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Secretary of State

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Rt Hon Greg Knight MP
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Your ref: Q 02

1st Dec 2010 2010

20 Nov

Thank you for your letter of 9 November about answers to written parliamentary questions 5511 and 5513, asking about the New Schools Network (NSN).

I have written to Lisa Nandy MP today, answering her specific questions in full – a copy has been placed in the House Library and is enclosed for your records. It is important to note, however, that in answering the (approximately 40) parliamentary questions that Ms Nandy has asked on NSN and Free Schools since the General Election, we have already provided similar information.

The Freedom of Information response to which you refer was issued on 14 October; our various responses to Ms Nandy's questions were laid prior to that date 13 September and 12 October.

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MICHAEL GOVE



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
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Lisa Nandy MP
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I have been notified by the Procedures Committee that you do not feel that my Department answered your parliamentary questions 5511 and 5513 when we provided a consolidated response to a number of questions on 6 September.

Please accept my apologies if that was the case – it was certainly not our intention. I would like to clear-up any remaining confusion by answering the questions as follows:

5511 - To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reasons a contract has been made with an outside organisation to administer initial inquiries about free schools.


The experience of the Academies programme indicates that the support requirements for some promoters, such as new parent groups, could be significant, particularly in the first few months. Some of this function is most appropriately provided by an external organisation, which also distinguishes the roles of promoting and encouraging free school projects from the role of approving them.

The New Schools Network (NSN) has championed the development of parent-promoted schools and been providing advice and support to those interested in establishing new schools since 2009, as well as developing networks amongst interested groups and individuals. This makes NSN ideally placed to fulfil the role at least for an initial period. Given its close working relationship with many of the groups that are likely to form the first free schools, it will also expedite the progression of their plans.

5513 - To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what tendering process was undertaken in awarding the contract to administer initial inquiries on setting up free schools; and what organisations submitted tenders.

As there is no contract for providing advice to potential Free School providers (we have a grant agreement with NSN) the Department did not seek any tenders.

A copy of this letter will be placed in the House Library.

with every good wish,


MICHAEL GOVE