



THE GOVERNING BODY OF

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Glenure Road, Eltham, London SE9 1UF

1st November 2019

Mrs G Stockman
PA to the Executive Principal
St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive School
32 Footscray Road
Eltham
London
SE9 2SU

FOR THE ATTENTION OF MR MARKUS RYAN

Dear Markus,

ADMISSIONS POLICY CONSULTATION 2021/2022

The governing body of St Mary's Catholic Primary School respectfully request that St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive reconsider their proposals for changing the admissions policy for 2021/2022.

St Mary's Catholic Primary and St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive have an established history and parish that has been shared for the whole time that both schools have been in existence together. Given that rich history it would be fair to say that our families are as very much part of St Thomas More as they are of St Mary's.

The links between our two schools do not stop at the Year 6 to Year 7 transition period as a large number of past pupils from both schools have gone on to become staff members at either school. We have welcomed staff from St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive who have provided valuable outreach work to both our staff and pupils. In addition we have accepted St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive students on numerous work experience placements. Not forgetting of course that we also have governors who sit on both governing bodies.

St Mary's Catholic Primary has therefore always been proud to be a feeder school into St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive and we see no reason for that not to continue into the future.

We do however feel that the proposed changes to the admissions policy will have a detrimental effect on the transition of pupils from St Mary's Catholic Primary to St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive and feel we must on behalf of our pupils and parents, both present and future, raise these objections with you.



Greenwich
Catholic
Schools
Trust

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is part of The Greenwich Catholic Schools Trust, a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales with company number 10762358. The registered office is at St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Glenure Road, Eltham, SE9 1UF.





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In relation to the proposed Admission Policy for 2021/22 we note that on page 3 the school makes a definition of *Feeder Schools*, as such:

¹ **Feeder Schools**

The current feeder schools to St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive are our two partnership schools: St Thomas More Catholic Primary, Appleton Road, Eltham, SE9 6NS and Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Tudway Road, Kidbrooke, SE3 9YX.

Objection 1

As per the School Admissions Code (2014) Section 1.15, any selection of a feeder school or schools as an oversubscription criteria *must be transparent and made on reasonable grounds*.

St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive is currently in a 'partnership' with St Thomas More Primary and Holy Family Primary. The three schools are not in a federation nor a multi academy trust and therefore there is no legal basis binding the schools together. There is no rationale for referring to St Thomas More Primary and Holy Family Primary as feeder schools without referring to the other feeder schools such as St Mary's Catholic Primary.

We therefore contest that the definition of '*current feeder schools*' is inaccurate and unreasonable given the reality of which primary school a pupil entering Year 7 originates from.

If we can refer you to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator Annual Report 2016/17 (page 4, Section 4), we would argue that pupils from St Mary's Catholic Primary together with pupils from the other feeder schools would be disadvantaged by the proposed change in the Admissions Policy.

If pupils from St Mary's Catholic Primary fail to secure a place at St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive as priority has been given to pupils as per this proposed admission change, then St Mary's Catholic Primary pupils would face a significantly longer journey and/or a more difficult journey to another Catholic Secondary School.

This outcome would be considered unfair. (Office of the Schools Adjudicator Annual Report 2016/17, page 10, section 18).

We would therefore request that the definition of feeder schools should be removed.



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Furthermore in light of this new definition added to the Admission Policy, we have two additional objections to raise as part of your consultation.

Objection 2

Sub-Criteria (b)

Child(ren) of staff members employed at either St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive or one of the feeder schools¹ for two or more years by the 1 September of the year of entry.

We object to this item as the School Admissions Code (2014) Section 1.39 only provides for this preference for staff employed at the school and makes no reference to feeder schools. St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive, St Thomas More Primary and Holy Family Primary are three different schools without a shared admission policy. We therefore can see no valid reason for this addition to include staff from two other schools and request that the phrase 'or one of the feeder schools' is removed from the sub-criteria (b).

Objection 3

Sub-Criteria (c)

Attends a feeder school¹ and has been on roll at a feeder school¹ continuously at the time of application for at least two years and whose home address is within or up to a distance of 3km from St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive.

We draw your attention to your own website (relevant page attached) which refers to St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive as having "in effect only five main feeder schools and 65% of our pupils come from just three of these."

Given the large numbers of pupils which join St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive from St Mary's (2019: 45 pupils which represents 36% of the full intake), then we think it is a reasonable assumption to make that St Mary's is one of the feeder schools which St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive makes reference to on its own website.

We therefore object to sub-criteria (c) in that it would be unreasonable to give preference to two feeder schools over the other three feeder schools. By enacting sub-criteria (c) this would lead to pupils from St Mary's and the other feeder schools being unfairly disadvantaged.





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In conclusion, the governors of St Mary's Catholic Primary School request that St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive remove these proposals to their admission policy 2021/22 to include any reference to feeder schools. As stated in the Schools Admissions Code 2014 (section 14), the practices and criteria used to decide the allocation of school places must be, 'fair, clear and objective'; we feel that these changes fall short of this principle.

As highlighted by many of our shared families and parishioners, we do not think this proposal is in the benefit of Catholic children in our local community and parish. Fundamentally we believe, in line with Diocesan policy, that feeder schools should not be used to prioritise any school above others and that access to a Catholic secondary school should not be determined by a previous educational setting.

We look forward to your acknowledgment and response to our objections.

**FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNING BODY
OF ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Paul Drake
CHAIR OF GOVERNORS



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Our School

[School Ethos and Values](#)

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St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive School was founded in 1964. It is a mixed 11-16 comprehensive school with a roll of over 600 pupils. It is located in the south east of London in the Royal Borough of Greenwich, close to the border with Kent.

The school started as 3½ form entry and has always had an excellent reputation in the area. The school has a very stable senior leadership and has had five Headteachers since it opened. The first headmaster, Mr Redmond, set the tone and values for the school which are evident, real and tangible even today, as many visitors comment.

Our excellent record of academic success puts us consistently in the top 10% of schools nationally. Students gained 93% 5 or more A* – C passes at GCSE in 2015 and 82% 5 A*-C (including English and Maths). We are very proud that over the last few years over 42% of all GCSE grades are at A or A* which rivals many selective grammar schools.

In 2015 and 2014, a number of pupils also gained passes at the Free Standing Mathematics Qualification in Additional Mathematics as a foundation for A-level. Three Sciences are offered at GCSE. The school is proud of the fact that it takes pupils of all abilities and achieves equally highly with the less able as well as with academic high fliers. All the indications are that we give significant “added value” (top 10% CVA).

St Thomas More has the reputation of being a school with the highest standards of discipline. A premium is put on courtesy, smart appearance and good order. Over the last few years discipline is not repressive and is based on mutual respect between teacher and pupil. Pupils have real motivation to work hard and to succeed. A phrase which is often used by visitors, supply teachers and even inspectors is “What a lovely school!”

St Thomas More has 124 pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 and 120 pupils in Years 10 and 11, and each is divided into four forms. The school is consistently hugely oversubscribed and there have been several attempts in recent years to increase its roll. Because of demand the intake is effectively concentrated into a small area within a 2-mile radius of the school. There is tremendous support for the school within the local community.

Over the last six years the school’s building programme has led to the expansion of facilities in many subject areas; this includes the addition of £700,000 outdoor sports facilities. The school is a specialist college in Mathematics and Computing and completed a building programme which has increased ICT facilities and given three extra classrooms. There are interactive whiteboards in every classroom with seven ICT equipped rooms. Our web-site supports the virtual learning environment (VLE) within the school.

St Thomas More is fortunate to be served by very good feeder primary schools. Because of our very small catchment area, we have in effect only five main feeder schools and 65% of our pupils come from just three of these. The school works very hard with all pupils and the Gifted and Talented pupils achieve excellent results. The school is in Family 5 of the London Families of Schools.

All pupils admitted to the school come from fully practising Catholic families who attend Mass every Sunday. There is a very strong Catholic ethos built around the mission statement “To encourage each individual to grow and develop through love and the teachings of Christ”. This ethos has always been fully supported by non-Catholic as well as Catholic staff and has been greatly enriched by the contribution of all. We are also extremely fortunate to have tremendous support from the parish priests of our main feeder parishes. Lynchpins of the Catholic dimension of the school are our Chaplain and Counsellor.

At the end of Year 11 the great majority of pupils – about 95% – progress to further study. Some of these go to Christ the King College, excellent Catholic sixth form colleges in Sidcup or Lewisham. Most go to grammar school sixth forms, other colleges, independent or school sixth forms. Many pupils have progressed to Oxford or Cambridge and large numbers go on to a range of universities.