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To note.

Rec 6

11/2

Dr Keith Hampson MP  
House of Commons  
London  
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16 FEB 1988

Dear Keith,

**GRANT-MAINTAINED SCHOOLS**

WILL REQUEST IF REQUIRED

I am grateful to you for setting out your views on parental ballots in your letter of 26 January, and in the discussions in Standing Committee on 2 February.

I appreciate that you have a genuine concern about this issue and understand your motives for suggesting that a proposal to apply for grant-maintained status should command the support of a significant proportion of all parents at the school before it is taken forward. But I do think that your fears are groundless, both because I expect a high response rate in the ballot and because the outcome of the ballot will not be the sole factor determining whether the application is successful.

First, the response rate. I cannot believe that large numbers of parents will be indifferent to the proposal or ignorant of its implications. Before the ballot is held there will have been lobbying of the governing body and considerable local publicity. This will surely be a major local issue on which the great majority of parents will have strong feelings one way or the other and I see little danger of hi-jacking by a determined minority from a particular political, ethnic or religious grouping.

The second point concerns the impact of the ballot result on the eventual decision on grant-maintained status. The outcome of the ballot will not by itself decide whether the application is successful. It will simply set in motion the procedures leading to a formal application, with all the scope for objections that that allows. I and my successors will have to decide an application on its merits, taking account of all the evidence submitted. I

shall not be establishing fixed criteria which require that any application should command the support of a particular proportion of parents, because I think that could be too inflexible in certain circumstances. But I would of course be influenced in my decision if an application indicated a low level of parental interest and a high degree of concern in the local community.

I totally agree with you that a school will need a firm core of support among parents, governors and the local community if it is to be successful as a grant-maintained school. But I see no inconsistency in suggesting that a simple majority of those parents voting in a ballot should be sufficient to trigger the process. Neither, it seems, do our other colleagues in the Standing Committee.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, at her request.

Yours ever,

Kenneth

*[Handwritten mark]*