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Rt Hon David Laws MP
Minister of State for Schools

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Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain
Chair, Accord Coalition
39 Moreland Street
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RECEIVED
20 MAR 2013

18th March 2013

Dear Dr. Romain,

Subject: Schools admissions in “faith schools”

Thank you for your letter of 17 December, addressed to the Secretary of State and signed by a number of representatives, regarding the issue of faith schools ability to select in admissions. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area. Unfortunately, your letter was overlooked in my office so I am very sorry for the unacceptable delay in responding.

It is important to remember that the majority of state-funded schools in England are, and will continue to be, non-faith schools. There is, however, a long standing tradition of church schools in this country. Our education system developed over the past 200 years in partnership with the mainstream Christian churches whose involvement in education predates the involvement of the state.

The Government greatly values the contribution that faith schools make to the education sector by providing high quality school places and increased choice for parents. The Government was clear in *'The Coalition: Our programme for government'* and in *'The importance of teaching: Schools White Paper 2010'*, that we want to offer parents and children a diverse education system consisting of a wide variety of high quality providers. Many parents value the high standards and ethos of such schools and actively seek them out.

The Coalition Agreement made a commitment to “work with faith groups to enable more faith schools and facilitate inclusive admissions policies in as many of these schools as possible”. The new Academy and Free School programmes are making a major contribution to this inclusivity commitment. As I am sure you are aware, any new Academy or Free School with a faith cannot prioritise more than 50% of its admissions for child of the faith, when they are over-subscribed. We have also reformed the admissions system to allow anyone to object to arrangements that they believe are unfair or not compliant with the Code. In the first year of the new Code, the Office of

the Schools Adjudicator received fewer objections on the grounds of faith than in previous years. This is encouraging. We also know that many faith schools do not operate any form of prioritisation on the basis of faith.

I am grateful for your offer to meet but I regret that diary commitments mean I am unable to accept.

Thank you for writing to me on this important subject.

Yours sincerely,

love,


David Laws MP

P.S. Apologies again for
the delayed reply.


