



FAITH-BASED DISCRIMINATION IN RICHMOND PRIMARY SCHOOL OFFERS 2013

...and how local church schools could
become more “community minded”

Parents of primary-aged children need good schools, close to home.

Our analysis demonstrates the impact of faith-based admissions criteria at over-subscribed church schools across the borough, with many families disadvantaged in access to nearby schools.

Vince Cable MP has recently called for local church schools to be more “community minded” in admissions.

We have identified simple improvements governing bodies at individual schools could take without compromising their schools’ status or ethos.

While these suggested changes do not *fully* address our in-principle concern about limiting access to state-funded schools on the basis of parental beliefs, they do enable schools to acknowledge their responsibilities to the wider community.

A report by Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign

September 2013

www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk

IMPACT OF FAITH-BASED DISCRIMINATION ON PRIMARY SCHOOL OFFERS IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND 2013

SUMMARY

Over a third of the borough's primary places are at its sixteen church schools, thirteen of which are oversubscribed. Data on the initial offers made to parents for September 2013 entry show that nearly **80%** of places at those thirteen schools were allocated on a faith basis. The majority of the Borough's community schools are *also* over-subscribed, making the effect of restrictive entrance policies at church schools more acute.

As a result, the choice of state schools available to non-religious, non-churchgoing, or non-Christian families is extremely restricted compared to the choice available to churchgoing families. In some areas this is limiting people's ability to secure a Reception place a reasonable distance from their home. Mapping of the data suggests that the pressure is particularly severe in most parts of Twickenham- north Teddington and central Barnes- Mortlake- central Sheen.

There are many examples in the borough of extreme exclusivity in admissions to both Catholic and Church of England primaries. The Council is responsible for adequate provision of places overall. But the governing bodies of individual church schools are responsible for choosing the degree of faith-based selection to apply. Vince Cable MP has recently called on them to be more "community minded" in their admissions, and the Anglican Diocese of London is also calling on its own schools to increase the number of community places available.

We have identified simple initial steps to improve community accessibility that could be taken by Church of England and Catholic primary school governing bodies for September 2015 entry without compromising the schools' status or ethos.

The changes proposed would not *fully* address Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign's in-principle concern that local children should not be denied access to state-funded schools simply because of their parents' religion or belief. But they would begin to meet Vince Cable's call for church schools to be more community minded in their admissions.

DATA

The information used in this report was obtained from Richmond Council and individual primary schools under the Freedom of Information Act. It represents offers made to parents in April 2013 for September 2013 entry to Reception. The dataset is available in [Appendix 1](#).

We recognise that the initial offer data from April differs from the final take-up of Reception places, as not all offers are accepted, and there is considerable movement of waiting lists between April and September. Nevertheless, the data accurately represents the initial demand for places and the effect of church school over-subscription criteria on the offers available to parents.

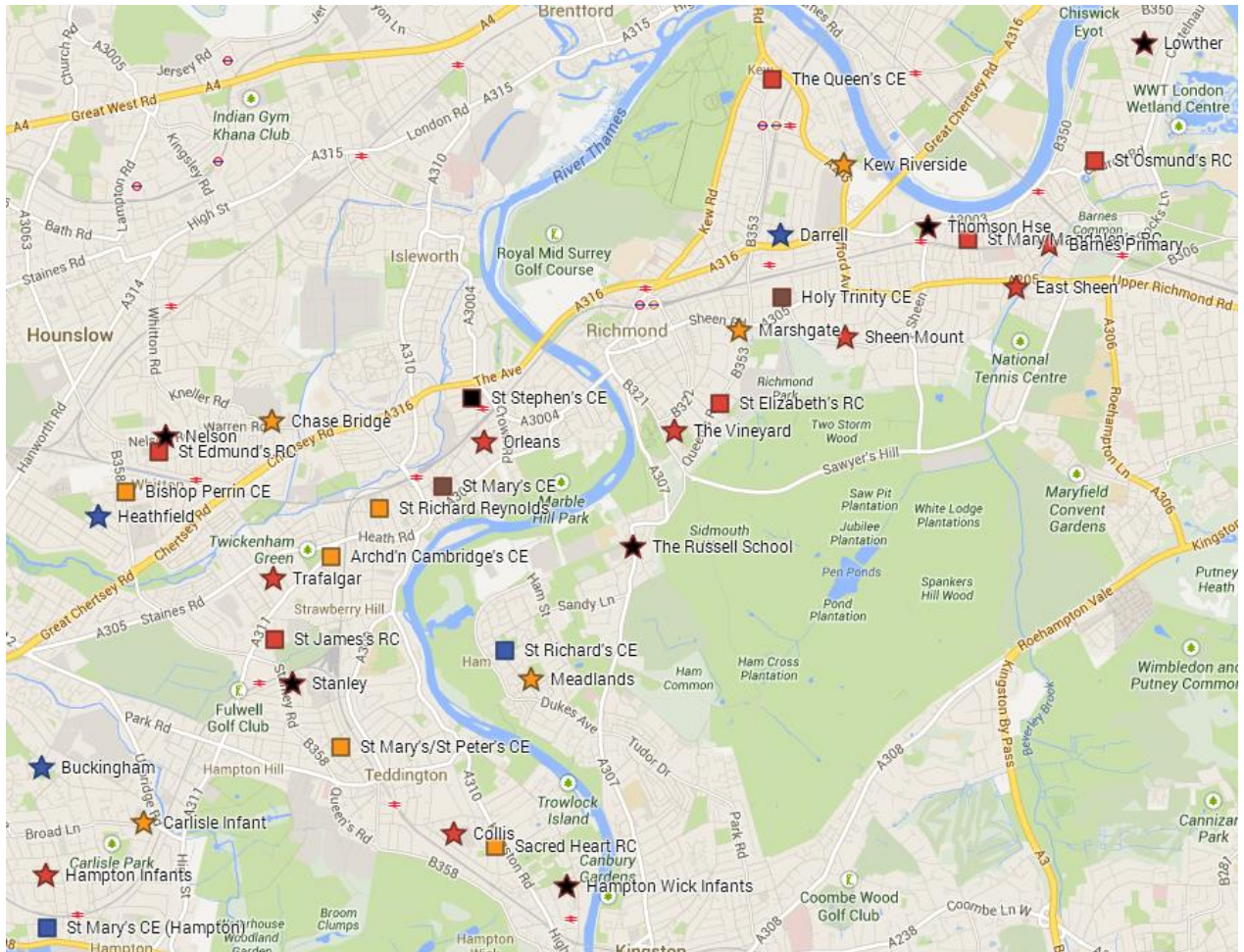
The key metric used in this analysis is the % of offers (excluding offers to siblings) made against faith-based criteria.

HIGH-IMPACT AREAS

The map¹ displays the 38 primary schools admitting children to Reception² classes. It shows:

- For faith schools: the % of offers made against faith-based criteria.
- For community schools: the degree to which schools were subscribed compared to their capacity.

A concentration of red and yellow markers indicates areas of particular stress.



FAITH SCHOOLS ■

**Over-subscribed: % faith-based offers
(excl siblings)**

Very high exclusivity (90-100%)

High exclusivity (50-89%)

Moderate exclusivity (10-49%)

Low exclusivity (1-9%)

Fully inclusive (0%)

Not over-subscribed

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ★

% preferences vs capacity

**Over-subscribed on basis 1st preferences
(>105%)**

**Fully subscribed on basis 1st preferences
(95-105%)**

**Fully subscribed on basis of all
preferences**

Under-subscribed

Two particular areas stand out in the mapping:

¹ The online version, available at <http://tinyurl.com/lbrutprimarymap>, includes the data for each school (click on the symbol). The analysis does not attempt to look at the quality of the schools.

² This scope excludes St.John the Baptist Church of England Junior School (year 3 onwards), which prioritises pupils from Hampton Wick Infants, a community school. St.John's is therefore effectively inclusive.

On the Twickenham side of the borough

Parents in an area covering most parts of Twickenham/north Teddington have to choose between:

- Archdeacon Cambridge's Church of England Primary (over-subscribed; after sibling offers, 70% of places were offered on a faith basis)
- Trafalgar (community school over-subscribed on the basis of 1st preferences alone)
- St Richard Reynolds Catholic Primary (over-subscribed; 10 community places, 20 faith-based)
- St James's Catholic Primary (over-subscribed; 100% of both sibling and non-sibling offers made on a faith basis)
- Stanley (community school, over-subscribed on the basis of all preferences)
- St Mary's & St Peter's Church of England Primary (over-subscribed; 62% of non-sibling offers made on a faith basis, with only a 303 metre distance cut-off for community places).

Overall on the Twickenham side of the borough the situation is tight, and therefore sensitive to faith-based restrictions. Of the twelve community schools, six were fully-subscribed on the basis of 1st preference applications alone, and another four were fully-subscribed by lower preferences. Only two schools, Buckingham (Hampton) and Heathfield (Whitton), had spare places, and even those were filled by Council-allocated offers to parents who missed out on all of their specified preferences. However, they are some distance from the area of peak demand, representing a long commute for many of the families who have been allocated places. This situation indicates considerable pressure on community places.

The nine church schools include four Catholic schools, two with 100% faith-based admissions, and six CofE schools, of which 3 made more than 60% of offers on a faith basis (86% in one case). If the proportion of community places at these schools were to be increased, many more families would have the opportunity of a primary school place a reasonable distance from their home.

On the Richmond side of the borough

Parents in the central Barnes, Mortlake and central Sheen area have to choose between:

- St Mary Magdalene's Catholic Primary (over-subscribed; 100% of offers made on the basis of faith)
- St Osmund's Catholic Primary (over-subscribed; 100% of offers made on the basis of faith)
- Barnes Primary (community school; over-subscribed on the basis of 1st preference applications)
- East Sheen Primary (community school; over-subscribed on the basis of 1st preference applications alone)
- Thomson House (community Free School, new for 2013; fully-subscribed on the basis of all preferences).

As in Twickenham, the overall situation on the Richmond side of the borough is tight. Of the eleven community schools, eight were 95% or more subscribed based on 1st preference applications alone. Only one (Darrell Primary, Richmond) had spare places, and again they were filled by council-allocated offers to parents who missed out on all of their specified preferences. The data therefore shows that this area also has considerable pressure on community places.

The six church schools included three Catholic schools with 100% faith-based admissions, and one CofE school (The Queen's Primary in Kew), which made only 1 non-faith-based offer. Only St.Richard's CofE school in Ham had spare places, and again these were filled by allocated offers.

HOW ADMISSIONS POLICIES AFFECT ACCESSIBILITY AT INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS

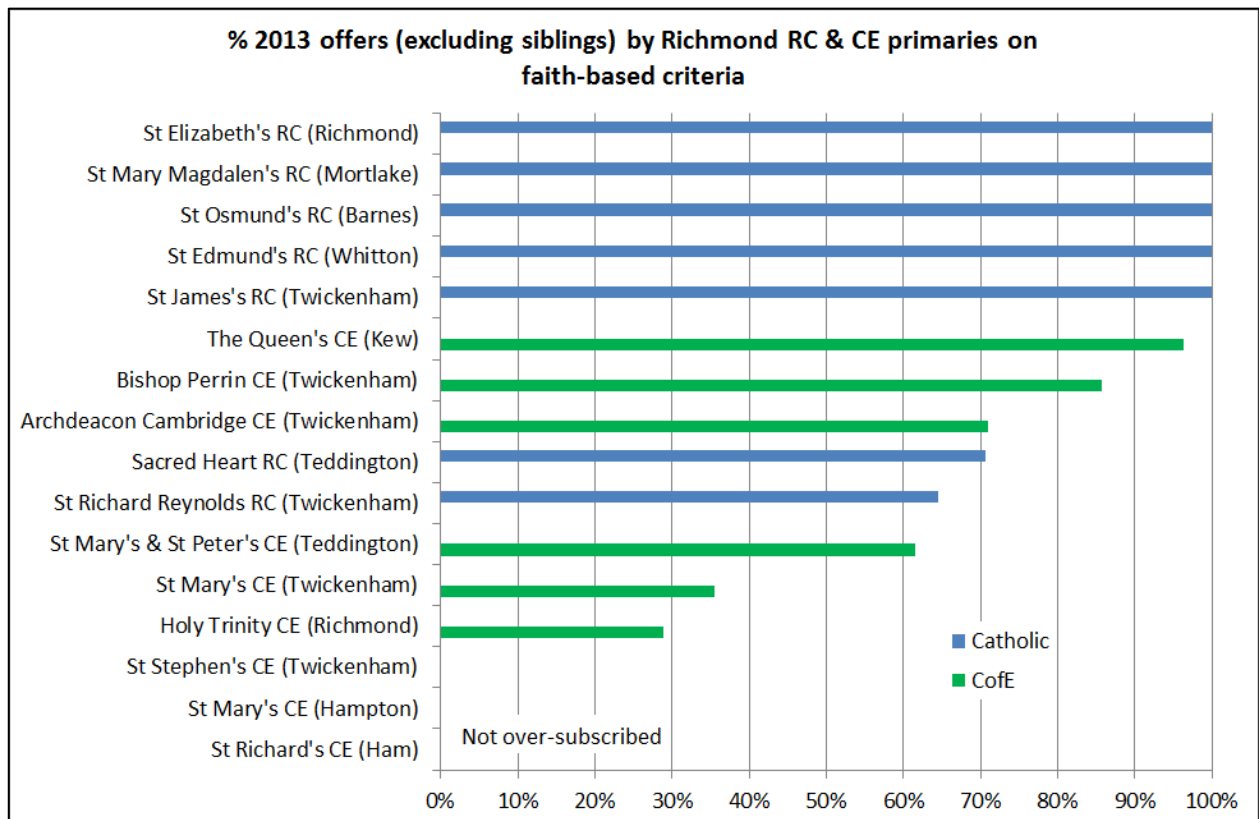
Although an exemption in equalities legislation allows state-funded faith schools to discriminate based on religion if they are over-subscribed, the degree to which they do so is decided by their governing bodies, and varies locally from 0% to 100%.

Vince Cable MP recently made this statement³: *"I have always been a defender of faith schools because of the extra choice it gives to parents, respecting their religion. But we are getting into difficult - and nasty - competition for places. In a band from East Twickenham to Teddington there are now five faith schools (three CofE, two RC), and two non-denominational schools which are also bursting at the seams. Local residents are finding that they cannot get places and are passed over for churchgoers who live much further away. I am appealing to the church authorities to be community minded on admissions."*

His call for local state-funded church schools to be more "community minded" is echoed in the statements made by the Church of England's London Diocesan Board for Schools which has said⁴: *"We feel that it is really important to go back to our roots. We think we should be there to serve the community, so we're really encouraging schools to move towards [open admissions]. Some have embraced it fully and don't have any admissions criteria other than making the nearest children the priority."*

Offers made April 2013 for September entry

The chart below shows the degree of discrimination applied by each church school in the borough, using as a measure the % of offers made on a faith basis.



³ <http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=60995e2b940263245ad65daa7&id=19e06da83f&e=470a4fd8f2>

⁴ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/10205477/No-places-for-churchgoers-in-newly-opened-faith-schools.html>

Admissions criteria

Borough church schools have a variety of detailed over-subscription criteria (see [Appendix 2](#)), but they fall into four broad types:

- Type 0 Fully inclusive
- Type 1 Faith-based priority for a fixed % of the places remaining after siblings are accommodated
- Type 2 Faith-based priority up to a fixed number of places
- Type 3 Faith-based priority for all places

Within these types there are variants which can make a substantial difference to the degree to which the school is accessible to the wider community. The table below maps the church schools against each category, and gives their % of faith-based offers for 2013:

Type	Variant	Primary school	Actual % faith-based offers in 2013 (excl siblings)
0	Fully inclusive	St.Mary's CE (Hampton)	0%
1a	Siblings, then faith-based for up to 50% of remainder		
1b	Siblings, then faith-based for more than 50% of remainder	Archd.Cambridge CE (Twick)	71%
2a	Fixed cap on faith-based places representing up to 50% of total	St.Stephen's CE (Twick) [6=10%] ⁵ Holy Trinity CE (Rich) [30=50%] St.Mary's CE (Twick) [24=27%]	0% 29% 36%
2b	Fixed cap on faith-based places representing over 50% of total	St.Richard Reynolds Primary RC Twick) [20=65% incl siblings] Bishop Perrin CE (Twick) [18=60% plus siblings]	65% 86%
3	Faith-based priority with no upper limit	St.Richard's CE (Ham) St.Mary's & St.Peter's CE (Tedd) The Queen's CE (Kew) Sacred Heart RC (Tedd) St.James's RC (Twick) St.Osmund's RC (Barnes) St.Edmund's RC (Whitton) St.Elizabeth's RC (Rich) St.Mary Magdalen's RC (Mtlake)	Under-subscribed 62% 96% 71% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100%

Church of England Primaries

Several Church of England primaries are considerably more discriminatory than the 50% level indicated by the London Diocesan Board for Schools. The most extreme examples are The Queens (Kew) 96%, Bishop Perrin (Twickenham) 86%, Archdeacon Cambridge (Twickenham) 71% and St Mary's & St Peter's (Teddington) 62%.

⁵ This is the position for the 2014 policy. The 2013 St.Stephens' entry priority was Type 3, but prior to that it was a junior school only, with Orleans Infants (a community school) as its feeder.

In the case of The Queen's, and St Mary's & St Peter's, there is no upper limit to the number of places offered on the basis of faith priority. At The Queen's, 33 of the 60 places went to siblings this year, and 26 to churchgoers, leaving only 1 offer on a non-faith basis. At St Mary's & St Peter's, 51 of the 90 places were offered to siblings and 1 on the basis of exceptional need. Of the remainder, 24 were offered against a religious criterion, leaving only 14 community places. The result was that the cut-off distance for community places reduced to only 303m from the school.

At Bishop Perrin, there are 18 "Foundation" (faith-based) places out of 30. This fixed number of places is filled before offers are made to siblings. The school received over 150 applications, of which 107 were from new non-churchgoing families. But, after offering 18 Foundation and 9 sibling places, only 3 community offers were made.

The approach at Archdeacon Cambridge is fairer in principle, as places are offered first to siblings and - instead of a fixed number of Foundation places - a fixed % of the *remaining* offers are faith-based. However, the % applied at Archdeacon Cambridge is very high – 70%. So, again, non-churchgoers are squeezed out, with 29 offers to siblings, 22 to churchgoers and only 9 community offers out of 60.

While St.Stephen's Church of England Primary (St.Margarets) was also over-subscribed, all its places went to siblings or on distance. But its governing body has chosen to introduce 6 *new* Foundation places from 2014/15, making it less inclusive than when it was a junior school fed by a community infants' school.

In contrast, the new St.Mary's CofE Primary in Hampton, a Free School opening in September 2013, has no faith-based selection at all, in line with Diocesan policy. We would like to see many more church schools following its example.

Catholic Primaries

As the chart shows, Catholic schools are the most discriminatory. However, non-Catholics do want to attend them. For example, St Edmund's in Whitton had 67 non-Catholic applicants for its 60 places (along with 90 applications from Catholic families), despite its published "Catholics priority" admissions policy. As reported recently in the local press, non-Catholic parents of children at Sacred Heart in Teddington are happy with their school and have expressed concern that their younger children may be unable to join their older siblings because of the faith-based admission criteria⁶. The over-subscription criteria of the new St.Richard Reynolds Catholic Primary include 10 community places and 20 faith-based. All 10 community places were subscribed in its opening year.

Guidance in the Catholic Diocese of Westminster Trust Deed⁷ says that: "*The governing bodies of Catholic schools shall always give priority to Catholic applicants above all other applicants.*" Southwark Diocesan guidance is similar⁸. School governors are obliged to "have regard" to Diocesan guidance⁹. But the new St.Richard Reynolds Catholic Primary (Diocese of Westminster) has a policy setting aside a third of places on a community basis, and Trinity Academy, a Catholic secondary Free School in Lambeth (Diocese of Southwark) opening in 2014, will have a minimum of 50% non-faith-based places¹⁰. It is therefore clearly possible for Catholic schools to be more community minded if they choose to be.

⁶ http://www.richmondandtwickenhamtimes.co.uk/news/10425551.Admissions_warning_as_Catholic_school_puts_faith_before_family/

⁷ <http://www.rcdow.org.uk/fileupload/upload/K2TheTrustDeedBooklet822010511356.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.educationcommission.org.uk/SiteFiles/80.pdf>

⁹ School Admissions Code 2012 para 1.38 <http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00213254/school-admissions-code-2012>

¹⁰ <http://www.trinityacademylondon.org/>.

HOW CHURCH SCHOOLS COULD BECOME “MORE COMMUNITY-MINDED”

It is clear from this analysis that there are simple steps that governing bodies could take that would make their schools more accessible to the wider community, without undermining their status or ethos.

What Church of England primary school governing bodies could do

There are two main drivers behind the high levels of faith-based discrimination at many borough Church of England primaries:

- Once a child from a churchgoing family has been offered a Foundation place, the places subsequently offered to its siblings are not counted among the Foundation places for later years, but are additional to them. The result is that open places are squeezed disproportionately in years with a large number of sibling applicants.
- This effect is compounded at some schools by high numbers of Foundation places, and at others by the absence of any cap on the number of faith-based offers.

The result in 2013 is that four of the eight Anglican primaries with faith-based over-subscription criteria made a very high % of faith-based offers, excluding many local children. If demand continues to grow in future years, the same will happen at other primaries with similar policies.

A simple solution available to governing bodies is to move to a similar model to Archdeacon Cambridge's, but with a lower faith-based %. In that model, all sibling applicants are first accommodated, then the *remaining* places are divided between Foundation/faith-based and open places, with a cap on the share of the remaining places offered on a faith basis. In a community-minded school, we suggest that limit should be well below 50%. This model is referred to in the table below as type 1a.

What Catholic primary governing bodies could do

The inclusion of one-third of community places at St. Richard Reynolds Primary provides the obvious precedent for other Catholic primaries, although we suggest that the % of open places should be increased to at least 50%.

This would in practice also avoid the risk of splitting families between two primary schools which currently arises if a Catholic school applying a “Catholics first” policy to all places is not fully subscribed by Catholics one year but is fully subscribed in another, with new applicants denying places to non-Catholic siblings.

The suggested model is referred to in the table below as type 2b.

In conclusion

While these changes would not meet all the goals of those (such as Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign) who disagree with faith-based selection at state-funded schools, their implementation would acknowledge the problem highlighted by Vince Cable, and by this report, and recognise the schools' responsibility to the wider community.

We hope schools will take the opportunity to make these changes by the Admissions Code deadline of 15 April 2014, in time for September 2015 entry.

Summary of suggested changes at individual schools

Type	Variant	Primary school	% faith offers	Suggested change for 2015/16 entry
0	Fully inclusive	St.Mary's CE (Hampton)	0%	No change
1a	Siblings, then faith-based for up to 50% of remainder			
1b	Siblings, then faith-based for more than 50% of remainder	Archd.Cambridge CE (Twick)	71%	Move to type 1a
2a	Fixed cap on faith-based places representing up to 50% of total	St.Stephen's CE (Twick) [6=10%] Holy Trinity CE (Rich) [30=50%] St.Mary's CE (Twick) [24=27%]	0% 29% 36%	No further faith-based places Move to type 1a Move to type 1a (30%)
2b	Fixed cap on faith-based places representing over 50% of total	St.Richard Reynolds Primary RC (Twick) [20=65% incl siblings] Bishop Perrin CE (Twick) [18=60% plus siblings]	65% 86%	Increase community places to at least 50% Move to type 1a
3	Faith-based priority with no upper limit	St.Richard's CE (Ham) St.Mary's & St.Peter's CE (Tedd) The Queen's CE (Kew) Sacred Heart RC (Tedd) St.James's RC (Twick) St.Osmund's RC (Barnes) St.Edmund's RC (Whitton) St.Elizabeth's RC (Rich) St.Mary Magdalen's RC (Mlake)	U/S 62% 96% 71% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100%	Move to type 1a Move to type 1a Move to type 1a Move to type 2b Move to type 2b Move to type 2b Move to type 2b Move to type 2b Move to type 2b