



Running a local campaign

Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign
case study

Summary



- New Voluntary Aided Catholic schools (secondary & small primary)
- Strong drive from Council leadership, Catholic parents and Diocese
- Council decided to give schools only currently-available site
 - Despite need for more inclusive school places in coming years
- Secondary will be effectively closed to non-Catholics
- Campaign high profile locally + some national coverage
- Timeline:
 - Initial skirmishes 2010
 - Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign (RISC) launched April 2011
 - Council decision to go ahead May 2012
 - Judicial Review in High Court (BHA & RISC) heard 15-16 Nov 2012
 - Found in favour of the local council and Department for Education

What's the aim?

Chances of success?



- Factors
 - How strong is your argument? How many people agree & how motivated will they be?
 - What are your resources – motivation, time, capability, knowledge, money?
 - What levers can you pull?
 - How powerful is the other side?
 - Wider implications/considerations
- Aim
 - Top end: major long term local impact
 - Still worth doing: raise awareness of the issues

How strong is your argument? How many people will agree & how motivated will they be?



- Inclusive admissions – the no. 1 issue
 - Strong ethical argument
 - Directly affects local parents and children
 - Other arguments less likely to motivate large numbers of local people
- Broaden base
 - Distinguish between principle of faith schools and principle of fair admissions
 - Be ready with examples of faith schools with fair admissions
 - Be explicit: faith schools not an issue, but discrimination in admissions not ok
 - Remain respectful of opponents & importance to them of their beliefs
 - Strident anti-faith tone unlikely to win many friends
 - Care with party politics – important but “faith” a toxic issue for them
 - They’ll be aware of the constituency they risk alienating

RISC approach



- Focus on inclusive admissions
 - Positive: for inclusivity
 - *“We, the undersigned, petition Richmond Council to ensure that every state-funded school opening in the borough from now on is inclusive, so that no child can be denied a place in a good local school because of the religion or belief of their parents.”*
- Not anti-faith school
- Formally backed by the Fair Admissions Campaign
- Broad base - proud to have Catholics & Anglicans among supporters
 - Many Anglicans disapprove of exclusive faith schools
- Kept returning to key question (never properly answered): *“”*
- *How can it be right to set up a new state-funded school that will turn away local children simply because of their parents’ religion or beliefs?*

What are your resources – time, motivation, capability, knowledge, money?



- People & motivation
 - Social media useful to find broad-based core players
 - New people may come to prominence along the way
 - Be aware of your and their levels of motivation
 - Respect concerns about confidentiality
- Time & duration
 - Hard to predict, but can be demanding
 - You may not know how long it will go on
- Team capability
 - Communications a major element: press, supporters, local politicians...
 - Behind the scenes: IT skills, team management, legal...
- Knowledge
 - What are the rules & processes, what's happening elsewhere
 - Essential to understanding different types of schools/how they are set up
 - Fair Admissions Campaign a major help
- Money
 - Can be minimal (a few leaflets) to significant (legal fees)
 - Unlikely to be zero

RISC approach



- Core team
 - A genuinely broad group which included from fairly early on many people who previously had never been active on this issue
- Supporters
 - 600+ email list, 145 Facebook, 750 Twitter followers, 3,300 signed petition
- Resource
 - Be prepared to do almost everything!
 - Impossible without a good team
 - Fair Admissions Campaign participation really useful expert advice
- Money
 - Some supporters will make donations
 - Big money for legal case as pledges (to be paid if we incur costs)
 - Over 100 supporters, pledge range £15 to £1000, average £140

What levers can you pull?



- What are the constraints?
 - Local campaigns unlikely to change national legislation
 - Free Schools/Academies are the name of the game
- Who has the power to make the decision?
 - Local Council
 - Department for Education
- How can you influence them
 - Councils – reduced impact but key for Voluntary Aided schools & some others
 - Public statements at Council and committee meetings
 - Formal petitions
 - Political vulnerabilities & opportunities – election time?
 - Have they followed their own rules?
 - Councillors on your side? (Ruling party ideally)
 - DfE – key for unsolicited Free Schools
 - Hard to influence directly – Fair Admissions Campaign may be able to help
 - Use your local MP – maintain good relations if you can
 - Indirectly via level of local support for schools you want versus those you don't want
 - Councils may have behind the scenes influence
 - Both
 - Legal, but use with caution...
- Be prepared for unexpected opportunities

URGENT: Have your say before 16th March

COUNCIL CONSULTATION on giving the only local site currently available for a new secondary school to the Catholic Church...

THE SCHOOL RICHMOND COUNCIL PROPOSES

**VOLUNTARY AIDED CATHOLIC
SECONDARY SCHOOL***

For children of Catholics

Children of the non-religious, Anglicans, other
Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs &
others need not apply

**plus small Primary with maximum 10 community places*

CLIFDEN ROAD

THE SCHOOL THE BOROUGH NEEDS

**RICHMOND BOROUGH
INCLUSIVE SECONDARY SCHOOL**

A top-quality school welcoming all children
whatever their parents' beliefs

CLIFDEN ROAD

Turn over to see what action you can take



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

26 August 2011

Dear Michael

I am writing to ask if you will give personal attention to the issues raised in the letter to you from Jeremy Rodell of Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign (2 August).

Richmond Council proposes to establish a voluntary aided Catholic secondary school on an educational site shortly to become available. The idea of a Catholic secondary in the borough is supported by both parties represented on Richmond Council (yours and mine), and by me personally, and there has been a long standing campaign for one by Catholic parents 200 of whom emigrate at 11 to schools in surrounding boroughs.

The reason why the school proposal has recently become controversial is because there is a predicted overall scarcity of secondary places after 2015, in addition to the existing shortage of primary school places. There is therefore now a demand that priority should be given to a non-denominational school rather than a faith school (there are some who are opposed to faith schools in principle but that does not apply to me or the council). There is no obvious site for a second, new, secondary school, unless capital is made available to rebuild the local Richmond upon Thames College. There is a possible compromise which is to welcome a Catholic school but with a commitment to keep open a good proportion of places on a non-denominational basis.

The compromise happens to chime with the Coalition Agreement and government policy to create new faith based academies with, as a first option, 50% faith based admission, as I believe is incorporated in the Education Bill. Academies have been embraced by both parties in the borough and the Coalition's policy would therefore be well received locally.

The tricky issue – for you – is timing: whether to allow proposals for a Catholic VA school to proceed (assuming that the church authorities now request them) before the Education Bill comes into effect, or to apply the new provisions of the Bill. The issue is a highly sensitive one both for the Catholic community and for the borough more generally and that is why I am encouraging you to give the matter your personal attention.

Yours sincerely

The Rt Hon Dr Vincent Cable MP

How powerful is the other side?



Lord True – Council Leader

- Tough opponents
 - Local government
 - Majority administration
 - Strongly motivated individuals with power & influence
 - Politicians & officials
 - Religious communities & institutions
 - Parents (both genuinely devout or seeking advantage)
 - Catholic Church & Church of England
 - Central Government
 - Strongly motivated individuals with power & influence
- “Know your enemy”
 - What do they really want?
 - Any scope for compromise?
- “Love your enemies”?



Wider implications



- What you do in one area may impact on others
 - Avoid providing ammunition
- Even if you lose the local battle, it may help the push for a change in national legislation to remove faith-based discrimination in admissions



Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign

Web: <http://www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/InclusiveSchool>

Facebook group: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/Faithschoolsrichmond/>

Email: communications@richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk

Fair Admissions Campaign

<http://fairadmissions.org.uk/>