

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY

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www.Lsec.org.uk



for an inclusive and plural society free from
religious privilege, prejudice and
discrimination.

10th November 2016

Sir Peter Soulsby,
The City Mayor,
Leicester City Council,
3rd Floor,
City Hall,
115 Charles Street,
Leicester
LE1 1FZ

Open Letter

Dear Sir Peter,

Government proposal to remove 50% cap on religious selection in new schools

Recently the London Assembly passed the following resolution.

“During these challenging times it’s more important than ever that we do all we can to teach young people about tolerance and diversity. Religious selection causes segregation not just by belief but also by ethnicity and social class. This is the opposite of what we should be seeking to achieve, which is schools that are diverse and welcoming of children from all backgrounds.

Religious selection in schools can be a significant barrier to social integration. I’d urge the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor for Social Integration to put firm pressure on the government to drop these proposals which are completely at odds with their vision for a better integrated London.”

We urge you and the City Council to also put pressure on the Government to abandon these foolish proposals that will make it more difficult to achieve an inclusive and plural community in a city with the religious and ethnic diversity of Leicester.

The analysis used to justify the proposal to drop the 50% cap was flawed. No comparison of the ethnic make-up of each type of school in relation to the character of its neighbourhood was made. The better comparison is between the diversity in religious schools that are fully selective and predate the cap and those established with a 50% cap.

When this comparison is made, using the same school ethnicity data from the January 2016 school census that the Department provided in the green paper, it is clear that schools subject to the cap are more diverse and more integrated. In fact, if the cap were adopted for all religiously selective schools, many thousands more non-white pupils would gain places at these schools which they cannot access under current rules. For more details on this please visit goo.gl/xT1wgW.

We would also remind you of Ted Cante's report analysing the problems in Bradford. It was very critical of the role that religiously selective faith schools play and stated that *'we are concerned that some existing faith schools appear to be operating discriminatory policies where religious affiliations protect cultural and ethnic divisions'*. It also recommended that *'ideally admissions policies should avoid more than 75% of pupils from one culture or ethnic background in multi-cultural areas'* and that *'by offering, at least 25% of, places to other faiths or denominations'*, schools *'would immediately be more inclusive and create a better representation of all cultures or ethnicities'*.

The Government purports to be in favour of a cohesive and integrated society but is proposing to adopt a policy that contradicts this and enshrines the right of religious schools to admit children from only one particular religion. Please ensure that the Government is made aware that such a policy will make building and maintaining a cohesive society in Leicester much more difficult.

Perhaps we could meet to discuss this issue? The Society would be pleased to assist in drafting a motion for the Council on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

G. Bhumbra
President