

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your email to our Local Election Campaign address.

I am the candidate from the Scottish National Party (SNP) for Ward 3 - Giffnock and Thornliebank, and it has been agreed that I should reply on behalf of the SNP group comprising seven candidates.

This week's "Scottish Catholic Observer" reported the Scottish Government restating its support for Catholic education and quoted Mr Swinney (Education Minister); "The Scottish Government supports the rights of the Roman Catholic Church to give witness to its faith, and to uphold the traditions of Catholic education. We value the positive contribution made by Roman Catholic schools, and have no intention of changing the current position where Faith aspects of the curriculum in Catholic schools are determined by the Scottish Catholic Education Service."

The SNP instinctively and financially supports education for all our young people via several policies; not least the protection of Free Tuition which saves students in Scotland up to £27,000 compared to the cost of studying elsewhere in the UK.

We (the SNP council candidates) fully agree with your assertions to the excellence of St Ninian's High School under the leadership of Mr Docherty (Head Teacher) and his Senior Management Team and recognise the outstanding work and commitment shown by teachers and support staff. We applaud the consistently high levels of academic attainment - even within a changing educational environment - achieved by the pupils of St Ninian's. We also recognise the hard work and dedication that goes into providing extra-curricular activities and are mindful of how very well St Ninian's performs in this aspect of our children's education too.

We share your concerns about over capacity at St Ninian's and also about the issues arising from this that you have highlighted in your email. We have no intention of letting St Ninian's become a victim of its own success.

If elected, we will ensure that the voice of St Ninian's Parent Council gets heard in the Council chambers and that your case for capital investment is articulated clearly and discussed openly.

We will maintain ongoing dialogue with the Parent Council via attendance at your meetings and other appropriate communication methods.

We will work to ensure that our hard-working Education Department can continue to support St Ninian's High School effectively.

Unfortunately we are not in a position yet to discuss the national consultations, because, as you state, the results have not yet been published. When the results are available, we will be happy to facilitate further discussions with your Parent Council.

I hope the above is of use to you.

Best regards,

Colm Merrick.