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For immediate release

PRESS RELEASE

Trust to create two Catholic secondary schools by 2013

A group of Catholics behind two successful primary schools in south London will tonight launch a project to create two new secondary schools within two years.

The PACT Educational Trust will tonight host a “Pledge for Success” dinner for more than 150 people in the City of London’s Clothmakers’ Hall. Supporters will be asked to back the creation of two single-sex secondary schools that will open their doors in September 2013.

Sites for the schools have already been identified and names of headteachers shortlisted.

PACT’s research shows strong interest from parents in sending children to a new school with a firm Catholic ethos, modelled on their two primaries, Oakwood School and Oliver House. Existing local Catholic prep schools have commented that in some geographical areas there are not enough places at independent Catholic Day Schools for their children to go onto.

In PACT schools, which are inspired by the teachings of the founder of Opus Dei, St Josemaría Escrivá, parents are seen as the primary educators and are strongly involved in the schools.

Education emphasises the formation of character and virtue, allowing children to acquire personal convictions in a climate that balances discipline and freedom. A personalised tutorial system combines character development with the pursuit of academic excellence.

The Trust's chairman, Ella Leonard, says:

“We want our schools to be non-selective academically and as affordable as possible. What makes PACT schools different is the ethos we offer and the degree of buy-in we expect from both pupils and parents.”

PACT is convinced that this approach produces outstanding results. Although they are not selective academically, Oakwood School and Oliver House have strong academic records.

The trustees explored the possibility of the new secondaries being free schools, but say they were deterred by the restrictions in the legislation which preclude a faith school of being made up of more than 50% of students of that faith.

“As it is currently constructed, the free schools model would not allow for high-quality single-sex schools with a robust Catholic ethos,” says Leonard, adding: “If the laws changed, we would like to consider founding free schools.”

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

- Further information on PACT at www.pactschools.org.uk, and its two primaries at www.oakwoodschool.org.uk and www.oliverhouse.org.uk.
- PACT founded Oakwood School in Purley, Surrey for 3-11 yr olds in 1996 with 17 children, now 180; and Oliver House in Wandsworth, south London, in 2004, which now has over 170 children.
- The Board of Directors of PACT provides governance and strategic management of both existing schools. Each school has a named Director with particular governance responsibility for that school. Subcommittees dealing with Academic, Personnel, Ethos, Finance and Buildings and Estates help the Board discharge its responsibilities. Each school has a management team led by the Head responsible for the day to day running of the school.
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