

PRESS RELEASE - Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign

www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk



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RICHMOND BOROUGH CLASH ON CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Richmond Borough Council has stirred up huge controversy by offering the first, and so far only, available site for a much-needed new secondary school to the Roman Catholic Church - effectively barring 90% of local children.

Local Catholics have been lobbying for a Catholic secondary school in the borough for years, complaining that Richmond is one of only two London boroughs without one. This is despite the fact that there are already 8 catholic secondaries within 5 miles of the centre of the borough.

The Conservative administration included a promise to “encourage” a Catholic secondary in its May 2010 election manifesto, and Catholic school supporters raised an 1100-signature petition to support the policy earlier this year.

The borough is facing a growing shortage of places at good secondaries, as well as a lack of sites and funding. So the plan to give top priority to a Voluntary Aided school where admissions will be effectively closed to the 90% of borough children who are non-Catholics has run into heavy opposition.

Now the Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign, which is fighting the plan, is gaining support from right across the spectrum, including from Catholics who oppose segregated education. An on-line petition 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”* has already attracted over 1250 signatures in its first month.

RISC coordinator Jeremy Rodell said: “We were amazed at how quickly the petition took off, and how strongly parents and taxpayers feel about it. The campaign is strictly non-party-political, and not anti-religious. It’s just about fair admissions.

“Our petition does not even rule out a new Catholic school on the new site in Twickenham, provided it has inclusive admissions. But what the Council is proposing is the opposite of that. As soon as it’s full, this new school will be bound by church rules to turn away children simply because their parents aren’t Catholics, even if they live next door. That just can’t be right.”

(continued)

RISC has now secured enough support for its petition to trigger a debate at the full Richmond Borough Council meeting on 13th September. And supporters say they will be outside the Council's offices in Twickenham before the meeting to demonstrate their concerns and encourage more people to sign up.

Notes to editors:

1. See petition link for latest total: <http://tinyurl.com/petition1>
2. For more information, email info@richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk or call Jeremy Rodell on 07798 935569.

Issued by Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign
www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk