

Earl Baldwin of Bewdley
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0PW

Your Name and Address

Date:

Dear Lord Baldwin

I am writing to you about the Education and Inspections Bill, which is about to be debated in the House of Lords. All the parents and teachers I know want a good local school for every child. I share the concern of many of my colleagues that the Bill may mean that such an ambition becomes even more unattainable for many parents in this area.

I understand that the Government wants to set up primary and secondary trust schools which will be controlled by external sponsors, not democratically elected governing bodies consisting of parents and members of the local community. I am concerned that what this means is that private individuals, religious organisations or companies can buy significant control, including what is taught and pupil admissions.

I am worried that the Government's proposals will mean that increasingly, schools choose the young people they admit, rather than parents choosing schools, and the Local Authority cannot intervene.

I know this Bill has been the subject of much debate in the House of Commons and that as a result the Government has made a number of concessions. I remain concerned, however, about the impact of proposals on the schools in my area. Might I suggest, therefore, that during the course of the deliberations on the Bill in the House of Lords, you consider pressing the Government on the following questions.

- Do you think the measures to ensure fair access and community cohesion will be effective if individual schools are encouraged to set their own admissions criteria?
- Do you think that individual schools determining their own admissions criteria will encourage schools to admit children with special educational needs?
- Would it not be better to concentrate on promoting diversity of specialism within each school to enable genuine curriculum choice for pupils rather than promote different types of school?

- Shouldn't parents be given the chance to decide through a ballot of local parents and a parents' meeting before any school can acquire trust status?
- Will local parents know of and be able to understand the procedures for vetting and monitoring companies that wish to create trusts?
- What happens if local parents would prefer a community school rather than a trust school but the Secretary of State will not allow one to be established?
- What guarantees are there that the schools within the same local authorities will share resources and co-operate with each other to the benefit of pupils?
- Do you think the measures the Government proposes will increase the chances of parents achieving a good local school for their child?

Thank you very much for reading this letter. I would be very grateful if you could take these views into account in your deliberations on the Education and Inspections Bill and, if possible, if you could raise these concerns with the Minister. I appreciate that you may get many letters every day and so do not expect a response to this letter.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely