

LETTER FROM GERALD RONSON PUBLISHED IN THE JEWISH CHRONICLE

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Dear Sir,

We welcome the publication of this report as it confirms the thinking behind JCoSS: that the current market for Jewish secondary education in London cannot and should not continue as it is.

It is entirely unsurprising that the report concludes there is an oversupply of places directed at what it describes as the mainstream orthodox market, a segment of the community which accounts for little more than half the overall market and which is shrinking. Of course this finding has implications for the existing orthodox schools but they must speak for themselves.

What is surprising, and disappointing, is that the report has so little to say about the total lack of supply for a section of the market which is growing: Reform, Liberal, Masorti and Sephardi Jews and Orthodox Jews who favour a pluralist approach (over a quarter of those attending the existing pluralist primary schools).

To lump these parents together with mainstream Orthodox is misleading in the extreme. Any attempt to impose a solution based on limiting supply, when almost half the community is excluded altogether from the choice of a Jewish education is not only unfair, it is doomed to failure as all the trends suggest the supply of mainstream orthodox children will continue to dwindle.

Instead, the challenge is to extend demand by opening up the choice of Jewish education to new groups. In this respect the Commission would have found it helpful – had it asked – to consider the extensive research into demand conducted by JCoSS, which was crucial in securing public funding for the project.

What this research showed was that – uniquely - cross-communal, inclusive schools have the capacity to tap into a new, large and expanding market, to attract into Jewish education parents who would never otherwise consider it. For example, it showed that nearly 6 out of 10 secular Jewish parents would consider JCoSS for their children, while the school will also offer places on an equal basis for the growing numbers of children of mixed marriages and non-Orthodox converts.

What this clearly shows is that inclusive schools, such as JCoSS, far from being part of the problem are a crucial part of this solution, opening up the choice of a Jewish education to all.

Yours truly,

Gerald Ronson
President - JCoSS