

# ARCHDIOCESE OF GLASGOW

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Most Rev. Mario Joseph Conti  
Archbishop

20 September, 2011

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Recently East Renfrewshire Council has published a Consultation Document on admission policy to St. Ninian's High School, Giffnock. The implications of this document are far reaching and require our attention since they affect the future of Catholic education in the surrounding area.

As you well know, St Ninian's High School is a very successful Catholic school to which parents wish to send their children. At the same time, it is widely recognised that the school is a victim of its own success and is now facing over-crowding problems. This has provoked a dilemma for the Education Department of East Renfrewshire Council, which is under pressure to find places for all the pupils who currently have a statutory right to be educated at St. Ninian's as well as those who seek placing requests there.

We acknowledge that the Council faces a difficult situation but we cannot agree with its proposed solution, namely the removing of the right of priority admission from the pupils of St. Angela's and St. Vincent's Primary Schools.

It should not be forgotten that pupils from the areas served by these schools have been associated with St. Ninian's since the High School was founded; there would have been no St. Ninian's without these pupils, and they are part and parcel of the St. Ninian's success story. It is unfair to relegate those schools to the position of now having to seek an ever smaller number of placing requests. It is also unnecessary.

Of course the Archdiocese welcomes the proposal that, in the case of placing requests, a pupil who is a baptised Catholic will be treated with precedence for admission on production of an authentic baptismal certificate. This is certainly a step in the right direction. But it is not enough.

The Catholic Church recognises the statutory agreement that denominational schools in Scotland are managed by Councils as public schools which are

conducted '*in the interest of*' the denominational community (Education Scotland Act 1980 section 22D). We happily acknowledge that Catholic schools welcome the inclusion of children of all faiths and backgrounds and that they support all young people appropriately. Nonetheless, we take the view that, where a Catholic school is over-subscribed, priority for admission should be given to Catholic children.

Since denominational schools exist principally for the benefit of their primary client community, in this case the Catholic community, it is our firm contention that, in cases of over-subscription, baptised Catholics should be given priority at first admission stage, and not just for placing requests. We understand that this is the procedure followed by numerous Local Authorities in Scotland and we urge East Renfrewshire Council to adopt this policy.

Therefore I would ask you to reflect on these issues and to consider writing to East Renfrewshire Council to make your views known before the consultation ends on November 5.

Yours devotedly in Christ

*+Mario Conti*  
*Archbishop of Glasgow*