

PRESS RELEASE - RICHMOND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN RESPONSE TO SECRETARY OF STATE DECISION TO GRANT PERMISSION FOR CATHOLIC CHURCH TO MAKE SCHOOL PROPOSAL

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INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN GEARS UP

“We’re determined to continue fighting for the principle that new taxpayer-funded schools in the borough should not discriminate against children because of their parents’ religion or beliefs, whoever is running them.” That was the reaction of the spokesman for the Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign (RISC), Jeremy Rodell, to the news that Michael Gove (Secretary of State for Education) has given the go-ahead to the Catholic Church to propose a Voluntary Aided secondary school for the borough. He pointed out: “The Secretary of State has simply decided not to stand in the way of the church putting a proposal forward. **It doesn’t mean it will actually happen.** The Council are committed to a consultation, so there will be a great opportunity for local people to tell them what they think.”

RISC is arguing that, if the church’s proposal goes through, the borough will be stuck for decades with a school in the centre of Twickenham – the only site currently available - that around 90% of local children can’t get into because their parents aren’t Catholics. They say that can’t be right.

Mr Rodell explained that there are other options available for the site. “For example, we’ve just heard about a new proposal for an inclusive academy with a science and engineering specialism that could occupy Clifden Road. Only last week we saw that the Church of England is proposing a new primary school in Hampton with no faith-based selection at all, so a fully inclusive faith school is a real option. And Vince Cable has suggested the compromise of a Catholic school with a substantial share of places set aside for non-Catholics.”

“Economic times are tough, pupil numbers are increasing and the borough is already under-provided with high quality secondary school places. The consultation will be a key opportunity for fair-minded people from every background to make clear that they simply want a decent supply of high quality schools open to everyone, and don’t want Clifden Road to be used for an exclusive Catholic school.”

He went on to point out that the Conservatives’ May 2010 election manifesto accused the previous LibDem Council of going through ‘the pretence of consultation, but always with its mind made up’.

“After the fiasco of the Twickenham Station planning decision, a lot of people will be watching to see whether this administration is any different.”

Notes for editors:

- Council 6 Jan 2012 press release on Gove decision:
http://www.richmond.gov.uk/home/council_government_and_democracy/council/civic-offices/departments/communications/press_office/press_releases/january_2012_press_releases/latest_move_on_clifden_school_site.htm

- RISC Briefing on secondary school supply/demand versus Council plans available here:
http://www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk/files/index?folder_id=6834144
- Conservative election manifesto available here:
[http://www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk/files/view/other-useful-documents/Conservative_manifesto - R&T PUTTINGLOCALPEOPLEFIRST 19.4.10.doc](http://www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk/files/view/other-useful-documents/Conservative_manifesto_-_R&T_PUTTINGLOCALPEOPLEFIRST_19.4.10.doc)
- Link to Richmond Science & Engineering Free School
<http://sciengschool4richmond.btck.co.uk/>
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