

PRESS RELEASE – Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign

For issue 8th May 2012

NO NEWS IN COUNCIL CONSULTATION: CATHOLICS SUPPORT CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Commenting on the outcome of the Council's consultation on the use the Clifden Road site for Voluntary Aided Catholic schools, RISC Spokesman Jeremy Rodell said "The overall result tells us nothing that we didn't know already. A campaign run by state-funded Catholic schools, supported by the church, succeeded in ensuring the majority of respondents were Catholics, and 98% of them were in favour. What is more interesting is the breadth of opposition."

"Three-quarters of the respondents who were not Catholics are opposed to the proposals. That includes 90% of non-religious people, 70% of those belonging to non-Christian religions and even 55% of Anglicans. This may reflect the fact that the Church of England is moving strongly towards fully inclusive admissions in its new schools, while the Council's proposals are for the least inclusive type of Catholic school possible."

RISC has obtained a copy of the recommendation given last December by Department for Education officials to the Minister considering the Diocese request for consent to publish proposals for the Voluntary Aided secondary school. It states: *"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 secondary places in the area. As such, the Diocese considers the VA [Voluntary Aided] 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."*

RISC commented "This confirms that the decision to propose Voluntary Aided schools instead of the Council's policy to promote Academies was purely to get round the rule that new Free Schools/Academies are limited to 50% faith based selection. It also confirms that the Diocese does not expect non-Catholic children to be able to get into the school. Even more damning is the indication that a deal has been done behind the scenes to convert the school to an Academy at a later date, which will enable it to keep its 100% exclusive admissions policy while benefiting from 100% taxpayer funding. It is astonishing that the Council is happy to be complicit in bending the rules in this way."

Notes for editors:

1. For further details, contact Jeremy Rodell on home@jrodell.com or 07798 935569.
2. The Department for Education document was obtained under the Freedom of Information Act and is available here: http://www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk/files/view/other-useful-documents/diocese-consent-application/DfE_FOI_-_recommendation_on_consent_to_publish_proposals_for_secondary_school.pdf
3. RISC's analysis of the findings from the consultation is available here: http://www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk/files/view/consultations-2012/RISC_Clifden_Road_consultation_results_summary_-_May_2012.pdf