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Elizabeth Truss MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education and Childcare

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Oliver Colvile MP
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London
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12 June 2014

Dear Oliver,

Thank you for your letter of 24 April, addressed to the Minister of State for Schools, on behalf of your constituent, Mr Jonathan Marshall, about religious education (RE).

The Government firmly believes in the importance of RE to foster understanding among people of different faiths and cultures, including people with no religious beliefs, and to develop children's knowledge of the values and traditions of Britain and other countries. That is why it remains compulsory for maintained schools and academies to provide RE for all children up to the age of 18.

The Secretary of State has reaffirmed his commitment to RE. In order to improve RE teaching, Departmental officials are working with the Religious Education Council to highlight best practice and encourage teachers to develop their own approaches accordingly.

Reforms to school performance measures will further encourage schools to teach Religious Studies GCSE. RE is among the subjects that can form part of the new 'Progress 8' measure. Under the new accountability framework, results of eight subjects, rather than five, will count towards the main indicator of school performance. This change will encourage schools to offer even more students a broad and balanced curriculum, including RE.

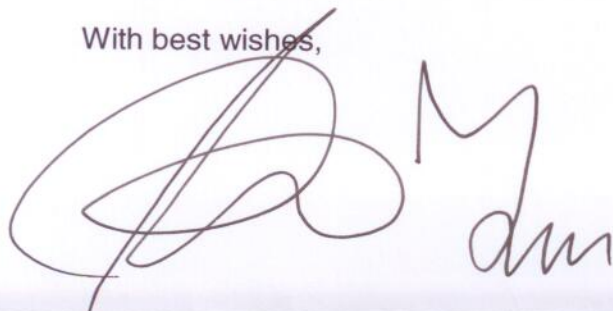
Furthermore, the next steps in the reform of GCSEs and A levels will help to promote good teaching of RE. We are introducing more rigorous content into reformed GCSEs and A levels to be taught from September 2016, and I am pleased to say that Religious Studies is one of the subjects in which we are developing new qualifications.

Under its school inspection framework, Ofsted does not inspect individual curriculum subjects, but is required to report on whether the curriculum offered by the school is broad and balanced and promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. If, during an inspection, inspectors see practice

that does not conform with statutory requirements, they will set this out clearly in the inspection report.

Please thank Mr Marshall for writing on this important matter and I hope this letter is helpful to him.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'E' followed by 'Truss'.

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