



Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel:08700 0012345 dfes.ministers@dfes.gsi.gov.uk
Rt Hon Alan Johnson MP

7 November 2006

Dear colleague,

Supplementary School Admissions Consultation

I am writing to consult you about proposals to include some additional provisions in the new School Admissions Code. This consultation supplements the full public consultation on the draft Code published on 8 September 2006 under section 85(3) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. Responses are invited on these proposals by 1 December 2006.

1. Faith School Admissions

I have welcomed very much the recent statements by the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church on the roles that their schools play and will play in the future. The Church of England announced that all new Church of England schools would have at least 25% of places available to children with no requirement that they be of practising Christian families. The Roman Catholic Church has said that new Catholic schools would be planned to meet the needs of Catholic parents and to provide places for other families subject to local agreement.

These are important developments and it is right that they should be reflected in the School Admissions Code. I therefore propose to add a mandatory requirement to the new Code to provide that the governing body of a new foundation or voluntary aided school with a religious character must obtain the consent of the relevant faith body before setting admission arrangements that give priority to children not of the faith.

Local authorities and the Schools Adjudicator will be required to take this requirement into account in considering whether to modify admission arrangements for these schools.

2. Hard to Place Protocols

The draft Code currently states, at paragraph 3.70, that admission authorities should have protocols in place for admitting children they consider 'hard to place' including the most vulnerable children in society. I am aware that some schools have not been willing to take part in protocols and therefore do not play their fair part in ensuring these children, often some of our most vulnerable, are admitted to a suitable school as quickly as possible. I would therefore like to consult on the basis that all admission authorities must participate in hard to place protocols.

I have enclosed with this letter, revised draft text on each of these points which either replace existing paragraphs in the draft Code or are additional. I would welcome any views you have on these suggestions by 1 December. Details of the full consultation documents and how to respond can be accessed at www.dfes.gov.uk/sacode, however, I would welcome any responses to this supplementary consultation to be emailed to admissions.consultation@dfes.gsi.gov.uk or sent to the School Admissions Team, Area 5D, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent horizontal line above the "J" in Johnson.

ALAN JOHNSON