

Catholic Schools Letter Petition and Link

It has just been brought to our attention by the Catholic Bishop's Conference and the Chief Executive of the Catholic Education Service Paul Barber who is also a CUGB Council Member, that the Government may be about to renege on the specific promise that was made to Catholics in the 2017 Conservative manifesto. The promise was to remove the 50 % cap on Catholic admissions to Free Schools. This is important both because of the merits of the policy (see below) and because we need to show the Government that they cannot treat the 5 million plus UK Catholic community in this way.

The President of the CUGB, Sir Edward Leigh – himself a Conservative MP, and the Catholic Bishops have been lobbying on this but their lobbying does not appear to be getting through. Therefore there is a need to persuade as many Catholics as we possibly can to sign an online letter to the Secretary of State which can be found by clicking: <http://cbcew.org.uk/education-cap>. If you fill in the first form it then leads you to the letter that you can then click to send. For information a copy of the on-line letter is shown below . This is now urgent as a decision may be taken soon and clearly to be effective we need as many signatures as possible and so everybody is encouraged to share this with all Catholics that you know.

The facts are that the cap has hindered the opening of new schools in areas that need them because Canon Law prohibits Catholic schools from discriminating against Catholics. It is also not in the public interest because Catholic schools educate 21 % more pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds compared to other schools and 16.5 % of pupils in Catholic schools live in the most deprived areas, compared to 11.3 % nationally. To make matters worse, investments have been made in reliance on the promise.

It is important to note that our understanding is that the Government does not require legislation (so there is no issue as to parliamentary majorities or legislative time), it only requires the ministerial decision of Ms. Justine Greening the Secretary of State .

It must be stressed that the Association is not involved in politics, so this appeal is for members as individual Catholics, rather than as Catenians, with their wives, and their local Parishioners, to record their concern. So if you could circulate this to Provincial Councils and Circle Secretaries so that individual Catenians in the UK are made aware of this and can also personally contact their Catholic friends to support the Catholic Bishops and the Catholic Education Service in this initiative.

Copy of On Line Letter prepared by the Catholic Bishop's Conference

“Dear Secretary of State,

As a Catholic, I firmly believe in the right to a Catholic education. I am also proud that our schools are historically diverse and inclusive to children of all faiths and none. However, I am alarmed to learn that there is a cap in place which prevents new Catholic schools from admitting some Catholic pupils on the basis of their faith.

At the election, the Government committed to removing the 50% admissions cap in their manifesto. In addition to this, you have previously stated in the House of Commons that the cap was ineffective and acknowledged the impact this had on Catholics in particular.

I would ask you to consider your promise to the electorate and remove the 50% faith admissions cap allowing all Catholics who want to provide a Catholic education to be able to do so. In keeping your promise, you will also show the Catholic community that equality includes the right to practice a faith.

I am also sending this to my MP so they know how strongly I feel about this issue.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.