LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM LINDA RUNCIMAN

I am writing to state that I am appalled that the proposed Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Bill will effectively create an even more divided society as independent schools will be completely priced out of the market for children from less affluent backgrounds as this Bill will force schools to raise their fees even further.

Having taught in the primary state sector for most of my career I only moved to teach in a small independent school five years ago. My main reason for changing to the independent sector was so that I would be able to teach children with fewer interruptions and have support in the classroom, as this had been gradually removed to the point that there was virtually none available, even for children with specific needs. Therefore, as a primary teacher, I feel I am now able to meet the individual needs of all the children I teach, due to the level of support I receive. The private sector has provided me with opportunities in my career, to have a change in employer and to be able to gain some leadership experience.

I have noticed that there are increasing numbers of children who require support coming into our school. This correlates directly with the reduction of support for teachers in primary state schools. Parents are making huge sacrifices for their children to be able to attend our school and have often reached a point of despair and worry that their children are not receiving the support they need to be able to learn effectively.

Many of these families are being given substantial bursary help to meet the cost of school fees in the knowledge that they have already paid for their children to be educated through the state sector by paying income tax.

Furthermore each child removed from the state sector, especially when there is a level of support required, allows the funding for their state sponsored education to be allocated elsewhere. If these families are forced, due to rising fees, to return to the state sector there will be a huge funding deficits as well as more children feeling frustrated at being unable to progress sufficiently.

Children educated in the private sector are being taught to grow into complete, rounded individuals with regular coaching in music, drama, art, design and technology from specialist teachers, as well as the core subjects. These subjects are being taught sporadically in the state sector, dependant on individual teacher’s interests and confidence to address them. If independent schools become more elitist than they already are then we face, as a society, a whole generation growing up without developing these skills.
It is bad enough that our country can no longer keep the promise of each child achieving their full potential, but to further tax institutions where that potential is being reached as well as new confidence and belief being unlocked, is totally unacceptable. se insert your response below