



Parliamentary Monitor – March 2023

Introduction

In late February the UK Government and the EU published their plans for resolving the trade and constitutional question of Northern Ireland following Brexit. The agreement, called the [Windsor Framework](#), was overwhelmingly approved by both Houses of Parliament in March. Following Nicola Sturgeon's resignation as Leader of the Scottish National Party a [leadership contest took place](#), which ended with the election of Humza Yousaf on 27th March. The role of religion in public life was a major topic of the contest, with the religious views of both Yousaf and his main rival, Kate Forbes, being discussed widely in Scottish and national media. Parliament entered Easter recess on Friday 31st March and will not sit again until Monday 17th April.

Education

SEND/AP briefing – A briefing was circulated to MPs in select dioceses across the country regarding Catholic demand for new SEND or AP schools. The briefing explained how the 50% admissions cap prevented new Catholic schools from being opened and asked for MPs to write to the Education Secretary, requesting that she remove the cap.

Meeting with Caroline Ansell MP – Following receipt of the CES briefing on the 2022 Schools Census, Caroline Ansell MP, who is a member of the Education select Committee agreed to a meeting. Topics discussed included Catholic SEND provision and an explanation of the importance of removing the 50% cap on faith-based admissions in Catholic schools.

Schools Rebuilding Concerns in Wales – The CES contacted the members of the Senedd that have Catholic schools in need of repairs in their constituencies and regions, in particular in Bangor. This resulted in three meetings, with Sam Rowlands MS, Siân Gwenllian MS and Llyr Gruffydd MS to discuss the concerns of the Catholic community and to request advice. They provided the CES with a number of local authority contacts. All three MSs were generally understanding of the difficulties faced by Catholic schools and were keen to be helpful going forward.

Networking at the Association of Muslim Schools Event – The CES was represented at the Association of Muslim Schools' 30th Anniversary dinner. Representatives from the Independent Schools Association (ISA) and the Independent Schools Council (ISC) were in attendance. Following the event, members of the P&PA team met with the Policy and Public Affairs Officer at the ISC to discuss predicted future education policy, potential implications for independent schools across the country and ways the CES and ISC can work together to protect Catholic independent schools.

Consultation communication with Labour Shadow Cabinet – Following our submission to the Labour National Policy Forum's consultation this year, including to the policy commission concerning education, the team has established contact with both the Policy Advisor to the Labour Party on education and the Shadow Cabinet's education team, with a view to establishing regular communication and sharing further resources about our opposition to the faith-based admissions cap.