

Suggested letter to councillors in support on the Fair Admissions Campaign

Tips on adapting the letter

If you are a parent... then please say so, and talk about any relevant experiences you have trying to get your children into the best local school.

If you are a pupil... then talk about the importance to you that you have a diverse range of friends and classmates.

If you are a teacher or governor... then talk about how your experience has shown you how important it is for schools to be diverse.

If your representative is a Liberal Democrat or Green... [both parties](#) have policies calling for 100% religiously inclusive admissions in all state funded schools, so do point this out.

Letter:

I am writing as your constituent to ask your position on the issue of religious selection in school admissions. I do not think that state funded schools should be able to turn pupils away because of their or their parents' religion.

I believe that such selection constitutes discrimination along religious, ethnic and socio-economic lines.

Religious selection of this nature is bad for cohesion between different religious groups. Dr Jonathan Romain, Rabbi of Maidenhead Synagogue, said 'I want my children to sit next to a Sikh in class, play football in the break with a Methodist, do homework with a Hindu and walk to the bus stop with a Muslim before returning to their Jewish home.' How can it be right that state funded schools can have admissions policies that can select up to 100% of pupils on the basis of faith and deny Jonathan's desire?

Turning to ethnic segregation, Professor Ted Cantle, author of the Cantle Report, found that faith schools with religious admission requirements were 'automatically a source of division' in Blackburn. Community cohesion is vital for our increasingly pluralistic society, but instead we continue to divide children in their formative years along religious – and hence ethnic – lines.

In addition, it has been shown that religious selection often causes socio-economic selection – with some parents feigning religious belief or practice to get their children into their preferred school. 2008 research by Rebecca Allen has found that 'if we take a community school and a voluntary-aided religious school, both located in a neighbourhood with exactly the same levels of deprivation, the community school is likely to have about 50% more free school meal children than the voluntary-aided school.' More recent research has showed that this statistic still holds true today.

To be clear, I am not enquiring about your position on the state funding of faith schools – simply about religious selection in admissions. Evidence from many Church of England and Methodist schools that have inclusive admissions show that a school can maintain a religious ethos while not selecting in this way.

I also do not think that ending religious selection in school admissions would reduce parental choice. In fact it would increase choice, in giving all parents the ability to send their children to their nearest

school, or the best school in their area, if that is what they wish. If a school gets good results, why should some children be denied access to it?

A survey conducted by YouGov in November 2012 showed that the public at large opposes religious selection by state funded schools by more than four to one (73% opposed, 18% supportive). I therefore hope that you will represent the views of the majority of your constituents by similarly opposing such selection.