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Our Ref: IW/1378tr

12 May 2021

SENT VIA E-MAIL sec-of-state.ps@education.gov.uk

The Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
Westminster
LONDON
SW1P 3BT

Dear Secretary of State

Re: The continued importance of maintained schools

We are writing in response to a recent speech to the Confederation of School Trusts, in which you set out your vision for all schools in England to be part of a multi-academy trust. In particular, we wish to challenge in the strongest terms your assertion that being part of an academy trust is the only way for schools to be part of 'a strong family'.

As you are surely aware, many schools in Birmingham and elsewhere in the country continue to thrive in the maintained sector. Maintained school leaders are no less committed to their pupils and staff than their peers in academy trusts and are achieving outcomes comparable to academies.

Every day Birmingham schools and academies work together in local areas, by phase and as a city, making a huge difference to children, young people and their families. All schools also work with us as a local authority on critical issues such as social care and safeguarding.

The last year has been extremely challenging for the education sector and all schools, maintained and academy, have shown incredible dedication and resilience. Sadly, your comments to the Confederation of School Trusts did not reflect this and risk creating division in a profession that we should all be extremely proud of.

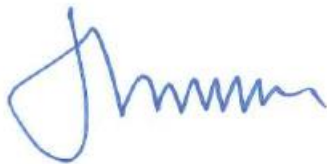
As a council we remain focussed on supporting children, young people and families through the remainder of the pandemic and into the recovery. It would be helpful if the Government also recognised the excellent work taking place in all schools, rather than looking to force high performing maintained schools to academise, when their resources are rightly focussed on children and young people.

All schools in Birmingham have been part of the city's response to the pandemic and all schools will play a vital part in our recovery. We urge you to allow school leaders to focus on the job at hand.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Ward', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Ian Ward
Leader of Birmingham City Council

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jayne Francis', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Jayne Francis
Cabinet Member for Education, Skills & Culture