

RICHMOND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN



www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk

Press release - 26 Sep 11

CATHOLIC EDUCATION BOSS INTERFERES IN LOCAL DECISION ON RICHMOND SCHOOL

Supporters of inclusive education in Richmond upon Thames have been "incensed" to discover that Dr Oona Stannard, Chief Executive of the Catholic Education Service, has sent a letter to all members of Richmond Borough Council giving "a series of misleading arguments and inaccurate statements" in support of the only available site for a new secondary school in the borough being used for a Catholic Voluntary Aided school rather than an inclusive school.

In the letter, Dr Stannard argues in support of the Council-backed proposal for a new Catholic school, claiming superior quality for schools that give priority to children of Catholics.

Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign (RISC) has been campaigning for any new school in the borough to have admissions open to all children, regardless of religion or belief, and has built up almost 2000 supporters in the area signing a petition on the local authority's website. The campaign has now also written to councillors, in order to rebut Dr Stannard's arguments.

Jeremy Rodell, coordinator of RISC said, "Some of the arguments Dr Stannard puts forward in this attempt to interfere in the local debate would be laughable if the issue were not so serious. How can she possibly justify the claim that a new Catholic Voluntary Aided school would provide the borough with 'greater choice', or make a 'contribution to community cohesion' when it would effectively be closed to the 90% of local children who are not Catholics?"

"Or that a school specifically intended to provide places in Twickenham for Catholic children who would otherwise go to one of the eight existing Catholic secondary schools across the borough border but within five miles of the centre of the borough would 'release places in some of the Community secondary schools'. That's simply illogical. She doesn't seem to have any understanding of the real challenges facing education locally.

"As we keep saying, most of the opposition to the Council's plans for a new Catholic Voluntary Aided School is not because the school would be Catholic, but because its admissions policy would always give priority to Catholics over everyone else - even if they live outside the borough. What the great majority of people want is sufficient places at high quality inclusive schools, whoever is running them."

Notes to editors:

For further comment, please contact Jeremy Rodell on home@jrodell.com or at 07798 935569

- Copies of Dr Stannard's letter and the response from Professor Tina Bruce on behalf of the Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign attached
- Link to petition, now approaching 2000 signatures, 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.**" <http://tinyurl.com/riscpetition1>
- Richmond Inclusive schools Campaign represents a large number of people from across the community, with beliefs ranging from the non-religious to Anglicans, Muslims, Hindus, Jews and Catholics, including parents and senior figures from borough schools.
- Website www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk where you can register to be kept informed on the story, read what supporters say and view the debate in the Council on 13 Sep.
- RISC has the support of the Accord Coalition <http://accordcoalition.org.uk/> .