

# Richmond - Twickenham

# TIMES

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Friday, November 23, 2012

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Prayers are answered: Parents and pupils were delighted with the ruling

## Catholic parents celebrate controversial school ruling

By Rachel Bishop  
rbishop@london.newsquest.co.uk

Catholic parents are relieved after a judicial review ruled in favour of a proposed Catholic school.

Mr Justice Sales concluded that Richmond Council had acted lawfully throughout the process of setting up St Richard Reynolds Catholic College in Clifden Road, Twickenham.

Judge Sales made the unusual step of making the announcement on the

final day of the hearing, Friday, November 16, because of children awaiting confirmation of a place at the proposed school.

Headteacher Richard Burke said he was pleased the uncertainty over the school had come to an end.

He said: "Starting a school from scratch is a fantastic opportunity."

Seamus Joyce, whose sons Alex, five, and James, seven, attend St Elizabeth Catholic Primary School, said he was glad his sons could continue their education with their friends.

Mr Joyce, of Lower Mortlake Road, said: "I was worried, but I'm quite relieved now that the judge has seen sense and that it's going in the right direction."

The children would have faced a 6am start if they had to travel out of borough for a Catholic school, but could now leave at 8.30am, he said.

Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign, which had teamed up with the British Humanist Association to take the case to the High Court, was disappointed with the decision.

But leader of Richmond Council

Lord True said he was delighted by the outcome.

He said: "Over the past year, the British Humanist Association has elbowed its way into Richmond upon Thames with their clear national agenda of hostility to faith schools - their action has been uncaring and unsympathetic to the many people within the Richmond Catholic community who have worked hard to bring their dream of a dedicated secondary school to fruition."

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Defeated: BHA and Risc members outside the court

# Groups fail to halt 'We will not give up on this fight'

## faith schools' plan

By Rachel Bishop

rbishop@london.newsquest.co.uk

The main argument discussed at the judicial review was between Richmond Council's need or want for a Catholic school.

The British Humanist Association (BHA) and Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign (Risc) argued that the council had suggested there was a need for a Catholic school in the borough.

They said this flouted

### DAY ONE

section 6a of the recently amended Education Act, which states that if a council thinks there is a need for a new school it must seek academy proposals.

They also argued that if the council claimed that the school was not needed, just desired, the consultation was flawed; as people responded to it on the understanding a Catholic school was a necessity.

David Wolfe QC represented Risc and BHA and gave examples where the council had said it needed a new school for Catholics.

Mr Wolfe said the council's cabinet member for schools, Paul Hodgins, had stated in a council meeting there was a need for the school.

Mr Justice Sales argued about the intent of Coun Hodgins words.

He said: "Perhaps he's saying it would be a good idea. One can talk in general terms."

Chief executive of BHA, Andrew Copson, said the group would not give up their fight against faith schools, despite the ruling.

He said: "We are disappointed but we will certainly consider appeal if the full judgment, when we receive it, allows that."

Chairman of Risc Jeremy Rodell said: "Throughout all the debates and exchanges over the past 18 months no one has yet given a satisfactory answer to the simple question how can it be right to set up a state-funded school that will be able to turn away children simply because of the religion or belief of their parents? That remains just as wrong now as it was before."

"We hope one day we will live in a country where that is as illegal and unacceptable as racial discrimination is today."

"We brought this challenge to help to bring that day closer and the fight will go on."

"In the meantime, I wish the new schools well."

"The children who will go to them are not responsible for the school's unfair admissions policies, or the way in which the council leadership has forced them through to the detriment of the wider community."

### DAY TWO

introduction of a community school would not be a good use of the site."

The Secretary of State for Education's team explained that a council could approve voluntary aided schools, such as the proposed Catholic school, regardless of their duty to seek academy proposals.

Robin Hopkins QC represented the Secretary of State and told the court that there were two independent routes

to establishing a new school.

New faith academies are limited to a maximum of 50 per cent faith-based admissions but voluntary aided schools can go up to 100 per cent.

Justice Sales ruled that the council had not identified a need for places, that the consultation was not misleading and that the council could approve a voluntary aided school without seeking academy proposals.

He will make a full account of the decision in coming weeks.

## New school on college site could open in five years

A new secondary school could open to five forms of pupils in Twickenham by 2017.

Proposals for a new educational centre at Richmond College have been agreed by Richmond Council and college governors.

The plans for the college site in Egerton Road, Twickenham, will go to consultation and a decision should be made by Easter next year.

At a meeting at the college last Thursday, principal David Ansell said November 15, the proposals brought "considerable advantage" to the school.

The announcement follows an initial agreement from the college governors and council on proposals considering the future shape of the college provision, a new secondary school, new improved community resources and exploring the possibility of new purpose-built accommodation for Clarendon School, in Hampton.

Earlier this year a feasibility study was commissioned to consider options available for



Scheme: Plans for a new educational centre have been agreed for the Richmond College site in Egerton Road

the Egerton Road site, including future improvements to college buildings and the investigation of a new school to meet future increases in demand for secondary school places.

Mr Ansell said: "The feasibility study not only considered a new post-16 educational centre of excellence

that will benefit the whole of Richmond upon Thames, but also considered how the college and the council can work together to make the best use of the site by creating a high quality secondary school."

At the meeting leader of the council Lord True, said there would be at least £10m spent

on the new provisions at the school.

Lord True said: "We have been working on ideas for co-operating with the college for 18 months as part of our planned strategy for local education improvement, although before the feasibility study was completed it was not possible to commit to this publicly."

"We can now do so in this exciting announcement. The borough will invest large sums in parallel to commitment by the college."

"We believe the proposals will bring major benefits to the college and to secondary age children alike via an entirely new secondary school."

"We are delighted to be working on this innovative proposal with Richmond upon Thames College – a great institution and centre of excellence of lasting importance to our borough and the diversity of education within it."

Details regarding the consultation will be released shortly.

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# Does decision undermine free schools?

Sir – I respect the judgement of the High Court to allow the state-funded Catholic schools in Richmond and wish these schools well.

However, sadly this judgement seriously undermines the Government's flagship policy of free schools and makes a mockery of the coalition agreement for promoting faith schools with inclusive admissions.

While every new free school application, for which parents and sponsors put in a lot of hard work, will have to compete for limited funds and sites, there remains a back door for religious groups to set up new schools with discriminatory admissions policies.

As a local parent, along with thousands of people in Richmond, I am extremely disappointed with this judgement.

We still believe – in common with the vast majority of the British public that “state-funded schools, including state funded faith schools, should not be allowed to select or discriminate against prospective pupils on religious grounds in their admissions policy”.

Our key point all along has been that it is simply wrong to set up a new state school in the borough that will discriminate against most children simply because of their parents' beliefs. That remains just as wrong now as it was before.

Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign (Risc) has brought together people all across the borough who are deeply passionate about education and communal harmony and we will continue to campaign “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”.

This big society campaign has people from all backgrounds, with a lot of them tirelessly working in Richmond's state education sector to improve our existing schools and set up new inclusive schools. We are all in it together and will continue to work at the grassroot level for the benefit of everyone in



Doug Goodman, from Clifden Road, Twickenham, captured this autumnal shot. If you have a picture you would like published in our weekly Borough View slot, email it to [lettersrtt@london.newsquest.co.uk](mailto:lettersrtt@london.newsquest.co.uk)

our community.

I hope that as my children continue their education in the state education sector, religious discrimination will end in our state schools.

One day, in our multicultural and diverse and tolerant society, religious discrimination will be as illegal and unacceptable as racial discrimination is today.

We brought this challenge to help to bring that day closer and our campaign will go on both locally in Richmond and hopefully inspire millions others nationally.

**GAURAV MATHUR**  
London SW13

Sir – This is an open letter to the leadership teams of all of our local community schools; heads, governors, senior teachers and parents, teacher association committees.

While your equivalents in our Catholic primaries tirelessly promoted the Clifden Road consultation to parents at their schools, handing out paper copies of the form, and actively recommending that people should “vote” for new Catholic voluntary aided schools, the vast majority of you stood by and remained neutral.

That may have seemed the right thing to do at the time, and certainly your employers and mentors at Richmond Council was advising you to maintain that position.

However, I hope that now you will look carefully at the skewed response to that consultation, and the resulting outcome, and realise that bad things really do happen when good people stand by and do nothing.

As a local parent of children at a community primary I'm

ashamed of all of you.

**AN ANONYMOUS PARENT**  
Twickenham

Sir – I am writing to express my dismay at Lord True's arrogant and bullying tone in his latest press release following the ruling on the Catholic school.

He has done nothing to heal the wounds in this community relating to the council's controversial decision to procure the most exclusive form of Catholic school paid for by taxpayers' money.

He has repeatedly denied the existence of the thousands of people in this borough who are vehemently opposed to its exclusive admissions policy, and instead, decided to mount personal attacks on Mr Rodell, who has proved himself over and over again to be a most

dignified and respectful advocate.

Lord True does himself and his party no favours by lowering the tone of the debate with personal attacks and by showing himself in this unpleasant manner.

A little more humility (surely one of the tenets of the Christian faith he espouses), a little more honesty in acknowledging the genuine anger and hurt of the non-Catholic community, and a little more consideration for the people he purports to serve would go a long way.

Hopefully we will live to see the day when there is an end to religious discrimination in our schools.

**NAME AND ADDRESS SUPPLIED**  
Via email

Sir – In his press release following the High Court decision on the Catholic school issue; Lord True once again attempts to characterise the Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign as the work of a single person (Jeremy Rodell) orchestrated by the British Humanist Association which has apparently “elbowed its way into Richmond with their clear national agenda of hostility to faith schools”.

In doing so he is refusing to take his constituents strength of feeling seriously – a large number of local people with no link to the British Humanist Association have supported this campaign.

He is knowingly misrepresenting the facts (more than 3,000 residents signed the petition); he is showing no signs of having understood the core of Risc's argument (which is about admissions criteria, not anti-faith schools); and he has singled out one individual out of the many campaigners to be subjected to personal attacks.

Rather than mark the council's victory in a measured and gracious manner; the communication attempts to belittle and pour scorn on the valid concerns of many residents.

I find this offensive; and it paints a picture of Lord True and his administration as arrogant, deceitful, and bullying. These are characteristics not commensurate with the role of someone elected to serve in public office, and I look forward to his departure from this office at the earliest opportunity.

**ANDREW WOODWARD**  
Richmond  
TW10

Sir – Congratulations to Lord True on winning the court case to set up an exclusive Roman Catholic school on the legal ground that there was not actually a need for it (though the council has spent £8.5m on the school site).

So nice that all sides are in agreement on something.

**DAVID KLEIN**  
Twickenham

## Time to stand up to negative aspects of all forms of media

### THE GOD SPOT

By Paul van Essen  
[greaterlife.org.uk](http://greaterlife.org.uk)

The reports circulating this week that more than 2,000 children have been sexually abused, many of them via organised social media, over just a 14-month period, have gravely and understandably concerned many people. We live in a society that is marked by many good things, but this is a

situation that no loving and whole person can accept as right or good.

It has to be understood that we cannot control what people choose to do privately online, but we can affect the arena of public media. We are all influenced by media, more so as children, but all the way through life. When I was young Indiana Jones was the hit of the day. For others it was Buzz Lightyear.

We pick up attitudes, words, actions and lifestyle from the media we are exposed to. Art

(of whatever quality) both reflects and influences life.

If we choose to say and do nothing about the content of what is sent out over the TV waves and other public media we tacitly endorse the messages that are being sent. If we say nothing about excessive programming featuring aspects of sex, binge drinking, violence and hatred between men and women or other behaviours that are ultimately not enhancing peoples' lives then we are, to some degree at least, responsible for the prob-

lem. We have to be active, and we can do that without being antagonistic. The public has a powerful voice.

Albert Einstein said: “The world is a dangerous place to live; not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it.”

Edmund Burke said: “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” What about you? What kind of lifestyle would you like to be responsible for?

## High tides at Richmond Bridge

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Saturday	1117	6.13	0000	6.41
Sunday			1217	6.25
Monday	0054	6.52	1307	6.39
Tuesday	0137	6.60	1348	6.54
Wednesday	0214	6.68	1426	6.68
Thursday	0248	6.75	1501	6.77
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