LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

CALL FOR VIEWS ON THE NON-DOMESTIC RATES (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM ANONYMOUS

Dear Sirs,

I write in support of independent schooling and to express my opposition to the proposed removal of eligibility to claim charitable relief from non-domestic rates from mainstream independent schools, by conveying my family’s personal experience of St Mary’s school in Melrose. Immediately prior to my children (now 13 and 11) joining St Mary’s, we experienced the sudden and unexpected loss of my husband and the children’s father at the age of 41. As you may appreciate, the months following my husband’s death were very difficult, but our loss impacted on my daughter then aged 5, especially hard and after some discussion with her state school teacher, it was apparent that there simply was not enough resource available to provide the educational and emotional support that she required and continues to require, some years later.

After much thought, I made the decision to enrol my children at St Mary’s, where I have been particularly impressed with the high level of pastoral care and attention they receive. I truly believe that St Mary’s has the necessary resources to provide tailored support, specific to the needs of my children, that is unlikely to be available in the State school system. For those lucky enough not to have been impacted by family tragedy or for those who are blessed with confident and able children, the ‘lighter touch’ approach so provided by the many excellent Scottish state schools is perfectly satisfactory. However, I feel that it would be a failure on the part of our government, if they were to push the affordability of independent schools further out of reach of parents and families, who make the financial commitment to pay not just for an education, but also for the greater level of care and support that is considered necessary in the eyes of the parent.

It concerns me that if even a small proportion of the children currently receiving, independent Scottish schooling transferred to their relevant state school, the burden placed on those publicly funded establishments would stretch their limited resources even further and possibly limit the level of any pastoral care and support that is available, even further, thus impacting on children from families that are unable to access fee paying schools. Indeed, in this scenario, it may well end up costing the taxpayer more to properly fund adequate State schooling resources than would be saved by removing the Charitable relief currently afforded to the Scottish independent school sector.

I sincerely hope that the relevant Committee considers this point of view. I realise that family bereavement is not a common issue when considering the merits of
independent schooling, but from my experience and in the interests of supporting my children at a time when they were most vulnerable, I felt fortunate that St Mary’s was able to provide the care and support that we needed and still benefit from to this day.