

Press release: Faith-based places introduced at Twickenham primary school

St.Stephen's Primary school in St.Margaret's has decided to introduce "Foundation Places" which will give preference to children of worshippers at local churches, with St.Stephen's church top of the list.

The school's governors decided unanimously to go ahead with the change at their meeting on 21st March, despite objections from Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign (RISC) among others. Councillor Scott Naylor is the Council representative on the governing body.

In their objection, RISC pointed out that, until 2011/12, most children at St.Stephen's Junior school had come from nearby Orleans Infants, a community school with no faith-based selection. Now both schools are all-through primary schools, and one of them is setting aside places for churchgoers.

RISC welcomed some other changes to the admissions arrangements. But they expressed concern that, with parents already anxious about finding school places, the increased prominence of faith-based selection means that some parents will feel obliged to attend church to have an equal chance of getting their children into their local state primary school.

A RISC spokesperson said: "We are disappointed that an opportunity is being missed to eliminate faith-based selection at St Stephen's altogether. We believe it's unfair for a state-funded school to discriminate against local children because their parents are not practicing Christians."

Notes:

- St.Stephen's proposal, RISC's objection and St.Stephen's confirmation that the original proposals will go ahead: <http://www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk/local-issues/current-admissions-issues/st-stephen-s-admissions/>
- List of school governors: <http://www.st-stephens.richmond.sch.uk/govMembers.html>
- The number of Foundation places is relatively small at this stage – 6 out of an annual intake of 60. But the number makes little difference to the degree to which parents will feel under pressure to adopt churchgoing. Our objection document gives further details.