

**B&NES Cabinet meeting discussing the transport subsidy for Catholic families.
Wednesday 10th April at 6.30pm at the Guildhall in Bath.**

Speaker: Brendan Rouse Chair of St Mary's Parish Pastoral Council

A Catholic School is not just one with a God-centred Mission Statement supported by all its teachers, it's made by the faith and actions of the pupils. If the balance between the ratio of Catholics to non-Catholics changes too much, will we really be confident that the Journey of Faith of our children will be as strongly served as the current cohort of students.

I am a teacher at St John's Catholic Primary and parent of two boys in Years 2 and 5 at St Mary's Catholic Primary. We live more than 3 miles away from St Gregory's and therefore the subsidy cut will affect us.

I want to send my children to a Catholic School.

Why?

My boys and their contemporaries have already started their Journey of Faith in a Catholic Primary where they witness 'Christ in everything' in the same way they do at home and at Church. For example we pray together at home and at Catholic school the day is punctuated by prayer.

Last week I took part in the Good Friday walk of witness. We were jeered at by some young men in a car. Society is quick to mock Christianity. In a Catholic School we may still have our questioning and 'Doubting Thomas' moments, but with the majority of fellow students being Catholic and where all the teachers are asked in their applications if they will: (quote): "**be sympathetic and supportive of the Catholic character of the school and be able to support this fully**" (end quote), with this I would expect appropriate Catholic guidance and support to underpin their emerging faith. Children and especially teenagers often need to look beyond just their parents for spiritual guidance and being surrounded by a positive Christian cohort is invaluable.

The fact that St Gregory's offers assemblies with Christian content and inspiration, retreats and Liturgical services are important for our youngsters to re-examine their journey of faith. As these are often led by our Parish Priests the continuity of our teaching at home/church/school is strengthened. These are especially important for many Catholics who do not make it to Mass every Sunday.

On Good Friday and Easter Sunday St Mary's Church was full. About 50 children in each mass took part in the Children's Liturgy services. About 20% of these were from Kerala who have a very strong and living Catholic faith. As many of these families live or work near the RUH which is over 3 miles from St Gregory's, they like us will be negatively affected by these cuts. Their cultural Catholic explicitness would add further value to the Catholicity of St Gregory's.

Finally, I ask the council to continue its support for a transport subsidy as without it many families will not be able to afford to send their children to St Gregory's. St Gregory's is an 'Outstanding' school and any places will be quickly filled by non-Catholic students which will have knock-on effects to other schools in Bath. A Catholic School is not just one with a God-centred Mission Statement supported by all its teachers, it's made by the faith and actions of the pupils. If the balance between the ratio of Catholics to non-Catholics changes too much, will we really be confident that the Journey of Faith of our children will be as strongly served as the current cohort of students.