



23 September, 2019

**Julie Robinson, chief executive of the Independent Schools Council, responds to the vote at the Labour Party Conference (22 September 2019) to abolish independent schools.**

Julie Robinson, ISC chief executive, said: *“Parents across the country have every right to be worried about the decision by Labour Party conference to support a motion to abolish independent schools. The move is an attack on the rights and freedoms of parents to make choices over the education of their children.*

*“Abolition would represent an act of national self-harm. Tearing down excellent schools does not improve our education system. The repercussions would be irreversible and far-reaching, damaging educational opportunities and limiting life chances. Moreover, Labour’s plan would breach the European Convention on Human Rights on the right to choose education.*

*“No society should put politics before the interests of children and young people. This decision is an ideological distraction from dealing with the real problems in education. We all want to see more funding for state schools and greater support for underperforming pupils, which is precisely why we encourage all schools to work together in the interests of every child. Recent polling data has revealed more than a third of British adults believe increased funding for state schools is the key priority to improving social mobility, with just six per cent supporting abolition of independent schools.*

*“Every family with school-aged children would be affected if independent schools were abolished. State school class sizes would swell further, resources would be stretched and the financial strain on already-stretched budgets would be enormous. At present, independent schools contribute nearly £14billion to UK GDP each year and save the taxpayer £3.5billion per year through the education of children and young people at no cost to the taxpayer.*

*“Independent school parents and their children should not be blamed for social inequality, when inequality already exists in the state system. These schools are proud to be a vital part of the national education system. They work with the state sector to enable children from disadvantaged backgrounds to get a great education whether through bursaries and scholarships, or through partnership work, which has been praised by state school leaders including the Association of School and College Leaders. Let’s focus on working collaboratively to carry out more of this life-changing work.*

*“For far too long this debate has been fuelled by ideology. We must leave this dangerous approach behind and, instead, all engage in a serious, positive conversation about what really matters: how to build upon what we have in order to improve education for all children.*