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Schools inspired by Opus Dei to open in London next year

This article appeared in the Catholic Herald (UK) on 21 September 2012

30/09/2012

Two schools founded by Opus Dei members are to open next year in south London, it was announced this week.

The Cedars and the Laurels, will have their open day tomorrow and will open next September.

The Cedars, a boys' school, will be based in South Croydon and the Laurels, a girls school in Clapham, south London, both with entry numbers of roughly 44-46 pupils a year.

The schools are being set up by PACT (Parents, Children, Teachers) Educational Trust, a charity with links to Opus Dei and which is inspired by the philosophy of St Josemaría Escrivá. The personal prelature will provide chaplains to the schools.

PACT runs two prep schools in Clapham and Purley, Surrey, and established the new schools in response to huge demand from parents at those schools, and because of interest elsewhere. The sites have been secured, both of them with good transport links.

Ella Leonard, chairwoman of PACT, said: "PACT always had a vision that

it wanted secondary schools, but recognized that it needed good, solid foundations first. Now it was felt that the time was right, what with inspection reports having been very positive, and what is seen as a bulge in the secondary school places coming up. We've taken the plunge."

Mrs Leonard said PACT were inspired by Pope Benedict XVI's address at the Big Assembly in Twickenham in 2010, and that it had received great support from the Catholic Education Service, prospective parents and nearby parishes.

Although south-west London is currently lacking Catholic schools, the Laurels will join a new Catholic secondary school in Twickenham and a proposed Catholic free school in Clapham, both due to open next September.

The two existing PACT schools fund bursaries for about 15 per cent of pupils, and the same will apply to their senior counterparts. Mrs Leonard said: “No family should be put off from attending because of their financial position, as with our existing schools. We’re non-selective, but even as a non-selective school our academic results are very good because of these character development programmes.”

She said that the secret to the schools was the ethos of St Josemaría Escrivá, who “recognized that parents are primary educators, that schools are there to help them, and that families and teachers work together.”

Linda Sanders, the headmistress of the Laurels and Robert Teague, the headmaster of the Cedars, will address prospective parents and pupils at the inaugural open day

tomorrow at Oliver House
Preparatory School in Clapham.

Mr Teague, who was appointed over the summer, said: “All of my five children went through the PACT schools and it’s been extremely effective in helping them.

“The key is, first of all, character. Not as in cold showers and runs, but virtue, generosity, loyalty and sincerity. If you get character right, everything else clicks into place. If you get a child who tries their best at everything, they will achieve.”

For a prospectus or to be kept informed of developments visit:

www.thecedarsschool.org.uk
www.thelaurelsschool.org.uk

Ed West

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(16/07/2025)