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The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP  
Secretary of State  
Department for Education  
20 Great Smith Street  
London, SW1P 3BT

Delivered by hand.

18 September 2023

Dear Secretary of State

We are writing to ask you to support our Catholic schools by finally lifting the faith-based admissions cap on new free schools.

Catholic schools, academies and colleges in England and Wales educate just under 850,000 pupils, with Catholic schools making up 9 per cent of the national total of maintained schools.

Our schools are extremely popular with parents and pupils, not only because of their academic performance - five percentage points higher than national GCSE Maths and English scores - but because of the care and quality of the teaching.

While Catholic schools are some of the best performing in the country, there are barriers preventing them from achieving further success. This includes the admissions cap, which the Catholic Union and others have been calling to be scrapped.

The policy has had the effect of making it impossible for new Catholic free schools to open, putting pressure on existing Catholics schools. This is a particular problem for parents of SEND children as it limits their choice.

There has never been any evidence to justify the cap. Our schools are already extremely diverse in terms of background and religion of pupils. Nearly half are from an ethnic minority background, compared to a third in the state sector. Our schools also educate more pupils from the most deprived backgrounds.

There are many other challenges facing Catholic schools, including pay and conditions for staff and the pressure of inspections, which we urge you to address. Lifting the cap would help boost morale for those involved in Catholic education as well as making a real difference to pupils and parents.

We hope that you will use your time as Secretary of State to back Catholic schools and scrap the cap.

**Rt Hon Sir Edward Leigh MP**  
President, the Catholic Union of Great Britain

Undersigned.

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*The Catholic Union of Great Britain: The Voice of Catholics in Public Life*

President: Sir Edward Leigh, MP

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