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Lord Nash

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the School System
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Dr Carolyn Wilkins OBE
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Your ref: Council – Grammar School – 20161109

25 November 2016

Dear Dr Wilkins,

Thank you for your letter of 15 November, addressed to the Secretary of State, about grammar schools. I am replying as the minister responsible for this policy area.

One of the priorities of this government is to ensure that all children, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to achieve as far as their talent and hard work will take them. We are committed to delivering an education system that works for all children, not just those from privileged backgrounds.

Selective schools could help maximise the talents of disadvantaged students and close the attainment gap between pupils from deprived backgrounds and their more advantaged peers. Figures show that in the year after they leave sixth form, disadvantaged pupils from grammar schools are almost twice as likely to get a place at an elite university as better off children at comprehensives. Grammar school pupils also progress faster and outperform children of similar ability who attend non-selective schools. In 2015 95.7% of those at selective schools gained five or more A*-C GCSEs or equivalent compared to 90.5% in comprehensive schools.

We want every school to be Good or Outstanding, delivering the high standard of education often found in the very best grammar schools, with a rigorous curriculum and the highest expectations for every child. Only by raising the standards and performance of all schools will parents have a genuine choice when it comes to selecting the best school for their children to attend.

We are not proposing a return to the old binary system of grammar schools and secondary moderns, which you mention. We are supporting the most diverse schools system we have ever had in our country and we will be able to cater properly for the different needs of all pupils and give parents real control over the kind of schools they want for their children. Selective schools are almost

50% more popular than non-selective schools when comparing a parent's first preference choice for their child but with the law currently banning new grammars, many parents are unable to have a true choice.

We are proposing additional selective schools within a system where more children than ever before already attend a Good or Outstanding school. We expect selective schools to play their part, either by supporting other less well performing schools or sponsoring new schools in areas where they are needed, as well as removing the barriers that prevent disadvantaged students accessing selective education.

Selective schools sponsoring non-selective schools should consider how to best educate all their pupils. This could include moving pupils between schools, encouraging this at different ages such as 14 and 16 as well as 11 and according to their abilities and talents. Pupils at a non-selective school sponsored by a grammar might join the grammar for specific subjects or specialisms where they themselves are outstanding – or they might move to the grammar full-time later than aged 11, based on their performance at their current school.

The department recently launched a consultation on our educational reforms. This consultation, *Schools that Work for Everyone*, sets out a 21st century schools system that we believe will help ensure that all children are able to attend a Good or Outstanding school. It sets out a wide range of conditions on grammars including taking a proportion of pupils from lower income households and ensuring that there are opportunities to join the selective school at different ages. The consultation can be found at: tinyurl.com/gssrzqv. I urge you to engage with this consultation, as we are keen to reach as many parents and communities as possible, so that we are able to review a wide range of opinions and responses.

Thank you for writing on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,



JOHN NASH