

PRESS RELEASE - Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign - 6 May 2013

SIBLINGS NEED PRIORITY AT CATHOLIC PRIMARY

Non-Catholic parents of children at Teddington's Sacred Heart primary school have been told that their younger brothers and sisters may not be accepted in future because the school is obliged by the Church to give top priority to children from Catholic families if it is over-subscribed. The rule is contained in a Diocesan Trust Deed which applies to all Catholic schools. Most other schools, including many Church of England primaries, give priority to siblings of existing students regardless of faith. Parents are then spared the difficulties of having two young children at different schools.

One of the affected parents, whose son was offered a place in a one-off bulge class at Sacred Heart, said: *"Our son is really happy at the school, and it seems terribly unfair that they may refuse a place to his little brother. The Council offered us a place originally without warning us about this rule, and now they are saying we will have to apply for a place for our other child and simply hope it will be ok, or move our older son to another school."*

Helen Clark, a spokesperson for Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign (RISC) said *"The response the school received from the Diocese shows this is not the first case where non-Catholic families with children at Catholic primaries in London have run into this problem. When faced with a similar issue, a CofE primary in Camden recently agreed to change its admissions policy. We hope Sacred Heart's governors and the Catholic Diocese understand the serious issues faced by local parents and will also change their admission policy."*

We will do what we can to support these parents, but surely no parent should be put in this situation in the first place."

Notes for editors

1. For further information contact Helen Clark at

2. Link to Trust Deed on Diocesan website

<http://www.rcdow.org.uk/fileupload/upload/K2TheTrustDeedBooklet822010511356.pdf> . See introduction and "Diocesan Directives ...pursuant to Canon 806..." page 4.

3. Extract from letter from school to affected parent: *"[O]ur Trust Deed requires us to prioritise Catholics, and ... as a school we cannot deviate from the Trust Deed.... [The Diocese lawyer] advised us that other schools had faced our predicament and consequently also sought advice from the Diocese, whereupon the issue had been referred to the (then) Director of Education for Westminster, Paul Barber. He confirmed that, given the terms of the Trust Deed, there was no scope for change."*

4. Extract from Sacred Heart admissions policy - over-subscription priority:

1. Catholic looked after children. 2. Baptised children of practising Catholic families (see note A).3. Other Baptised children of Catholic families 4. Other looked after children. 5 Catechumens and Christians of other denominations whose parents wish their child to have a Catholic education and whose application is supported by their minister. 6. Children of other faiths whose parents wish their child to have a Catholic education and whose application is supported by a religious leader. 7. Any other applicants.
The attendance of a sibling in the school at the time of enrolment will increase the priority of an application within each category.

5. Camden story:

<http://www.camdennewjournal.com/news/2013/may/%E2%80%98kentish-town-9%E2%80%99-force-school-rethink-admissions-policy>