

View from the House

After a short break, Parliament returns on the 6th September for two weeks and rises again for the Conference season. Many of you have also returned to school and have received exam results. Congratulations must go to pupils, staff and parents for all the hard work during the course and beyond. Although exam results are important, it is just as important to remember that education should be seen in its broadest context and that whatever we do, we have to try to do it well.

Following my request for a meeting with the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove has kindly agreed to meet with me to discuss the two schools Joseph Leckie and Alumwell Business and Enterprise College who lost out when the Building Schools for the Future Funding was cancelled. I hope to put their case to the Secretary of State to restore the funding. I visited Joseph Leckie before the recess and saw the beautiful new Colin Beilby building and would like the rest of the school to be a modern learning environment.

I have been told that those people who fast during Ramadan do so to remind themselves what it is like not to have any food and to live in poverty. This is similar to those who fast during Lent. By the end of the week fasting will end and I wish you all Happy Eid Mubarak.

The next two weeks in Parliament should be busy as we welcome back the Prime Minister after his paternity leave and congratulate him and Mrs Cameron on the birth of their daughter Florence.

Many of you have written to me to let me know how you have been affected when you invested in Equitable Life. The Ombudsman found there was maladministration by the regulatory bodies and the Equitable Life (Payments) Bill will have its second reading on the 14 September.

Although the Bill does not clarify how the payments scheme will be set out, it provides the authority for the money to be paid out once the scheme is set up and for future tax treatment of the payments. The amount that will be paid out to those who lost their money through no fault of their own will depend on the Government spending review.

The Parliamentary Ombudsman Ann Abraham found that there was evidence of “serial regulatory failure constituting maladministration and resulting in justice”. The affected people should get a fair payment in line with the Ombudsman’s recommendation. I will press their case at the Second reading.

Valerie Vaz MP