntary aided, (VA), Roman Catholic, (RC) primary school.

Summary

2. The proposed new school will be a one form of entry VA, RC primary school with nursery provision. It is intended that the new school opens in September 2012. The aim is to establish the new school on the site of a former girls' grammar school currently owned and occupied by Richmond Adult and Community College. The postal address will be Clifden Road, Twickenham, TW1 4LT. A copy of the application is available at [Annex A](#).

Recommendation

3. That the Minister **gives consent** to Diocese of Westminster to publish proposals for a new primary school.

Timing

4. Routine. It would be helpful if the Minister could provide a response w/c 19 December to enable us to notify the Diocese in that week.

Background and Argument

5. The proposed school is due to open on 1 September 2012. The Diocese of Westminster spans 18 local authorities and currently has six other primary VA, RC schools in Richmond upon Thames. The proposal is in response to parental demand for further RC primary places in the area. Population growth in West London has meant that Catholic parents are finding it difficult to secure a place in a local RC school.

6. There are currently six RC primary schools in the Borough totalling between them nine forms of entry. All the schools are near, or above their pupil number capacity and are over subscribed for admission purposes. The new school will reduce the pressure on other maintained school places in the Borough and enable local children to access a RC primary school near their home rather than travelling to other London Boroughs.

7. It is essential to the Diocesan Trustees that the proposed school should wholly provide places for Roman Catholic children in order to meet the demand for Catholic primary places in the area. As such, the Diocese considers the VA route its only option as it will allow for the admission of 100% Roman Catholic pupils; whereas a new Catholic Academy would be required to admit 50% non-denominational admissions if oversubscribed, which we expect this to be the case, due to demand in the area. The Diocese has confirmed that it may consider Academy status in the future, once the school is established.

8. While recognising that Ministers want to encourage the establishment of Free Schools and Academies, they have made it easier to establish new VA schools, and provisions within the Education Act 2011 simplify the process to publish proposals for a new VA school as prior consent from the Secretary of State will no longer be required.

9. Richmond Borough Council supports the proposal and is considering the purchase of a four acre site and leasing most of it to the Diocese for a period of 125 years for the purpose of education. The site which was formally a girls' grammar school is currently owned and occupied by Richmond Adult and Community College and includes playing fields and parking facilities.

10. The Diocese also aims to establish a new RC secondary school on the same site in 2013 and a separate application has been submitted to take this forward.

11. Having considered the application in the light of the factors listed in guidance and the particular circumstances that apply in this case, we have concluded that there are strong arguments in favour of agreeing consent to this application. The criteria set out in guidance was issued by the previous Administration and this application has been reviewed against those criteria, with additional considerations taking into account the general policy presumption in favour of Academies. We expect to issue new guidance in February. A summary of our conclusions can be found at [Annex B](#).

Finance

12. The Diocese will be provided with the site and buildings for the new school by the local authority. The proposed new school is not reliant on any identified Departmental funding source.

Presentation

13. We are aware that since receipt of this application and the accompanying application for a secondary school, a significant amount of correspondence objecting to the proposal has been received by the Department. The objections are based on the grounds that any new provision provided by the authority should not be designated Faith provision, but should be fully inclusive. Some correspondence has also been received supporting the proposal.

14. The granting of consent to this application is not granting for the establishment of the school, it is purely consent to publish proposals. The proposer will still be required to go through the required statutory process to establish the school. This process involves a period of representation in which members of the public can submit their views on the proposal. These should then be taken into account by the Decision Maker when making a final decision on the proposals. If required, we will provide Press Office with appropriate lines to support the decision to grant consent to the application.

Internal Clearance

15. XXXXXX (Deputy Director, School Choice, Organisation & Fair Access Division) and XXXXXX (Legal Advisors Office).

Action

16. If the Minister is content, officials will write to the Diocese of Westminster informing them of the decision.

XXXXXX
School Choice, Organisation & Fair Access

Cc to PS/Advisers, XXXXXX PO, and Regional

Annex A

<p>Proposed opening date:</p> <p>1st September 2012 or 1st September 2013.</p> <p>Religious category (if any):</p> <p>The proposed school will be a Catholic school within the trusteeship of the Diocese of Westminster.</p> <p>Ethos:</p> <p>As a Catholic school the proposed school will be established to support parents in their responsibility for their children's education. The goal of Catholic education is to draw out the potential in each person to the full, in a community which recognizes Christ as our guide and inspiration. Catholic schools provide the context within which teaching and learning are planned and take place. This is done in a structured way and in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church. The further expression of its engagement in the mission of the Church is the school's contribution to the good of society and its culture. Community cohesion is a core value of this expression, as are ethnic and cultural diversity. These have always been a rich feature of the identity of a Catholic school.</p> <p>Secondary Schools only - Proposed specialism (if any):</p> <p>n/a</p>
<p>2. If the proposed school is to be a foundation school with a foundation (i.e. "Statutory Trust School"), information on the proposed foundation and current plans for membership:</p> <p>n/a</p>
<p>3. Brief details of main reason for the proposed new school e.g. amalgamation/reorganisation, falling roles/surplus places, BSF/PCF, headteacher(s) retiring, new housing development or population growth:</p> <p>The main reason for the proposed new school is a steady increase in parental demand for more Catholic primary places in the area. This is a combination of increases in population and the popularity of the existing Catholic primary schools. The new school will both reduce the pressure on community school places in Twickenham and enable local children, who currently have to travel further to access a Catholic school, to be educated nearer to home. Pupil numbers have risen considerably in this area of London over the past few years and this school will also cater for these children. The Council acknowledges the need for additional primary places in this part of the Borough.</p>
<p>4. Will the school replace an existing school or schools? If so, provide details of the closing school(s), (e.g. Postal address; Number of Pupils; Age range; Category) and proposed date for closure:</p> <p>n/a</p>

5. Statement on how the school will contribute to raising standards, including how it is proposed it will network with other schools in the area:

The proposed school will be part of a network of 216 schools in the Diocese of Westminster. 23% of Catholic maintained primary schools in the Diocese are judged outstanding by OFSTED and 86% are good or outstanding (corresponding national figures for all schools are 14% & 66%). There are no Catholic maintained schools in the Diocese judged inadequate. The six Catholic primary schools in the Borough are all good or outstanding. This background of academic excellence will be built on and replicated in the proposed school. The Diocese has an established track record of partnership with local authorities, as do the Catholic schools with other local schools. The proposed school will therefore be well placed to deliver high quality education for children of primary school age in the area. It will work with parents, governors and the wider community to serve the local area, engaging actively with other schools and the communities from which pupils are drawn.

6. Evidence of levels of parental demand for this school:

This can be seen clearly by the level of oversubscription in the existing Catholic primary schools in the Borough 2011 entry data:

School	Admission Number	Total applications
Sacred Heart	30	139
St James's	90	307
St Edmund's	60	166
St Elizabeth's	30	141
St Mary Magdalen's	30	119
St Osmund's	30	123
Total	270	995

7. Views of local community: evidence of informal or statutory consultation, copies of consultation documents, notes of meetings and feedback received (please list any documents attached):

There have been numerous consultations in Richmond upon Thames about the proposal for a new Catholic secondary school in the Borough. The feedback from all these consultations has also included representations about a shortage of primary school places, notwithstanding the expansion of St James in 2002. This is reflected in the number of parents whose applications for places in the existing primary schools are unsuccessful. The continuing pressure on places was also part of the consultation process which produced

the current Diocesan School Organisation Plan.

Full informal and statutory consultations will be held as part of the process of publishing proposals for the new school.

8. Contact details:

Name: **Tel No:**

E-mail:

Address: Diocese of Westminster Education Service,
Vaughan House,
46 Francis St,
SW1P 1QN

Date: 16th September 2011

Annex B

The contribution the school would make to levels of local diversity

1. The proposed school will increase diversity and parental choice by adding an additional VA, RC primary school to the local area. There are, at present, 40 maintained primary schools in Richmond upon Thames. These comprise 25 community schools, 9 Church of England VA schools and 6 RC, VA schools. There are no foundation schools and no primary Academies.
2. There are currently no proposals to establish a Free School within the Borough of Richmond upon Thames.

Local standards

3. The Diocese of Westminster currently has 216 schools spread over 18 local authorities. Of these, 167 schools cater for primary age pupils. There are six RC primary schools in Richmond upon Thames and all have Ofsted ratings of good or outstanding. Of the Diocese's primary schools, 23% are judged outstanding by Ofsted and 86% as good or outstanding. This compares to the national average for primary schools of 16% and 66%. None of the Diocese's schools are judged inadequate. The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames has an Ofsted rating of excellent for the delivery of Children's Services.
4. Free school meal eligibility within Richmond upon Thames is 9.2% compared to the national average of 18%.
5. The Diocese has an established track record of partnership with local authorities, as does its schools with other local schools. The new school will form part of the family of 216 Catholic schools across the Diocese of Westminster.

Urgency for the new school to be in place and the impact of the competition process

6. There is some urgency to this application. The new school is proposed to open in September 2012.

Any views expressed by interested parties e.g. parents and the local community

7. The Diocese and Borough have carried out a number of local consultation exercises, all of which have consistently shown widespread support for a new Catholic school. The consultation originally sought views about a new secondary school but as a result of comments and feedback it soon became clear that there was also demand for a new local RC primary school. Although most of the feedback received supported the proposal, a group has been formed which opposes in principle schools with religious

character. The group appears to be supported by the National Secular Society. If consent was granted to the application the Diocese would be required to follow a statutory process. This process involves a period of representation in which members of the public can submit their views on the proposal. These should then be taken into account by the Decision Maker when making a final decision on the proposals.

Particular circumstances applying locally

8. At present there are six RC primary schools in Richmond upon Thames and the Diocese has been receiving a steady stream of letters from parents living in Richmond asking for additional RC primary places. The local authority acknowledges the need for additional primary places and supports the proposal. The local authority is considering buying four acres of land to lease to the Diocese for the establishment of the new school.