



# ST. ANNE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

*Living and working as Jesus taught us*

Marina Crescent, Huyton, Liverpool, Merseyside, L36 5XL  
stanne@knowsley.gov.uk

Dear Field for All Group

We acknowledge receipt of your email and wish to thank you for the time you have taken to frame an alternative proposal for St Anne's school field. In response we would like to offer the following comments:

1. The school's Governing Body remains committed to ensuring that the land that has been designated to it by Knowsley Borough Council as its school field can be used safely, securely and primarily for that purpose. The Governing Body is absolutely committed to ensure that the school can provide the best education, in its widest sense, and the best environment for all its current/future pupils and to use all the resources available to it for that purpose. For this reason, the school eagerly awaits the ultimate outcome of the planning process that has been set in motion in relation to the fencing of the school's field.

2. The school's Governing Body recognises that the school is at the heart of a broad local community that comprises not just those who live closest to the school premises but the wider parish of St Agnes. It pursues its objectives with this clearly in mind. The Governing Body's compromise proposal to fence off a smaller area of its allocated land than previously proposed demonstrates its willingness to listen to the concerns of local residents. Nevertheless the Governing Body recognises that in pursuing even this revised proposal, it would not have been possible to meet the full expectations of those who feel that the community should continue to have full unrestricted access to a substantial part of the school's designated field. It is the Governing Body's genuine belief that a school field cannot be what is formally termed "public open space". A school field must be appropriately secure for its primary purpose and then consideration can be given to what other access can be made available. This is a right afforded, quite understandably, to the vast majority of school fields. We are merely seeking the same treatment for St Anne's school field.

3. Subject to the ultimate outcome of the planning process, the Governing Body is eager to work with organised community groups (perhaps supported by local elected representatives) to examine how managed access to the school site/ field can be developed in a way that neither compromises the integrity and sustainability of the school site, premises and facilities nor places an undue pressure or impossible demand on the school's financial resources.

4. The Governing Body recognises that the "Field for All Group" has submitted its proposal in good faith and with what appears to be the right intentions. However, governors feel that the suggestion contained within the proposal is based on a fundamentally false premise. The land in question is formally designated as St Anne's school field by the landowner, Knowsley Borough Council. It is not a public open space. It is therefore not valid for local residents to make a compromise offer to give up a section of that land for the school's use, as it is simply not their land to give up. The section proposed to be fenced has been earmarked by us for the purpose of a running track and football pitch, should planning permission be successful. In contrast, the compromise "offer" clearly aims to

maintain a significant proportion of St Anne's school field as openly and publicly accessible. This is not only incompatible with the Governing Body's primary objective set out in (1) above, but would, in any case, provide an insufficient additional secure area to deliver a genuine living improvement to the current facilities for the benefit of the children.





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5. The Governing Body recognises that this has indeed been a stressful time for the community and that “divisions and unrest” have been generated as a consequence. Governors appreciate that there are some local residents who have taken the view that there is nothing to justify the proposal put forward by the school. It would appear that there is nothing that the Governing Body or supporters of the proposal could ever articulate that would change certain individuals’ views on this matter. We have reached the point where we will have to agree to disagree. The Governing Body doesn't accept the assertion that it is “isolated from the local community”. It believes that it has been able to demonstrate through this process that its proposal has a significant amount of community/parental support.

6. Regrettably, however, there have been some objectors who have taken the opportunity as part of the formal planning consultation process and beyond to call into question the integrity of the governing body, individual governors, the headteacher, the parish priest and the Archdiocese, with unfounded accusations of impropriety, lying, corruption and underhand dealings, as part of a wider campaign either to naively or wilfully misrepresent the school's intentions or right to do what it was proposing, with the express purpose of undermining the school's application/ reputation. The Governing Body feels that these accusations were not only unjustified but also completely unnecessary. It is the Governing Body's belief that the attitudes displayed and misinformation perpetuated by a small minority that has contributed hugely to any divide in the community. The Governing Body recognises that it would be difficult to work constructively with those that held such views or remained wedded to such an approach. For example, one of the many fallacies perpetuated locally by certain individuals is that the school/ Archdiocese is seeking to secure the land simply for the purpose of selling it off for housing development. This could not be further from the truth. We believe that securing the land for its intended use - educational purposes - will actually provide greater protection for this land to remain as green space. Any decision to sell off this land for housing or any other development could only ever be made by the landowner, which will continue to be Knowsley Borough Council.

7. The Governing Body notes that the “Field for All Group” have submitted their proposal anonymously as “local residents”. We offer no further comment on that choice other than to suggest that when the planning process has concluded and there is a genuine opportunity to enter into positive dialogue with community groups, it will be necessary to have individual contact details to allow this to happen properly and determine that they speak for the broader community interest as a whole.

8. The Governing Body, having already amended the original planning application, will not be seeking to amend the existing one and will await the Planning Committee decision when the application is next heard. We believe that the planning officer has already provided members with a comprehensive report, and substantial supplementary information, which contains all of the detail that is required for them to make a balanced and informed decision, taking into account comments from objectors and supporters alike.

St Anne's Catholic Primary School Governing Body





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