



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED FOR INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS IN BOROUGH

A campaign (www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk) has been launched to persuade the Council to ensure that any new schools in the Borough of Richmond are inclusive, and to drop its support for a new Catholic secondary school.

The growing campaign follows an objection to the Catholic school policy raised last year by local humanists, and it has now attracted a range of religious and non-religious supporters.

A spokesperson for the Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign, Jennifer Singer, said: *"We're a diverse group of local people with a clear positive message. We promote inclusive schools that enable choice in education provision for all families in the borough. Given the high demand for places among residents, Richmond's new schools must be open to all local children of all faiths and of none, with teachers that are selected on their ability to deliver a balanced curriculum. It's the Council's duty to look after the interests of all the people of Richmond, and therefore we ask them to consider a range of providers to ensure a fair process in providing education for the next generation of children."*

The first act of the campaign has been to issue a detailed briefing to every member of the Council in advance of their debate on the Catholic school policy. As well as explaining the benefits of inclusive schooling, it points out that:

- It's important to recognise that the need for two new schools in the borough is derived from the demand for places. The borough is actually a "net importer" of secondary school children from other Authorities, making it difficult for local children to secure places. A Catholic secondary would make it worse by giving out-of-borough Catholics priority over local non-Catholics.
- The Catholic Diocese of Westminster says that *"Catholic schools exist to assist parents in handing on the Catholic faith to their children"*. That is reflected in their admissions, employment and curriculum policies. But a privilege for one group disadvantages everyone else: 85% - 90% of the borough's children are not from Catholic families.
- Catholics already enjoy priority over non-Christians in admissions to Christ's school in Richmond. On the other hand the Council's "Linked Schools" scheme is currently biased against children from local Catholic primaries seeking places at the borough's community secondary schools.
- The policy conflicts with other Council policies on academies (there is no requirement for a Catholic school to be an academy), increasing choice (a Catholic school would reduce choice

for the majority), diversity (a new school would be awarded to the Catholic Church without seeking competition between alternative high quality providers) and consultation (there has been no meaningful consultation of borough residents on this policy).

- This is not about quality: the only “outstanding” schools in the borough are inclusive schools.
- We live in a plural community. But by definition, a Catholic school would encourage division, not community cohesion.

Anyone who supports the campaign should go to www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk for more details, or email info@richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk .

Notes to editors:

1. The document sent to all local Councillors is attached.
2. For more information, email info@richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk or call Jeremy Rodell on 07798 935569.