

9 December 2010

Dear Archbishop Nichols

This is to acknowledge your letter to me of yesterday's date. It is marked "Private & Confidential", so I will not quote from it directly. However, since your purpose is to ask me to help to dispel impressions that you and those who act in your name are opposed or inimical to the Vaughan School, I do not feel precluded from publicising this reply.

People's opinions about the motives of the Diocese will be determined, not by anything I might think or say, but by the actions of the Diocese. I have neither time nor space to rehearse these in detail, but here are a few that seem particularly hard to understand:

- The Diocese's consistent failure, over the past few years, to observe its own policy on consultation before appointing Foundation Governors.
- The Diocese's failure to provide a cogent explanation for its refusal to re-appoint as many as seven highly able and dedicated Governors, and two Chairmen in succession.
- The Diocese's referral of the School to the Office of the Schools' Adjudicator.
- The Diocese's appointment to the Governing Body of its own Director of Education.
- The Diocese's failure to appoint current parents as Foundation Governors.

A lot of people think that the Diocese has treated the Vaughan at least high-handedly, if not with contempt bordering on malice. To their mind the School has been singled out for special treatment. I might add that they will be confirmed in this belief by events at last evening's Governors' Meeting, not least by the astonishing decision of your representatives to appoint to the Chairmanship one who is already Chairman of a nearby Catholic school.

So I regret that no words of mine can help to improve the standing of the Diocese in the eyes of many concerned with the Vaughan. To regain their trust and their respect will take a long time and much patient work. Your agents will have to convince people that they are more interested in the good of the School than in imposing at all costs an ideologically-driven, one-size-fits-all approach to the organisation of Catholic education. No less importantly, they must stop labelling those who disagree with this approach as disloyal or even disobedient. I can hardly exaggerate the extent to which inferences of this kind are resented.

In short, Your Grace, handsome is as handsome does.

Yours sincerely



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