

19 January 2017

Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
Chair of the Education Select Committee
House of Commons
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Dear Mr Halfon

50% admissions cap

When the Government published its Green Paper containing the proposal to remove the 50% cap on faith based admissions to academies and free schools, we wrote to your predecessor, Neil Carmichael MP, calling for the Select Committee to call an inquiry into this proposal. Our concern is that the proposal has the potential to significantly increase religious discrimination and social and ethnic segregation within our publicly funded schools.

As you will be aware, the Secretary of State has the power to lift the admissions cap without legislative change. We are concerned that the Government will give effect to this significant policy shift without reference to Parliament. Therefore, with a new education secretary in post who has previously advocated for more fully religiously selective schools, I would like to reiterate our call for an inquiry by your committee. We regard this as essential to provide any degree of parliamentary scrutiny to this divisive policy shift.

There is a significant and growing weight of academic and expert opinion to support the contention that religiously based admissions criteria produce more religiously, ethnically and socially segregated schools. We believe that an inquiry by your committee is essential to provide a forum for such evidence to influence the policy making process. We would of course be willing to provide our own expertise in written or oral evidence to the Committee if requested.

Schools provide a golden opportunity to foster understanding and tolerance amongst tomorrow's generation. We urge you to do all you can to ensure this opportunity is not wasted by needlessly extending freedoms to discriminate against pupils in admissions and segregate children along religious lines.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,
Stephen Evans
Chief Executive