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Faith Schools

Thank you for contacting me about faith schools.

The Prime Minister has made clear that the Government is dedicated to making Britain a fairer society where success is based on merit not privilege, and that education lies at the heart of that mission. In September 2016 a consultation was launched asking for views on a range of proposals aimed at creating an education system that extends opportunity for everyone, not just the privileged few. This consultation has closed and the contributions are being read and listened to. I look forward to reading the formal response once it is published in due course.

The reforms to the education system since 2010 have transformed education in this country. I am encouraged that there are now more than 1.8 million more children in good or outstanding schools. Every child should have the best possible start in life. The stark reality, however, is that demand for school places only continues to grow, and too many children in this country still do not have access to a good school. I know that this will continue to be a top priority for the Department for Education over this Parliament.

Schools play a vital role in promoting integration and promoting an understanding of different faiths and communities. Faith schools have a strong record of high pupil attainment and are often very popular with parents. All schools are expected to be inclusive and fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. I know the Department for Education will continue to work closely with faith schools to promote and support integration and will outline its plans shortly.

Faith designated schools and academies are allowed to prioritise children of their faith when they are over-subscribed. While voluntary-aided faith schools are able to select up to 100 per cent of pupils on the basis of faith, new academies and faith schools that have been opened under the free schools programme are subject to a cap. This means that when the free school is over-subscribed it can only apply faith-based oversubscription criteria to the first 50 per cent of places.

The Department for Education greatly values the important role Catholic schools play in the education system and that will continue. I know it will outline its response to the consultation in due course.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP