

**From: Cllr Gabriel Michael Batt, Conservative, Bathavon North Ward.**

Address to Bath & North East Somerset Cabinet, Wednesday 10th April 2013.

"Home to School Transport Review" Agenda item 23 (*May be brought forward*)

Leader of the Council, Cabinet members. Thank you for allowing me to address your meeting.

When St. Gregory's was founded some 33 years ago it was not intended to be a secondary school for Bath children but a school **in Bath** for the children of Clifton Diocese. With a catchment area to the East at Chippinham, to the North at Chipping Sodbury, to the South at Wells and Shepton Mallet, and to the West at Coalpit Heath and Kingswood. It was never intended to be a local school in terms of geographical neighbourhood. The catchment area was defined by Clifton Diocese to serve primarily the Catholic Christian Community. Currently 25% of the pupils attending the college are not Catholic children, however they add a dimension to the college to the benefit of all staff and pupils.

From its inception St. Gregory's has been a very successful school, continually oversubscribed and regularly been rated outstanding by Ofsted. It will be opening a 6th form in the Autumn of this year.

There is a long standing social contract between Catholic Schools and local Government to fund transport to Catholic schools because of the distances involved. If the subsidy is removed, Catholic families who live more than 3 miles away will struggle to get their child to the school of their first choice. This will undoubtedly lessen the numbers of children from the outline areas. Because St. Gregory's is an outstanding and popular school this shortfall in school numbers will be taken up by children from Bath to the detriment of other secondary schools in Bath.

Catholic parents already pay through their taxes for the education of their children. All catholic and other faith schools have to pay 10% of all capital costs, which is funded by their church giving. They are in fact paying for part of their children's education twice.

At a very well attended meeting, recently held at the school for parents of children at St. Gregory's and the feeder catholic schools in the catchment area, governors and others discussed this subject. Also present, and I was very pleased to see, Cllr Dine Romero, Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children and Youth, I am sure she would have seen and heard the depth of feeling from those parents attending, just how important St. Gregory's is to them and their children.

When the Liberal Democrat Party was formed shortly after St. Gregory's was created they said at that time that all children should travel to school by bus and not car and that school transport should be free, I would like to think that is still the policy of the Liberal Democrat Party.

Members of the cabinet, society should not discriminate against minorities.

Thank you for your attention.

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