To whom it may concern.

I am a parent with two children at an independent school in Edinburgh. My wife and I make a lot of sacrifices to enable us to afford sending our children to the independent school. It is our choice, albeit a costly one, but we believe in providing our children with the best education we can afford.

The proposed removal of non-domestic rates relief from independent schools will have more than just a short term financial impact of increase school fees.

- What of the increased pressure on the already creaking public school sector when more children are being signed up?
- Will all schools, public or independent be treated the same? Specifically referring to VAT exemptions here.
- What is the potential impact of teacher redundancies at independent schools?
- Longer term what is the impact on local communities if independent schools potentially sell off assets to fund the rate rises – loss of sport and other recreational facilities, school property being sold to housing developers, etc.?

The goal of the original petition and proposal was that public and independent schools should all be treated the same, abide to the same set of rules. However the figures don’t add up. For a level playing field, should the rate relief for independent schools be removed, anyone choosing to send their children to an independent school should receive a tax break on personal or council tax as long as they have children in full time education. Isn’t that fair? There’s already a double taxation policy in place. Is that fair?

Where is the additional funding coming from – another personal and / or council tax increase?

Is there a plan to have the required infrastructure in place within three years by 2022? I can’t find any proof of a proper study carried out to assess the impact of the proposal on the existing infrastructure by the petitioners or the Barclay Review?

I get the point that the idea behind this is to level the playing field but believe this is completely the wrong way of going about it. Targeting a handful of institutions that contributes massively to the economy and future of Scotland is short sighted.

Instead of wasting resources to try and suppress independent schools these resources should be used to bring public schools on par with independent schools.