

## Letter to the Editor

### New secondary school

(Ed note: On 13th September Richmond Council held a debate (webcast available [www.richmond.public-tv/core/portal/home](http://www.richmond.public-tv/core/portal/home)) over plans for the Catholic Church to run a new voluntary-aided secondary school after a campaign group collected more than 1,000 signatures opposing the proposals. Prospect has received a letter from the Richmond Inclusive School Campaign an extract of which follows)

Jeremy Rodell, leader of the campaign, gave an excellent speech and I was most disappointed by the lack of substance and direct response from the Council to the specific issue posed – that admissions to all new Borough schools should be inclusive. I am still seeking a direct answer to the simple question posed by our petition, “Should a child be denied a place in a good local school simply because of the religion or belief of their parents?”

By the Council's own admission, sites are rare and funding is tight; there is no denying that additional secondary school places are needed, especially if we want to accommodate children who would otherwise have to travel to schools in other boroughs.

The Council's proposal to go for a Catholic Voluntary-Aided school, where children of Catholics will be given top priority even if they live in other boroughs, is not the right way forward. In this case the Council would be paying for the premises, the taxpayer paying 90% of the capital costs and all the running costs, and the Catholic Church only paying 10% of the on-going capital costs.

There is a better solution and many Catholic parents would be happy with a good local community school if they could get their children in. But the Council's Linked Schools system excludes five of the six Catholic primaries, so their children are pushed to the back of the queue. If the Council provided sufficient capacity at good local inclusive schools and reformed the Linked Schools system, the needs of all the Borough's parents, including Catholics, would be met in a way that everyone would consider fair. We represent the voice of a large number of fair-minded people from right across the community, with beliefs ranging from the non-religious to Anglicans, Muslims, Hindus, Jews and Catholics, including parents and senior figures from borough schools.

I strongly believe that if there is a will, there will be a way to find a 'win-win' solution. We should not let this drag on and if we want to save this unrest and division in the community, we need to decide soon. Let your views be known. Register your support at [www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk](http://www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk) and sign the petition at <http://tinyurl.com/riscpetition1>.

Gaurav Mathur, Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign

## Barnes District Guide Hall

Barnes District Guides would like to thank the Harroddian School, Barnes Charity Players, Barnes Ball, parents and the BCA for their generous donations towards the refurbishment of the guide hall following a flood in December.

The refurbishment has now been completed with the exception of a third toilet and shower room, suitable for members with disabilities. It is hoped that this work may happen next year depending on available funds.

The Guides are hoping that the target of £20,000 will be raised in time for the build of this extra facility, which would make the hall an attractive venue for visiting guide groups attending the Queen's Jubilee celebration and/or Olympics next year.

To assist with fundraising, Friends of Guiding will be running a Tombola at the forthcoming BCA Food Fair, and the district will be holding its annual Christmas Fair in their hall.

The District Guides are also indebted to Barnes Sports Club, Lowther School, St Osmund's School and The Wordhouse Publishing Group Ltd for use of their facilities for meetings whilst the hall was out of action.

Sue Richardson, Guides District Commissioner

## The Secret Lake

Local children's author draws inspiration from Isabella Plantation

Local children's author, Karen Inglis, has recently published *The Secret Lake* – a 'time-slip' mystery adventure set in Notting Hill's communal gardens, and partly inspired by the azalea pond at Isabella Plantation in Richmond Park.

It tells the story of brother and sister, Stella and Tom, who, when trying to find their elderly neighbour's missing dog, discover a tunnel and lake that take them back in time to their home and its shared gardens almost one-hundred years earlier. Here they befriend the children living there and get embroiled in a daring plot to help a young boy. The book is aimed at readers aged 8-11.

Karen says: “The story was inspired when some friends moved into an apartment that backs onto one of the communal gardens close to Notting Hill – the atmosphere in the enclosed gardens was so magical for the children that I couldn't help wondering what it had been like for the children who lived there a hundred years before...and what would happen if the children from the present day gardens met them.”

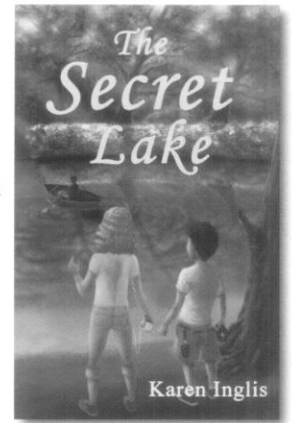
“The 'secret lake' element was directly inspired by the beautiful pond at Isabella Plantation in Richmond Park when all of the azaleas are out in May. The front cover illustration is based on a photo from this. Like many other local families, we used to take our boys there when they were younger and they loved running around there. Indeed the whole of Isabella has an atmosphere for children that is reminiscent of the communal gardens in Notting Hill...”

*The Secret Lake* is available from Barnes Bookshop, Sheen Bookshop and Richmond's Lion & Unicorn Bookshop for £4.99, or can be read online at [www.theseconlake.com](http://www.theseconlake.com). Karen will be doing a reading at Castelnau Library on Saturday 8th October from 3-4pm and will be happy to sign any copies brought along.

One last word from Karen: “I'm very keen to support our local bookshops, so please do buy from there if possible. However, please do let friends further afield know about the website.”

Karen, who is also a copywriter, self-published *The Secret Lake* so is doing all of the marketing herself. What's that like? “Fun but exhausting!”

You can find out more on [www.theseconlake.com](http://www.theseconlake.com).



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Find out more about First Class Learning Barnes at an **Open Day on 15th October 3-5pm** at St. Michael's and All Angels Community Centre, Charles Street, Barnes, SW13 0NX. Classes will be starting at the beginning of November.

For more information contact Vicky Barnett, tel: 07949 117 878 Email: [barnes@firstclasslearning.co.uk](mailto:barnes@firstclasslearning.co.uk), [www.firstclasslearning.co.uk](http://www.firstclasslearning.co.uk)

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