Grammar and Faith Schools

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee

My hon. Friend is making a powerful speech. Does he agree that the third issue should also be about social cohesion? Does he share my concern about some of the proposals on faith schools? I recognise the contribution that they make, but can he think of a single reason why the child of an atheist parent like myself should be excluded from a school because of their parents' lack of faith? Does he also share my concern that 100% selection by faith risks driving communities into further segregation and does nothing to improve social cohesion?

Neil Carmichael Chair, Education Committee, Chair, Education, Skills and the Economy Sub-Committee

I thank my hon. Friend for that instructive intervention. It goes off the issue of grammar schools, which I was hoping to talk about, but she is right that the issue of faith schools should be addressed. I say two things. First, we must have an inclusive society; we cannot parcel people up in that sector and say, "That's youâ€™off you go!" That is not acceptable. We must make sure that our faith schools do not do that and instead are all embracing. It is the outward-looking school, of whatever faith, that will do a good job.

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