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Rt Hon David Laws MP
Minister of State for Schools

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Shirley Watson
Principal
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^{3rd} January 2015

Dear Mrs. Watson,

Subject: Early entry/English discounting in performance tables

Thank you for your letter of 28 November.

I entirely agree with you that education is first and foremost about children's learning. What qualifications students are entered for, and when, should always be based solely on the best interests of individual students.

I acknowledge that the entry decisions you took were not intended to advantage the school in the performance tables. I took the decision to write to all of those schools affected by this issue to ensure that they were aware that this entry pattern could continue to have an impact in the future. Some schools have been affected by this entry pattern to a greater or lesser degree. The purpose of copying the letters to Ofsted and the local authority was to ensure that schools knew that we had made sure Ofsted were fully aware of the policy background behind the data.

I do appreciate that the decision to apply the entry rules from 29 September 2013 was implemented immediately, but we will always look to act in the best interests of pupils and we think it was right to take swift action to tackle inappropriate early entry.

The early entry policy does not aim to prevent schools from entering students early when they are ready. We expect that schools who are confident they are doing the right thing to continue with their normal entry practice.

Thank you for writing to me on this important issue.

Yours sincerely,

David Laws

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