

PS/Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools

From: XXXXXX
School Organisation Operations Team
Ext XXXXXX
Date: 9 December 2011

Copy: PS/Secretary of State
PS/Minister of State for Schools
PS/Minister of State for Children and Families
PS/Permanent Secretary
& others at end

REQUEST FROM THE DIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER FOR CONSENT TO PUBLISH PROPOSALS FOR A NEW A NEW 11 – 18 VOLUNTARY AIDED ROMAN CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL

Issue

1. The Diocese of Westminster has applied, under section 10(2) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006), for consent to publish proposals outside of a new school competition for a new 11 – 18 voluntary aided, (VA), Roman Catholic, (RC) secondary school.

Summary

2. The proposed new school will be a five form entry, VA RC secondary school. It is proposed to open the school in September 2013. The aim is to establish the new school on the site of a former girls' grammar school currently owned and occupied by Richmond Adult and Community College. The postal address will be Clifden Road, Twickenham, TW1 4LT. A copy of the application is available at [Annex A](#).

Recommendation

3. That the Minister **gives consent** to the Diocese of Westminster to publish proposals for a new secondary school.

Timing

4. Routine. It would be helpful if the Minister could provide a response in w/c 19 December to enable us to notify the Diocese in that week.

Background and Argument

5. The proposed school is due to open on 1 September 2013. The Diocese of Westminster spans 18 local authorities and this application is for

the first RC secondary school to be established in Richmond upon Thames. The proposal is in response to parental demand for a RC secondary school in the area. Richmond is one of only two London Boroughs which currently does not have a RC secondary school. Population growth in West London and the increasing popularity of RC secondary schools has meant RC parents in the area are finding it difficult to secure a place in a RC school.

6. There are six RC primary schools in the Borough with a total of nine forms of entry, (270 pupils). The new school will remove the need for local children to travel to other London Boroughs to access a place in a RC secondary school and will reduce the pressure for places in other maintained schools in the Borough.

7. It is essential to the Diocesan Trustees that the proposed school should wholly provide places for Roman Catholic children in order to meet the demand for Catholic secondary places in the area. As such, the Diocese considers the VA route its only option as it will allow for the admission of 100% Roman Catholic pupils; whereas a new Catholic Academy would be required to admit 50% non-denominational admissions if oversubscribed, which we expect this to be the case, due to demand in the area. The Diocese has confirmed that it may consider Academy status in the future, once the school is established.

8. While recognising that Ministers want to encourage the establishment of Free Schools and Academies, they have made it easier to establish new VA schools, and provisions within the Education Act 2011 simplify the process to publish proposals for a new VA school as prior consent from the Secretary of State will no longer be required.

9. Richmond Borough Council supports the proposal and is considering the purchase of a four acre site and leasing most of it to the Diocese for a period of 125 years for the purpose of education. The site which was formally a girls' grammar school is currently owned and occupied by Richmond Adult and Community College and includes playing fields and parking facilities.

10. The Diocese also aims to establish a new RC primary school on the site and a separate application has been submitted to take this forward.

11. Having considered the application in the light of the factors listed in current guidance and the particular circumstances that apply in this case, we have concluded that there are strong arguments in favour of agreeing consent to this application. The criteria set out in guidance was issued by the previous Administration and this application has been reviewed against those criteria, with additional considerations taking into account the general policy presumption in favour of Academies. We expect to issue new guidance in February. A summary of our conclusions can be found at [Annex B](#).

Finance

12. The Diocese will be provided with the site and buildings for the new school by the local authority. The proposed new school is not reliant on any identified Departmental funding source.

Presentation

13. We are aware that since receipt of this application and the accompanying application for a primary school, a significant amount of correspondence objecting to the proposal has been received by the Department. The objections are based on the grounds that any new provision provided by the authority should not be designated Faith provision, but should be fully inclusive. Equally, there has been correspondence received supporting the proposal.

14. The granting of consent to this application is not granting for the establishment of the school, it is purely consent to publish proposals. The proposer will still be required to go through the required statutory process to establish the school. This process involves a period of representation in which members of the public can submit their views on the proposal. These should then be taken into account by the Decision Maker when making a final decision on the proposals. If required, we will provide Press Office with appropriate lines to support the decision to grant consent to the application.

Internal Clearance

15. XXXXXX (Deputy Director, School Choice, Organisation and Fair Access Division) and XXXXXX (Legal Advisors Office).

Action

16. If the Minister is content, officials will write to the Diocese of Westminster informing them of the decision.

XXXXXX
School Choice, Organisation & Fair Access

Cc to PS/Advisers, XXXXXX PO, and Regional

Annex A

Application for consent to propose a Catholic secondary school in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Section 10 Application Form

APPLICATION FORM FOR Proposers (other than Local Authorities) TO APPLY TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE, FOR AGREEMENT TO PUBLISH PROPOSALS FOR A NEW FOUNDATION, STATUTORY TRUST (foundation school with a statutory foundation), FOUNDATION SPECIAL (with or without a Trust) OR VOLUNTARY TRUST SCHOOL UNDER SECTION 10 OF THE EDUCATION AND INSPECTIONS ACT 2006

Please complete all sections and submit to School Organisation & Operations Team mailbox at school.organisationproposals@education.gsi.gov.uk (or by post: School Organisation & Operations Team, DfE, 2F Area D, Mowden Hall, Darlington, DL3 9BG).

<p>1. Details of proposer and proposed school including:</p> <p>Title of Proposing Body:</p> <p>The Diocese of Westminster</p> <p>Local Authority area:</p> <p>London Borough of Richmond upon Thames</p> <p>Site details (e.g. single/split site, freehold/leasehold tenure):</p> <p>The Council has agreed to purchase this four-acre site. It is proposed that most of the site is to be leased to the Diocese of Westminster at a peppercorn rate for a period of 125 years for the purpose of conducting a Catholic maintained secondary school. The site consists of large buildings originally built as a girls' grammar school, and currently owned and occupied by Richmond Adult and Community College, together with playing fields and parking spaces.</p> <p>Postal address:</p> <p>Richmond Adult and Community College, Clifden Road, Twickenham TW1 4LT</p> <p>Age range:</p> <p>11 - 18 years: secondary school with five forms of entry.</p> <p>Category (Foundation/Foundation Special/Voluntary Aided/Voluntary Controlled):</p> <p>Voluntary Aided</p>

of London over the past few years and are predicted to rise steeply over the next few years. This school will cater for these children. The demand for secondary school places is particularly high in the Twickenham area where the school will be situated. The proposed site is close to central Twickenham and well served by public transport. There will be clear environmental benefits in allowing so many more children to attend a secondary school of their parents choice closer to their homes.

4. Will the school replace an existing school or schools? If so, provide details of the closing school(s), (e.g. Postal address; Number of Pupils; Age range; Category) and proposed date for closure:

n/a

5. Statement on how the school will contribute to raising standards, including how it is proposed it will network with other schools in the area:

The proposed school will be part of a network of 216 schools in the Diocese of Westminster, including 49 schools and colleges catering for secondary age pupils. 36% of Catholic maintained secondary schools in the Diocese are judged outstanding by OFSTED and 82% are good or outstanding (corresponding national figures for all schools are 18% & 60%). There are no Catholic maintained schools in the Diocese judged inadequate. The six Catholic primary schools in the Borough are all good or outstanding. This background of academic excellence will be built on and replicated in the proposed school. The Diocese has an established track record of partnership with local authorities, as do the Catholic schools with other local schools. The Diocese is also in discussion with St Mary's University College with a view to a formal link between the University College and the new school. These links will ensure the proposed school will be well placed to deliver high quality education for children of secondary school age in the area. It will work with parents, governors and the wider community to serve the local area, engaging actively with other schools and the communities from which pupils are drawn. The proposed school, whilst giving priority to Catholic children in its oversubscription criteria, will be open to pupils of all denominations and cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

6. Evidence of levels of parental demand for this school:

The Archdioceses of Westminster and Southwark have been receiving a steady stream of letters from parents living in Richmond asking for a Catholic secondary school in the Borough. Previous Consultation exercises during this period (see Q.7 below) have all confirmed this high level of demand. In March of this year petition of over 1,100 names was presented to the Council earlier this year, calling for the Council to work with the Catholic Church in the creation of a new secondary school (enclosed). A more recent e-petition set up by local parents in favour of the new school gathered over 1600 signatures within one week of opening and at the time of writing stands at 1860 (copy of website enclosed):

<http://www.richmond.gov.uk/epetitions?mgI=mgEPetitionDisplay.aspx&ID=48&RPID=8650148&HPID=8650148>

7. Views of local community: evidence of informal or statutory consultation, copies of consultation documents, notes of meetings and feedback received (please list any documents attached):

Both the Diocese and the Borough have carried out a number of local consultation exercises, all of which have consistently shown widespread support for a new Catholic secondary school. In 2001 a statutory consultation on the expansion of St James Catholic Primary School elicited a strong aspiration that Catholic secondary places should also be provided in the Borough. The Diocese carried out a specific consultation exercise in 2004 as part of the process of updating its School Organisation Plan – this confirmed the widespread support (consultation document enclosed). At around the same time the borough undertook statutory consultation of its School Organisation Plan including a proposal for a Catholic Secondary school, with similar results (extract of adopted S.O.P. enclosed). The Diocese held further consultation meetings in connection with a 'basic need' bid for capital funding to the DFES in 2005, again eliciting a high level of support (although the bid was ultimately unsuccessful). Throughout this period the Borough and the two Dioceses have worked closely together to explore every avenue to realise this long-standing aspiration. The current Conservative administration in Richmond was elected on a local manifesto which included a promise "to encourage" a local Catholic secondary school.

Following the first petition mentioned above, a debate took place in the April 2011 Council meeting at which both Conservative and Liberal Democrat councillors expressed support for this proposal (extract of minutes enclosed). The Council approached the Diocese of Westminster with the offer of the school site, and the two Dioceses are working to raise the money required to carry out the necessary capital works on site.

Since news of the Council's proposed acquisition of the site has become public, a group has been formed which opposes in principle schools with a religious character. An e-petition started by this group has gathered less support than that set up by parents in favour of the school (see Q.6 above). This is despite the fact that former has been open for signatures for twice as long as the latter.

Further full informal and statutory consultations will be held as part of the process of publishing proposals for the new school.

8. Contact details:

Name:

Tel No:

E-mail:

Address: Diocese of Westminster Education Service,
Vaughan House,
46 Francis St,
SW1P 1QN

Date: 16th September 2011

Annex B

The contribution the school would make to levels of local diversity

1. The proposed school will increase diversity and parental choice. There are, at present, no RC secondary schools in Richmond upon Thames. There is one Church of England VA school, 7 community schools and 3 Academies.
2. There are currently no proposals to establish a Free School within the Borough of Richmond upon Thames.

Local standards

3. The Diocese of Westminster currently has 216 schools spread over 18 local authorities. Of these, 49 schools cater for secondary age pupils, of which none are in Richmond. Of the RC secondary schools in the Diocese 36% are judged outstanding by Ofsted and 82% as good or outstanding. This compares to the national average for all schools of 18% and 60%. None of the Diocese's schools are judged inadequate. The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames has an Ofsted rating of excellent for the delivery of Children's Services.
4. Free school meal eligibility within Richmond upon Thames is 9.2% compared to the national average of 18%.
5. The Diocese has an established track record of working in partnership with local authorities as does its schools with other local schools. The Diocese is in discussion with St Mary's University College with a view to establishing a formal link between the University and the proposed new school. The new school will form part of the family of 216 RC schools across the Diocese of Westminster.

Urgency for the new school to be in place and the impact of the competition process

6. There is no urgency to this application. The proposed school is not due to open until September 2013.

Any views expressed by interested parties e.g. parents and the local community

7. The Diocese and the Borough have carried out a number of consultation exercises, all of which have consistently shown widespread support for a new RC secondary school. The first consultation was carried out in 2001 and various other consultation exercises have been carried out up to April 2011. In March 2011 a petition of over 1,100 names was presented to the Borough voicing support for the new secondary school and calling for the Borough to work with the Diocese on the proposal. Since the proposal was made public an e-petition opposed to it has been set up, but the Diocese

states that this has attracted less support than a more recent e-petition set up by local parents in favour of the new school.

Particular circumstances applying locally

8. At present there is no RC secondary school in Richmond upon Thames and the Diocese has been receiving a steady stream of letters from parents living in Richmond asking for such provision. The proposal has the full support of the local authority, and it is considering buying four acres of land to lease to the Diocese for the establishment of the school.