



6 February 2006

UNIQUE JEWISH SECONDARY SCHOOL GETS GREEN LIGHT

The UK's first inclusive Jewish secondary school moved a step closer to reality today, as the Government announced that the Jewish Community Secondary School (JCoSS) had been chosen to become a pilot to help parents influence new school provision.

The decision means that planning for the UK Jewish community's potentially largest-ever school project can proceed, with a view to opening its doors to pupils from all parts of the Jewish community in September 2009.

London Borough of Barnet and JCoSS will work together, with the Department of Education & Skills' support, to agree the feasibility, scope and costs of establishing a new school, including any building works. DfES has agreed to provide the capital investment needed once the exact building work required has been decided. Barnet LBC - which has been working with JCoSS already - is expected to provide consultancy and other support to the project.

Located on the site of the current East Barnet Upper School at Westbrook Crescent, New Barnet, JCoSS's promoters intend that the school will be open on an equal basis to all Jewish children, irrespective of their birth status and synagogue affiliation. It will provide a new model for faith-based, inclusive secondary education for the UK designed to encourage a positive approach to multiculturalism, to have an active involvement with the wider local community and to discourage religious factionalism.

Plans for the JCoSS development will include a specialist 50-place unit for children between the ages of 11-19 years old with a range of severe and complex learning disabilities which will be run by Norwood, the UK's leading Jewish children and family services organisation with particular expertise in special educational services. The partnership with World ORT will provide state-of-the art IT and world-leading educational expertise, resources and training to the school.

JCoSS is promoted by the Jewish Community Secondary School Trust in partnership with Norwood, World ORT, the Leo Baeck College-Centre for Jewish Education and the Jewish Community Day Schools Advisory Board. In independent research commissioned by the Trust it received massive backing from parents from every section of the Jewish community. Over 300 parents have already registered an interest in their child attending the school by visiting the JCoSS website (www.jcoss.org).

Jonathan Fingerhut, Joint Chair of JCoSS, added:

“This announcement will be hugely welcomed across the community. It is a tribute to the hard work of a large number of committed organisations and individuals. JCoSS is a tangible demonstration that the Jewish Community can work together for the benefit of us all, especially for our children.”

Commenting on Norwood’s involvement, Chief Executive Norma Brier explained:

“This is great news for the children and families we support. A new school will give disabled young people the same educational opportunities as their peers. This allows Norwood to bring our school for children with learning disabilities closer to the heart of the community, so that we can fulfil demand and offer access to all Jewish children and their families. By working together with all our partners, and developing a truly comprehensive and inclusive educational facility on a single site, we will be providing a groundbreaking service to the community.”

Linda Cooke, Joint Chair of JCoSS, concluded:

“We are determined to create a truly forward-looking, inclusive model for faith-based education with first class facilities for those with special educational needs. So, for the first time in this country, Jewish parents will have a choice as to what kind of Jewish secondary school their children can attend.”

ENDS

Further information:

Jonathan Fingerhut, JCoSS, 020 7209 9996

Ronit Shebson, Norwood, 020 8420 6900

Ben Rich, PR adviser to JCoSS, 020 7618 9100

Matt Hopkinson, DfES, 020 7925 5407

JCoSS’s website (<http://www.jcoss.org>).

Notes

1. JCoSS is backed by Norwood, Anglo Jewry's leading children & family services charity, World ORT, the world's leading educational specialists, the Leo Baeck College-Centre for Jewish Education and The Jewish Community Day School Advisory Board together with a group of Jewish lay leaders and Rabbis.
2. It is planned for JCoSS to be located on the site of the current East Barnet Upper School at Westbrook Crescent, New Barnet. This should be made possible by DfES funding to the LB Barnet to redevelop East Barnet School at Chestnut Grove, New Barnet, to enable the Upper and Lower schools to be combined in new buildings on a single campus.
3. Research conducted in April 2005 by Carrick James Market Research, found that Jewish parents from all sections of the community – by a difference of 64% to 16% – would prefer to send their children to a Jewish, rather than a non-Jewish, secondary school. Five minute face-to-face interviews were carried out with 509 parents carefully selected to create a representative sample of the Jewish community as a whole.
4. There will be further stages which the project will need to pass before the establishment of the new school and any new buildings is finalised. These include statutory school organisation procedures and planning consents.