



The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith

Minister for Skills

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The Baroness Finn
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

Monday 3rd February 2025

Dear Baroness Finn,

I am writing following the debate on the achievements of free schools and academies. Thank you for your contribution to the debate.

I should like to correct one point I made to you in my response. I had said that:

“Under the previous Government, schools did not always get the support to improve when they needed it. Between September 2022 and September 2025, 40% of all schools in a category of concern took over a year to convert into sponsored academies, and 10% took more than two years.”

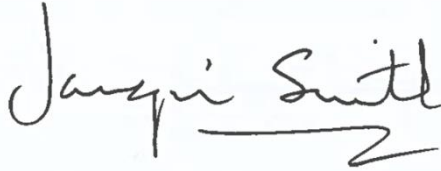
The correct statistic is that between **1 January 2022** and **31 December 2024**, **over 40%** of all schools in a category of concern took over a year to convert into academies, and **over 20%** took more than two years.

I should also like to correct a misunderstanding that my officials brought to my attention. When you said that the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill “scrap the requirement for failing schools to become academies”. I had understood you as meaning the Government will no longer require failing schools to become academies when I said, “I am afraid that the noble Baroness, Lady Finn, is wrong: we are not scrapping sponsored conversion.”

I understand, however, the point you were making was that the Bill removes the duty on Government to order failing maintained schools to become academies. In this you are correct. As set out in our consultation published today – ‘*School accountability reform – school profiles, improvement and intervention*’ – we will continue to issue academy orders to the worst performing schools. However, repealing this duty and replacing it with a discretionary power gives the Secretary of State more options to intervene to improve schools, including through our proposal that from September 2026, schools which are judged to require significant improvement receive mandatory targeted intervention from our new Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) teams. Structural intervention (through issuing academy orders to maintained schools or, for existing academies, transferring them to a new trust) will remain the default for schools in Special Measures or schools judged to Require Significant Improvement who have not made the necessary improvement within 18 months. Therefore, my statement that we are not scrapping sponsored conversion remains correct.

Thank you again for taking the time to engage on these matters. I hope these further details have been useful and I will place a copy in the House libraries.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue background. The signature reads "Jacqui Smith" in a cursive script. Below the name, there is a horizontal line that ends in a small flourish or underline.

The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith

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