

# Choices not taken away from non-Catholic pupils

Sir – We need some clarity on the Catholic school debate.

This school does not take away choices for non-Catholic children.

There are enough places in existing schools for now, and spare capacity in Twickenham Academy and Hampton Academy.

Indeed, many places at these schools are taken by out of borough children.

Many Twickenham parents do not apply to these schools, but they are seen as good options by parents in neighbouring boroughs.

The local authority has invested heavily in rebuilding Twickenham Academy.

The work is ahead of schedule and the new building is due to open in April 2013. It looks stunning and will have the most up to date learning and sporting facilities.

This school is just over one mile from Twickenham town

centre and in the borough of Twickenham, yet many of its children are from out of borough. It would make no sense at all for Richmond to open another community school in Clifden Road.

It would be the death knell for Twickenham Academy. Richmond's QC said as much in the recent judicial review. The local authority clearly wants Twickenham parents to make Twickenham Academy their school.

So why open a Catholic school at all? Well, why not? There has long been demand for one and there are approximately 1,900 Catholic children in the borough.

The costs will be part met by the Catholic diocese. Richmond consulted properly and the answer was "yes".

All but one other London borough has a Catholic secondary school, and all other parts of the country have

them. Talk of segregation and sectarianism is just nonsense. Schools already segregate by postcode, sex, and ability. Catholic children will mingle quite happily with others, as they already do.

On checking out the name of the new school, I discovered that Richard Reynolds was a monk from Syon House in Isleworth who was martyred in 1535.

So it seems Catholics have a long history in this area. In places like Australia and New Zealand they recognise now that indigenous peoples such as Aborigines and Maoris are entitled to express their culture. England was a Catholic country once and many still are Catholic. So who is hurt by having this school? No one.

In more ethnically or culturally diverse London boroughs, local authority funding is used for all sorts of

schemes targeted at certain community groups, in recognition of the fact that they bring benefits to our society and have a right to live here. As long as everyone has their needs met and no one is disadvantaged, where is the problem?

Yes, Catholic children now have an extra school to apply to, but other children are no worse off and have a fantastic new school down the road which is crying out for a Twickenham identity.

Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign has created an impression of one section of society depriving others of school places. If a far right organisation promoted a similar argument over education I wonder if there would be a backlash from the good liberal people of Richmond?

NAME AND ADDRESS SUPPLIED

## Will Lord True pledge his support to LGBT groups

Sir – As the saga of the Catholic secondary school in the borough nears its end, Lord True takes to your pages to express how he believes "respect for others" to be a fundamental duty and how the council is elected to serve "all the people".

He acknowledges that includes the "minority of Catholic pupils" in the borough. This is all admirable and it is great to see the leader of our council standing up so strongly for the rights of a minority – perhaps about 10 per cent of the population.

I look forward to reading in a future edition of how he proposes to provide even more desperately needed support to another group of pupils – those who are members of the LGBT community.

Homophobic and transphobic bullying is known to be widespread among young people and remains an unaddressed problem in many areas, including Richmond.

The Richmond LGBT Forum fully participated in the council's anti-bullying group until it ceased to exist a couple of years ago, when cutbacks in staff in youth services, and an absence of management will, meant that it could no longer be supported.

They also supported a volunteer youth leader who ran an LGBT youth group at Heatham House for a while.

That too could not be continued due to lack of resources within youth services.

The young people were also demoralised by the council's

refusal to allow them to use the name that they had come up with for their group – a decision that appeared appallingly ill-judged.

As a result young people in the borough who are coming to terms with their own sexual orientation are provided with little, if any, co-ordinated support and advice at a very vulnerable time in their lives.

Even more worryingly, the council is now considering withdrawal from the Stop Hate UK service which has provided all people in the borough a 24-hour service for reporting hate crimes and incidents of all types (including racial, religious and disability-related as well as homophobic and transphobic). The LGBT forum used the service as the basis for anti-bullying materials they distributed to schools in the borough, materials which will be meaningless without an effective 24-hour helpline to go with them.

Having spent a huge amount of council time, effort and money defending the rights of the Catholic minority, perhaps he will be able to devote a fraction of that to his "fundamental duty" to support the rights of another minority making up perhaps around 10 per cent of the population – lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, particularly those who are young enough to be in schools and colleges.

PETER KIRKHAM  
Twickenham

## Not a place for my child

Sir – As a parent, whose only choice is to send my child to the Richmond academies, I am appalled that Lord True in his letter makes a regret over setting up of our national academies.

So would the noble Lord please let me know where am I supposed to send my child as he has now closed the option of my child going to Clifden Road and all the other local schools getting

oversubscribed? And does the Catholic education service not run a national chain of schools?

Lord True's statement is a gross insult to thousands of local children in our three academies and their teachers and governors and in failing to support them, he has broken another pledge.

A CONCERNED  
TWICKENHAM PARENT



A reminder of the past. The Orient Express passes Marsh Farm Road, Twickenham, on a crisp sunny Saturday, December 9, 2012. Taken by Rob Gill from Cross Deep Gardens. If you have a picture you would like published in our weekly Borough View slot, email it to lettersrtt@london.newsquest.co.uk

## Boris has broken promise to cut transport costs

Sir – Boris Johnson promised to "bear down on transport costs" during his re-election campaign earlier this year after having put fares up above inflation every year since he became Mayor in 2008.

This week it seems that was not to be – Londoners will be hit with 10 more years of above inflation fare rises, starting with a 4.2 per cent rise next month.

The plans for inflation-busting fare rises were

revealed in Transport for London's latest Business Plan, which were debated and agreed at a Transport for London (TfL) Board meeting on Wednesday (12 December).

As chairman of TfL the Mayor has the final decision over what happens. He had the chance to help working Londoners who are struggling just to get by.

Instead Boris is busy campaigning for more tax cuts for the very richest, while

hitting ordinary working Londoners with another inflation-busting fare rise.

The most affordable way to travel around London is by bus, yet bus fares have risen 55 per cent under Boris – going up again next month to £1.40.

As rent, fuel and food costs soar, more passengers will seek cheaper forms of travel as family budgets continue to be squeezed and it is important that bus fares remain affordable to people on

lower incomes.

Boris recently announced an increase to the London Living Wage so hard-working Londoners can afford a decent standard of living. But as he gives with one hand, he takes away with the other by continually raising transport costs, leaving London with the most expensive transport system in the world.

MURAD QURESHI AM  
Labour Londonwide  
Assembly member

## High tides at Richmond Bridge

Hammersmith Bridge 26 minutes earlier; Kew Bridge 12 minutes earlier

	time	ht.m	time	ht.m
Friday	0244	7.21	1507	7.32
Saturday	0332	7.27	1557	7.40
Sunday	0419	7.26	1647	7.38
Monday	0504	7.15	1706	7.23
Tuesday	0548	6.95	1825	6.98
Wednesday	0633	6.70	1916	6.69
Thursday	0720	6.42	2010	6.42
Friday	0816	6.16	2106	6.20

National Severe Weather Warning Service 01344 856264. Floodline 0845 9881188.

The Port of London Authority (PLA), Bakers' Hall, 7 Harp Lane, London EC3R 6LB. 020 7743 7900, [portoflondon.co.uk](http://portoflondon.co.uk). Environment Agency floodline information [environment-agency.gov.uk/floodwarning](http://environment-agency.gov.uk/floodwarning).



# Risc will continue to fight cause

## Burger King is bad news

Sir – Now that he has secured his exclusive Catholic secondary school, you cannot blame Lord True for wanting to repair his image (No regrets in keeping pledge, December 7).

Unfortunately, he continues to misrepresent Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign (Risc) and its supporters. Contrary to what he says about “ill-founded interventions”, it is residents from a wide range of backgrounds who have been driving the opposition to the exclusive school.

And, as Risc has repeatedly stated, we are not campaigning against the principle of state-funded faith schools.

Some Risc supporters are opposed to them; others support them and send their children to them. But we are united in opposition to discriminatory admissions.

Lord True knows all this. He has personally heard it in statements from parents and other residents. But it suits him to ignore it. Risc supporters will not forget his reference to “the national British Humanist Association (BHA) and its local acolyte” and other ill-mannered attempts to denigrate them.

The BHA participated in the recent court case because of its national implications, just as the Secretary of State intervened on the side of the council.

His party’s 2010 local election literature promised only to “encourage a Roman Catholic secondary school”.

There was no mandate to spend £8.5m of taxpayers’ money on the only available secondary school site in Twickenham, and then to prevent its future use for an

inclusive school by leasing it to the Catholic church for 125 years at no charge.

Nor was there a mandate to conspire with the church to exploit what Greg Pope from the Catholic Education Service has recently described as the legal loophole to “get round” the cap of 50 per cent faith-based selection that applies to new free schools/academies, by establishing up to 100 per cent selective voluntary aided schools – with the option to convert them to academies later.

The Department for Education intervened in our legal case to defend this loophole, despite a commitment in the Government’s coalition agreement to make faith schools more inclusive – a point that Vince Cable has taken up.

After the court case, Lord True said that “a period of silence from certain all too well ventilated local voices would also be welcome”.

Bad news I am afraid – Risc will not shut up and go away. Three new inclusive secondaries may well be needed by 2017.

The council has proposals for one, in 2017, on the Richmond College site.

It needs the Turing House free school proposal to be approved for 2014 as it had already assumed a free school in 2013, though there is no clear site for it now that Clifden Road has gone.

There are no plans – and no site – for a third school, and no room for existing schools to expand.

Whether or not the court case goes to appeal, Risc will monitor and challenge faith-based discrimination in the

borough and hold the council to account for its admissions planning. Our website is up and running and will soon be revamped.

Our Facebook group is active. We will still be here at the time of the next council election.

Meanwhile, we are still waiting for an answer to this simple question. “How can it be right to set up a new state-funded school that will discriminate against local children simply because of their parents’ beliefs?”

**JEREMY RODELL**  
Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign

Sir – I would like to respond to Lord True’s letter (No regrets in keeping pledge, December 7).

He clearly does not see any irony in his labelling of the British Humanist Association (BHA) as a “campaigning body peddling a national agenda in our local affairs”.

As one of the very many non-religious people in Richmond I am grateful to the BHA for standing up for those of us with no financial means of defending ourselves against a wealthy campaigning body peddling an international agenda in our local affairs; namely the Catholic church. By dismissing the BHA so arrogantly he fails to recognise that they represent the views of a great many of his borough constituents, whether we be signed-up BHA members or not (and I am not, though I will certainly be sending them a donation).

**G ANDERSON**  
Twickenham

Sir – Much fiction has been presented as fact in correspondence about the new Catholic schools opening next year in Richmond.

Stephen Bennett, in his letter (No regrets in keeping pledge, December 7), refers the term “Roman Catholic” as being the correct description of those he says have been “agitating” for a school.

He claims Catholic relates to Orthodoxy and that the Roman Catholic church (sic) broke away from the the Catholic church (sic) in the mid 1040s.

He goes on to claim that this was one of the main reasons for the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

I fear he may be the victim of internet research.

Perhaps I might attempt to clarify things: The term “Roman” is pretty much confined to the English speaking world.

It was introduced in England largely by Anglicans to identify Christians in communion with the Holy See from other Christians.

For some, it remains a pejorative prefix; for most, it does not these days.

It is never used in official church documents.

The Catholic church did not break away from the Orthodox church in the 1040s as Mr Bennett suggests.

Historians usually refer to 1054 as the date the Great Schism when the Orthodox or Eastern churches broke away from the Catholic church although the fundamental beliefs of both churches are common.

The drawing apart of the eastern and western traditions happened over a period

of years. In recent decades there has been a reconciliation of the traditions, united under one Eucharistic understanding.

The Battle of Hastings had absolutely nothing to do with the eastern and western churches parting company.

It was a complicated issue, but essentially it revolved around who had the greater claim to the English throne, Harold Godwinson or William of Normandy.

Regarding his account of the former Catholic school in Queen’s Road, as I understand it, St Edward the Confessor was established there under the terms of the 1936 and 1944 Education Acts.

It was maintained by the Surrey County Council until the coming of the GLC in 1965.

It was a secondary modern school, as with all such schools, in the 1970s it was due to be included in a programme of replacement by comprehensive schools. Attempts were made to find a solution for St Edward’s, either by securing a new larger site or by possible amalgamation with another Catholic school, on two sites.

A solution was not found so the school amalgamated with a CofE school, St Mary Magdalene, to form a new duo-denominational school.

The Catholic Diocese of Southwark withdrew from this joint arrangement in the 1990s and handed over full control of Christ’s School to the Church of England.

Does any of this matter? Probably not to most but some might be interested.

**BARNES RESIDENT**  
Name and address supplied

Sir – Today I was appalled to notice that Karali leisure – actually Burger King – is opening an outlet at 33-35 London Road Twickenham, accross from Waitrose and conveniently close to our playground, infant school, and three nurseries.

Why I wonder, was there no public consultation about this from our council, which is forever saying it wishes to enhance our local shops, encourage independent businesses and beautify our local area? Did they not notice that it was a Burger King?

That is not all. Burger King is applying for a 24-hour licence. Yes, a huge double fronted fast food outlet in our local shops would like to be open 24 hours, beating all other businesses (although you can be sure, if Burger King is permitted many will then use this as a precedent to increase their hours).

There is a mountain of evidence that large fast food outlets attract yobbish behaviour, become a hang-out for youths, attract drunks and lead to antisocial acting out if not in the business then in the immediate vicinity.

Many will remember the problems with McDonald’s in the high street, and how it felt to push through groups of punters outside the store.

No matter how much Burger King claims it will have bouncers, or perhaps a bin, the point about its food is that it is portable, and its ability to control their punters ends immediately outside the shop.

If any resident does not want this to happen please, please object to the application, which can be viewed at [richmond.gov.uk](http://richmond.gov.uk).

**S BARRETT**  
Twickenham

## Police service

Sir – The new Richmond police station near St John’s Church was opened 18 months ago. When I visited it recently I was impressed by its reception area.

It is also accessible for people who have disabilities.

I was, therefore, concerned to learn that the counter will soon be operating only from noon to 8pm five days a week instead of the current 8am to 8pm seven days a week.

There will be no coverage at weekends and enquirers will have to go to Twickenham.

Richmond is particularly lively on Saturday nights and getting to Twickenham police station may be difficult through rugby crowds. Police support to residents should increase, not decrease.

**JANE DODDS**  
Richmond



## Borough View

This atmospheric shot was captured by Judith Burman on December 11 on the towpath. If you have a picture you would like published in our weekly Borough View slot, email it to [lettersrtt@london.newsquest.co.uk](mailto:lettersrtt@london.newsquest.co.uk)