

Furzehill  
Terrace Road South  
Binfield  
Berkshire  
RG42 4DS  
December 10<sup>th</sup> 2012

Dear Michael,

I have been asked to write to you on behalf of the Bracknell Forest SACRE which is very concerned about recent developments that have been initiated and effectively lower the status of Religious Education in schools. Firstly RE is not a subject which qualifies as a subject in the EBac and secondly there are no bursaries for those who wish to train as RE specialists.

History teaches us that a lack of understanding of others often creates fear directly and even where this is not the case unscrupulous people can promulgate untruths or extremely embroidered truths to inculcate fear in the general population. This in the past has led directly to the holocaust and genocide in many areas of the world - even in this country in former times. RE addresses directly this aspect of what is to be a rounded education in this country today. In learning about religions many misconceptions are met head on and issues addressed. In learning from religions it is aimed to make pupils more aware of themselves and to become more rounded individuals with a real understanding of their own beliefs and structures.

For some years the reports in OFSTED inspections on RE teaching have been cursory. It is perhaps not just a coincidence that the church schools that you value highly have a more intense SIAS inspection that concentrates on the teaching of RE and collective worship within the school. This would seem to indicate to me that when the status of RE is raised, then much that is good follows.

I would value a reply which indicates how our SACRE can counteract this loss of status among secondary school pupils. I would also welcome a decision to include RE as a subject in the Ebac.

Yours sincerely

David J. Fawcett  
(Chair of Bracknell Forest SACRE)

Reply to my letter dated the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2013

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of 10 December, addressed to the Secretary of State, about Religious Education (RE) and the English Baccalaureate.

I can assure you that the Government is committed to maintaining the status of RE as a compulsory subject that all pupils must study throughout their schooling, unless their parents have withdrawn them. We acknowledge that RE is important and studying it teaches children to understand the history that has shaped the values and traditions of this country, as well as other countries and cultures. It forms a key part of promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children and young people.

You ask about the impact of English Baccalaureate Certificates (EBCs) on subjects, such as RE, in which the Government is not proposing to develop EBCs. Those other subjects remain valuable and pupils will continue to study them alongside an academic core. We are currently considering how to make sure that high quality qualifications are available beyond the English Baccalaureate subjects, building on the more rigorous approach we are proposing for EBCs, and following our recent consultation, we will make an announcement in due course.

The Department has seen the research carried out by the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) on respondents' perceptions around the introduction of the Ebacc. Whilst acknowledging their depth of feeling, it is, however, the case that entries to Religious Studies GCSEs increased in 2012 by 7.7 percent. The headcount for teachers of RE at Key Stage 4 had increased from 10,400 in 2010 to 10,700 in 2011, and the number of hours of RE taught at Key Stage 4 had increased over the same period from 47,300 to 47,600. This shows that RE remains a popular and successful subject. Indeed, as a proportion of overall subjects entered, religious studies entries have surpassed both history and geography entries for the first time.

Thank you for writing on this important matter and I hope that my letter is helpful.

With best wishes

**Elizabeth Truss MP**  
**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education and Childcare**