

An open letter.

### **Question.**

Who can hold a school to account? The LA have paid scant regard to policy, process and procedure - and worse. The Diocese have an agenda for ethos and regime change, largely against parental choice, and the IEB are simply unaccountable. Who has the remit to correct this and give a voice to children and parents?

To Whom It May Concern:

'Trinity is a community of Catholic faith and learning, committed to nurturing educated, informed, fulfilled and socially responsible citizens who can play a positive role in the modern democratic world. It is a school for all types of students, from all different faiths – or no faith at all. We are a school committed to educating the children of Catholics; but also, all children in the Catholic way.'

Central to the Trinity ethos is Peter's Place which meets the needs of learners who have complex communication and social interaction difficulties. Students learn to become independent, productive and responsible members of Peter's Place and of the wider school community. They will reach their full emotional, intellectual, physical and spiritual potential. This is Trinity's commitment to the 'common good' in action – Trinity really does *walk the talk*. Whilst this won't enhance the school's performance, or league table position, it is a matter of ethical leadership and a resolute moral compass.

Having said that, Trinity deserves better treatment. The following fills me with dread and a deep disappointment, but it can all be backed up with evidence and/or witnesses. There is a story to be told that has been ignored for far too long.

The LA have paid scant regard to policy, process and procedure. When challenged about this, the LA have carried out ineffectual internal reviews of a defensive nature; who can hold them to account? A financial deficit that has been overinflated as a cover for regime change – why waste a crisis! A Warning Notice issued without offering evidence to support. EIA's haven't been completed. FOIA requests have been turned down, e.g. apparently the LA doesn't keep budgetary data on schools. They are simply marking their own homework whilst certain council officials are unprofessional and act with impunity.

The Diocese have long held an agenda to change the ethos of the school and return it to a more traditional Catholic education with a regressive ethos: this is against Canon law and direction from the Pope and the Vatican. From September, new school rules will include no longer using first names – an unusual but much-loved feature of Trinity life building trust and respect. Also, punishment for children that don't engage in prayer activity. Whilst it is said to be for consultation it is clear which way the school is going. With 60% of pupil's being non-Catholic - who is going to speak up for them? What happens to other faiths? Hindu, Muslim, Sikh – are they to be punished? I would like to state facts and the size of the issue, but as no EIA has been carried out - no impact has been considered nor mitigated. (Appendix 2)

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The IEB have been given free-range to act as they please. No constraints as long as the deficit is reduced – the budget must be balanced at any cost: curriculum is slashed; sixth form to be suspended; good teachers leave. They are unelected, unaccountable and uncommunicative as they spread misinformation and propaganda. They state that the sixth form will reopen in up to 2 years whilst the cost of redundancies will cost up to £500,000: the precise figures are a closely guarded secret. The business case has never been made known to parents – despite the fact that it has been asked for repeatedly; they are wilfully blind to the needs of parents. Even Councillors are kept out of the loop – who actually holds scrutiny and oversight of the IEB?

It is your moral and intellectual duty to ensure that the children of Trinity get the education that they were promised. The very nature of Trinity is being irrevocably changed, to the detriment of its pupils, and hidden under the guise of budgetary concerns. Real harm is already being caused in the face of uncertainty and change to ethos, impact statements have been written by concerned parents and are available for your inspection. The children's health and wellbeing is now being damaged, not to mention their longer term reduced life chances. Ultimately, it is children on the receiving end of these decisions (appendix 1).

There must be transparency and accountability – without it there can be no informed choice.

In order for this to happen concerned parents ask that:

- An external independent review/investigation into the circumstances of Trinity, and the wider impact, is commissioned.
- The findings of this are made public.
- All changes both external to, and within the school, are halted until the review is complete.
- In the meantime, EIAs are undertaken & FOI requests answered.

The Scrutiny Panel has the remit and power to correct this – a whole school community, of Catholics and non-Catholics alike, is relying on you to act in good faith (petition 1100+). This issue isn't going away – it would be appreciated if you were part of the solution.

This is about children. This is about equality, kindness and respect. It's about the children of Trinity Catholic School getting the education that they were promised, and they deserve.

Many thanks for your time. If you have any questions, I'd be happy to answer?

Concerned Parents.

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## Appendix 1:

Warwickshire Education (WE) Strategy 2018-2023 'Working in partnership, celebrating success, aiming for excellence' **Safeguarding and promoting the welfare and well-being of learners is paramount In all areas of work.**

WE2 Our challenge is to promote a broad, empowering and creative curriculum, focusing on times of transition, and prioritising vulnerable groups:

## Appendix 2;

The document Memorandum of Understanding between the Catholic Church and the Department for Education states under Key Principles General Page 5 of 17 Point 2

While the education system continues to evolve, the DfE remains committed to **securing the religious character and ethos of every Catholic school** and to preserving the diocesan family of schools.

8. It is only the Diocesan Bishop who can determine whether a school is Catholic and the **requirements necessary to secure its religious character and ethos**, in relation to which control of governance is essential.

Under Key Principles for Engagement Page :

g) Any academy solution for a Catholic school where there is cause for concern will also reflect and **protect its existing designation and the ethos of that school.**

In the document titled Schools Causing Concern Guidance :

Page 24, The role and duties of the IEB, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph "**Any obligations on the governing body in relation to maintaining the religious ethos of a maintained school will also apply to the IEB.**

**Therefore, as Trinity Catholic school is a type of maintained school the IEB is NOT ALLOWED to change its Ethos!**

It clearly states on the school website:

*(Trinity)is widely known as a more progressive Catholic school. All members of the community are known by their first names. This has its basis in theology; our first names are the names that God knows us by, and it is with that name that he calls us to do good works. The ethos of Trinity rests upon the knowledge that are all made equal in His image.*

**Our first name basis IS the very embodiment of Trinity's Ethos.**

The Diocese and the IEB are claiming that by taking away the very thing that makes our school unique that it is developing it. You cannot develop something you wish to erase and the decision reverses a collegial model into a hierarchical one, and runs contrary in spirit and letter to Lumen Gentium and the Second Vatican Council's exhortation on schools.

Point 14 :

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14. Thus, while policies and opportunities differ from place to place, the Catholic school has its place in any national school system. By offering such an alternative the Church wishes to respond to the obvious need for cooperation in a society characterised by cultural pluralism. Moreover, in this way she helps to promote that freedom of teaching which champions and guarantees freedom of conscience and the parental right to choose the school best suited to parents' educational purpose.(11)

**That right is now being denied from parents & students at Trinity.**

Point 89 :The Church herself in particular looks with confidence and trust to Religious Institutes which have received a special charism of the Holy Spirit and have been most active in the education of the young. May they be faithful to the inspiration of their founders and give their whole-hearted support to the apostolic work of education in Catholic schools and not allow themselves to be diverted from this by attractive invitations to undertake other, often seemingly more effective, apostolates.

**Our founder was Peter Hastings and his inspiration is embedded in our school moto "Equal by Means of God's Image" and use of Christian names is central to this.**

**Lumen gentium**, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, is one of the principal documents of the Second Vatican Council states

Changing a collegial model into a hierarchical one, runs contrary in spirit and letter to Lumen Gentium and the Second Vatican Council's exhortation on schools.

The schools own mission statement :

*" Canon Law insists that Catholic schools offer an education that is holistic, consultative and outstanding. At Trinity, we commit to this: but also to the specific mission of supporting the common good. All members of the community agree that our mission cannot be separated from a desire to offer outstanding education. We commit to the following principles as non negotiables as starting points for supporting Canon Law and the common good:"*

The Code of Canon Law regarding parents & teachers

*"§2.Parents must cooperate closely with the teachers of the schools to which they entrust their children to be educated; moreover, teachers in fulfilling their duty are to collaborate very closely with parents, who are to be heard willingly and for whom associations or meetings are to be established and highly esteemed."*

The Common Good

The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales describe the notion in terms of interdependency:

*'Because we are interdependent, the common good is more like a multiplication sum, where if any one number is zero then the total is always zero. If anyone is left out and deprived of what is essential, then the common good has been betrayed.'*(Choosing the common good, paragraph 8)

Levels of Anxiety have been increased by the change of Christian names at a time when students were in or about to enter into GCSE & A Level examinations. Why did they choose this time

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Lack of parental choice – all schools in Warwickshire will have similar ethos - TRINITY lived and breathed its Ethos and to remove the use of Christian names is a founding principle on equality and removes a unique and much needed selling point. There is no law that states ALL Catholic schools must be identical. In fact the church states that it must provide different types of schools..

### Catholic Life

#### [Survey for community, Aut 2017](#)

“Catholic education is inspired by a vision of life seen whole.

Catholic faith tutors us in reaching out to the fullness of human experience and to its expression in a community of life in society.”

(Cardinal Vincent Nichols Archbishop of Westminster.)—>

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We are all created in the image of God and are of unique value. We affirm the importance of each student with due regard to their social, ethnic and linguistic background, gender, various gifts, needs and abilities and will actively combat discrimination. We nurture a sense of purpose, confidence, self-understanding and concern for others. Students are enabled to explore issues freely and frankly in the pursuit of truth and justice.

This mission is reflected in the school’s desire to be a visible beacon of Catholic education by promoting a journey of faith within the school and the support of the vulnerable in the community. This is an inclusive journey: students do not need to be Catholic, or even of a faith, to embark upon it.

<http://www.trinity-school.org.uk/catholic-life/>

General and specific duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011.