

D cc Blyp

Prime Minister 2

PRIME MINISTER

You could mention this
to Mr Baker when you next
see him (perhaps in a week
The London Oratory School or so).

5 September 1986

The London Oratory School

Don't
say

Yes not

No war is more fierce than a Holy one!

I enclose a very interesting memorandum and letter which I have
just received from John McIntosh. Despite the obvious weight of
his argument and the overwhelming support of parents he is clearly
troubled by the possible outcome.

I think it would be worthwhile alerting the Secretary of State
that you are familiar with the case and recommending that when
the Diocese finally throws down the gauntlet he should be prepared
to pick it up immediately.

BG

BRIAN GRIFFITHS

THE LONDON ORATORY SCHOOL

SEAGRAVE ROAD, LONDON SW6 1RX TELEPHONE: 01-385 0102

FROM THE HEADMASTER: JOHN McINTOSH, MA

Thursday, 4th September 1986

Professor Brian Griffiths,
10 Downing Street.

Dear Brian,

I am very grateful to you for taking an interest in our present difficulty.

Because the Fathers of the Oratory, our trustees, and the governors have refused to cooperate with the Diocese, the Cardinal referred the matter to Rome. In June the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio, Archbishop Barbarito, asked to see the Provost and myself to discuss the matter. He was charming and very sympathetic; in fact after an hour he was, off the record, agreeing with us. He took a lot of trouble to explain that neither he nor Rome would get involved and that it was a matter to be sorted out within the framework of the civil law. I enclose a copy of the memorandum which I prepared for him which you might like to read.

I am not a lawyer, but I think we are in a pretty strong position. I do not think the ILEA would dare to try to cease to maintain us, and for the Cardinal to declare that he no longer regards us as a Catholic school would be a scandal which even he would not risk. I only hope I have not got it all wrong!

The Diocese continues to ignore our position and to include us in their proposals. However, when it comes to publishing public notices they will have to face reality. Meanwhile it is all very disturbing for staff, parents and pupils.

I will not trouble you with the volumes of correspondence, but thought you might like to see a letter which I wrote to the Cardinal on 15th July: this should give you an idea of where we stand! He has not replied to this one.

I should be very pleased to come to talk to you and I will telephone to arrange a time.

Sincerely,
John.

THE LONDON ORATORY SCHOOL

SEAGRAVE ROAD, LONDON SW6 1RX TELEPHONE: 01-385 0102

FROM THE HEADMASTER: JOHN McINTOSH, MA

MEMORANDUM TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE APOSTOLIC PRO NUNCIO

CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE CENTRAL PASTORAL
AREA OF THE DIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER

In 1979, under the chairmanship of Bishop Konstant, the Westminster Diocese began a review of the provision of Catholic secondary school places in the Central Pastoral Area of the Diocese in the light of the declining school population. Last summer the Diocese submitted to the Secretary of State plans which proposed establishing two new schools by amalgamating four existing schools, Cardinal Manning, Sion Manning, St. Edmund's and St. Thomas More, on two sites. The plans were rejected, though the Secretary of State acknowledged the need for rationalisation and said that he would consider as a matter of urgency any further plans put forward by the Diocese and the ILEA.

During the discussions which took place between 1979 and 1985, the trustees and governors were invited to cooperate in a number of proposed schemes which involved either reducing the intake to the school or amalgamating with another school. None of the proposals involved the creation of a sixth form college or removing sixth forms from schools. The trustees and governors decided to reject these proposals, mainly on the grounds that any reduction in the intake would have seriously undermined the viability of the sixth form courses and that there was, and still is, strong parental demand and support for the school. In the event the school was unaffected by the proposals submitted to the Secretary of State.

In 1985 Bishop Konstant was translated to Leeds and the Diocesan Education Service was reorganised by the Cardinal acting on recommendations made by the Grubb Institute in a report which he had commissioned. Mrs. Kathleen O'Gorman was appointed Director of the new service.

In December 1985 the Diocese published a consultative paper with a view to submitting new proposals to the Secretary of State during 1986. The paper proposed five possible solutions for achieving a reduction from 34 to 24 forms of entry. Only one of these solutions did not affect The London Oratory School. Two solutions proposed the setting up of a sixth form college and removing the sixth form from all schools, including the Oratory. Very early on it became clear that the Cardinal and Mrs. O'Gorman strongly favoured a sixth form college solution.

The trustees and governors met separately to discuss the consultative paper and in January and February respectively they wrote to inform the Diocese that they had decided that the school should continue as a six form entry (180) boys' school, admitting girls to the sixth form. In spite of this, the Diocese continued to include the school in the various discussion papers which it published, overlooking the fact that the school is not in the trusteeship of the Diocese. Because of this the governors decided to publish a statement in the Catholic press making the school's position in the matter clear. This was published on 30th May, six days before the publication of the Diocese's latest paper, which proposes the establishment of a sixth form college, the closure of two schools and that all other schools in the area, including the Oratory, should become 11-16 schools.

The London Oratory School is in the trusteeship of the Fathers of the Oratory who founded the school 123 years ago. They appoint the majority of the governors. The school receives no financial help from the Diocese and the Diocese does not appoint any of the governors. In 1970 the school moved to new premises in West Brompton and at the request of the Diocese became an all-ability (comprehensive) school. It is perhaps interesting to note that when the governors agreed to become an all-ability school it was on the understanding that all of the Diocesan schools would be reorganised at the same time; in fact the Diocese did not keep this undertaking and retained selective schools until 1976 when it was forced by Act of Parliament to change.

The London Oratory School admits 180 boys to the first form annually and about 40 girls to the sixth form. There are 1180 pupils altogether, 280 of these in the sixth form. The sixth form is the largest Catholic sixth form in the Diocese and the third largest sixth form in London. It is the only Catholic sixth form in the Central Area which is self-sufficient, the others depending on membership of a consortium of six schools, an arrangement which was set up four years ago and which, it is generally agreed, has failed. The school offers 24 A level courses and 30 non-A level courses. It was the most heavily subscribed school in the Central Pastoral Area last year and draws pupils from all over the ILEA area, the outer London Boroughs and contiguous counties. Many of the pupils travel from areas with the 11-16 and sixth form college system because their parents want them in an 11-18 school. There is very strong, almost unanimous I suspect, support by parents and pupils for the decision to remain an 11-18 school.

Under the civil law relating to education it is not within the competence of the Diocese to change the character of the school. The character of the school could be changed by (i) the governors publishing public notices, which would be subject to the approval of the Secretary of State, who may reject them, approve them or, after consultation, approve them with modification; or (ii) ~~the~~ the local education authority (ILEA) publishing a cease to maintain order, and the trustees simultaneously publishing a notice of their intention to establish a new school, both of which, again, would be subject to the approval of the Secretary of State. In my view it is highly unlikely that the Secretary of State would give his approval to such proposals. There is no means by which the Diocese itself can bring about a change. The 1944 Education Act, which established voluntary aided schools and secured public funding for them, was drawn up with the agreement of the Catholic hierarchy. My understanding of the new Code of Canon Law is that the canons which relate to Catholic schools are concerned with faith and morals, not organisation and management. In my view any attempt to use canon law or ecclesiastical authority to derogate from English civil law would meet with strong opposition and be very damaging to the relationships between the Church and State in the Country.

The Diocese's latest paper predicts that the proposed sixth form college would have 820 students if The London Oratory School were included. If our 280 are deducted from this they would be left with 540 students, nearly twice the number of which we manage to run a very successful sixth form. The existence of two distinct systems would, of course, provide parents and pupils wider choice.

The school is held in very high esteem by the ILEA inspectors, whose recent reports comment on the high standards achieved, quality of teaching, dedication of staff, good relationships between staff and pupils, care and concern of the staff in pastoral matters and the generally pleasant and well-disciplined atmosphere.

There is no doubt that in choosing the school the quality of the sixth form and its importance to the school as a whole is a very important consideration for parents.

The London Oratory School has a large, mixed successful and self-sufficient sixth form of over 270 pupils, offering a wide range of courses to boys and girls of all abilities. Pupils can choose from 24 subjects at A level, 30 subjects at other levels and are prepared for universities, medical schools, polytechnics, colleges of higher and further education, drama schools and art colleges.

Such a sixth form enables the school to provide Catholic children with an education which has significant advantages compared with an 11-16 school.

1. Younger pupils benefit from the security of knowing they are to be educated in the same school from the age of eleven to eighteen.

2. The more highly developed skills of the sixth form pupils in music, drama and sport are invaluable for lower school pupils, especially those in the fourth and fifth forms who are often in teams, musical groups and plays with sixth formers. These activities would all be more limited and considerably less demanding for the younger pupils without the contribution of the older pupils.

3. A school without a sixth form provides a very limited environment for maturing boys. A large, mixed sixth form enables the 11-16 year old to belong to a community more representative of the adult world for which he is being prepared.

4. Schools with sixth forms are more likely to attract and keep high calibre teachers because of the wider variety of teaching; without the prospect of some A level teaching, many academically gifted teachers would be deterred from taking posts in an 11-16 school even though they would enjoy teaching the younger pupils.

5. The duties which all our sixth form pupils carry out, supervising the younger pupils and helping at the many school functions, enable them to understand and develop the skills of cooperation, leadership and authority essential for them as a preparation for successful adult life.

6. At the age of 16-18 when pupils are going through a crucial stage in their personal and intellectual development they will be advised and helped by teachers who know and understand them. Although the school is always attracting young, able teachers, turnover in staff is well below average so that most of the sixth form tutors and teachers will have known their pupils for several years.

7. Parents of girls coming to the sixth form of The London Oratory School know that their daughters will continue their education in an orderly yet sympathetic environment in a large mixed sixth form which is part of a stable, disciplined and highly successful school.

If The London Oratory School were to close its sixth form the options open to Catholic parents would be seriously and unnecessarily limited. Parents of eleven year old boys would no longer be able to choose a Catholic non-fee paying school which would give their sons an uninterrupted education up to the age of nineteen. Parents of sixteen year old children, unlike those who educate their children in the private sector where all reputable schools have sixth forms, would be unable to send them to the sixth form of a long-established school with a proven record of stability, good discipline and academic success for pupils of all abilities; they would have no choice since there would be only one Catholic school available.

THE LONDON ORATORY SCHOOL

SEAGRAVE ROAD, LONDON SW6 1RX TELEPHONE: 01-385 0102

FROM THE HEADMASTER: JOHN McINTOSH, MA

Tuesday, 15th July 1986

His Eminence Cardinal George Basil Hume, OSB
Archbishop's House,
Westminster, SW1

Your Eminence,

You should have received a copy of a letter which I wrote to Mrs. O'Gorman recently at the end of which I refer to the booklet 'Your Child's Catholic Secondary Education' and rumours and statements by officers of the Diocese that 'Rome' is going to deal with the matter.

The lack of professionalism and, sad to say, integrity being displayed by the WDES in handling the matter of secondary school reorganisation is surprising. Misleading and dishonest statements and information, biased presentation of information and opinions, the use of innuendo and an unwillingness to substantiate what is being said seem to be the order of the day. It all smacks of a very unpleasant form of authoritarianism which is alien to the way in which we normally work in this country. The idea that come what may the Church should use intimidation and Canon Law to subjugate the Law of the Land is one which would arouse considerable disquiet and anger among both Catholics and non-Catholics in this country. English Catholics do not take kindly to intimidation by their priests.

There are two particular matters which I should like to put to Your Eminence.

First, in the paper 'A Proposal for Catholic Secondary Provision in the Central Area', in the booklet 'Your Child's Catholic Secondary Education' and in statements made by officers, sometimes at public meetings, the WDES has by omission as well as commission misrepresented the position of the school. This is misleading and confusing for parents and others with an interest. At first I attributed much of this to incompetence and genuine ignorance; however, it is now looking more blatant, calculated and malevolent.

Secondly, the matter of Rome's involvement. I assume that this was the reason for the meeting which Father Dilke and I had recently with the Pro-Nuncio. The Pro-Nuncio's assurance that neither Rome nor the Pro-Nuncio would intervene in the matter was unequivocal. However, Mrs. O'Gorman's and Mr. Morgan's view seems to be very different. On the telephone last week Mr. Morgan told me that the matter was still being pursued in Rome and that he was privy to information of which I had no knowledge. I should be loath to suggest that we should take the matter up with the Pro-Nuncio again but clearly the doubt must be resolved.

J

Westminster Diocesan Education Service