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Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
Minister of State for School Standards

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Mr Chris Heaton-Harris MP
House of Commons
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16 January 2018

Dear Chris

Thank you for your letter of 11 December, addressed to the Secretary of State, on behalf of a number of your constituents, regarding school admissions. I am replying as the Minister of State for School Standards.

The Department does not have a role in setting an individual school's admission arrangements. The admissions authority for each school is best placed to ensure that the admission arrangements for their school meets the needs of their local community. These authorities are responsible for determining, following local consultation, their admission arrangements, as long as they are fair, clear and objective, and comply with the School Admissions Code. The admissions authority for a local authority or voluntary controlled school is the local authority, and for all other schools it is either the governing body or the academy trust. The full Code is published at: tinyurl.com/L3uux5d. If a parent considers the admission arrangements for a school are unfair, they can raise an objection with the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. More information is available at: tinyurl.com/o6fcJh9.

Admission arrangements must be clearly and accurately described, to ensure that parents have a clear idea of their chance of securing a place at their preferred school. Admissions authorities decide on the criteria that would be most suitable to the school, according to the local circumstances. They must also consult locally on their admissions criteria, including with parents and the local authority. Any parent can apply for a place for their child at any time, to any school, including outside the normal admissions round. The admissions authority must offer a place if the school has space available.

I note that, in her email of 4 December, Ms Lesley Hagger, Director for Children, Families and Education at Northamptonshire County Council, states that the Council is currently consulting on its admission arrangements. I would encourage your constituents to submit their views to the consultation, if they have not done so already.

In addition, as Wollaston Secondary School has applied to convert to an academy, and admission arrangements will therefore be determined by the academy trust, you may wish to raise your constituents' concerns with the school directly. Whilst the School Admissions Code does not apply directly to academies, every academy is bound by its funding agreement with the Secretary of State to comply with the Code and admissions law in the same way as a maintained school.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

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