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Dear Ms Woolf and Bishop Williams,

The enclosed report from Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign (RISC) - *Faith-based discrimination in Richmond primary school offers 2013* - is intended to provide dioceses and school governing bodies with a new, evidence-based perspective on the impact of selective admissions policies at church schools in the borough of Richmond. It includes constructive suggestions for simple changes schools can make to become, in the words of Vince Cable (Twickenham MP, and a defender of faith schools) “more community minded”, without challenging their status or ethos. This is especially important at primary level, when parents rightly expect to be able to find a good school, close to home, and especially when there is so much pressure on places overall.

In preparing the report, we were encouraged by the indications given to the press by Liz Wolverton from the LDBS that Diocese schools “*should be there to serve the community, so we’re really encouraging schools to move towards [open admissions]*”<sup>1</sup> and the example provided by the new St.Mary’s primary in Hampton, with its fully inclusive admissions policy.

Unfortunately, as our report shows, this more inclusive approach is not currently reflected in the policies of several of the Diocesan primaries in the borough. We are writing now to ask you to urge them to adopt a revised approach along the lines suggested.

The scope of the report is schools with Reception classes. These are the Diocesan schools covered, with the % of places (after accommodation of siblings) offered on a faith-restricted basis:

- Archdeacon Cambridge’s - 70%
- Bishop Perrin – 86%
- St.Mary’s Twickenham – 36%
- St.Mary’s Hampton – not over-subscribed but in any case inclusive
- St Mary’s & St Peter’s - 62%, with only a 303 metre distance cut-off for community places.
- St.Stephen’s – 0% (but 6 new Foundation places introduced for 2014)

We have written to the chairs of governors at all the schools. But clearly our primary concern is with the policies at Archdeacon Cambridge’s, Bishop Perrin and St.Mary’s & St.Peter’s, all of which are highly discriminatory. Meanwhile, there were children in Twickenham and north Teddington who were not offered any of their six preferred schools, and were instead assigned places at schools up to 5km away.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/10205477/No-places-for-churchgoers-in-newly-opened-faith-schools.html>

We would much appreciate any action you can take to encourage schools to adopt the suggestion below, and in particular to encourage Archdeacon Cambridge's, Bishop Perrin and St.Mary's & St.Peter's to play their part in providing equitable access to primary places for the community as a whole.

### **Suggested change**

We are calling for all local Church of England primaries that currently apply a faith-based admissions test to move to a model which would put a clear % cap – maximum 50%, but ideally below - on faith-based admissions for the remaining places after siblings have been accommodated. This type of model, albeit with an excessive %, is already in place at Archbishop Cambridge's. There seems therefore no obstacle to its adoption by the Admissions Code deadline of 15 April 2014 in time for September 2015 entry.

This suggestion does not fully address our in-principle concern that *no* local children should be denied access to state-funded schools because of their parents' beliefs or religious practices. But we believe it is a readily achievable way in which your schools could make their admissions policies more community-minded.

We look forward to hearing your views, and would be happy to discuss the matter further.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Rodell – for Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign