



Lord Nash
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for
Schools
Sanctuary Buildings
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Democratic and Member Support
Chief Executive's Department

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Please ask for: Lynn Young

Date 1 April 2015

My Ref

Your Ref

Dear Lord Nash

On behalf of Plymouth SACRE, we wish to thank you for your letter dated 7 January 2015. We considered it carefully, and in some depth, at our meeting on the 9 March. It was good to read that you and the Department for Education know and value the work and role of SACREs in ensuring that RE is taught well and to high standards of academic rigour. It was also reassuring to read of the importance placed on RE and Collective Worship as key vehicles for enabling and supporting children and young people's development through the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural dimensions also ensuring that the National Curriculum is truly balanced and broadly based.

Your references to recent events in some schools in Birmingham and elsewhere only underline the vital importance of well taught RE as a measure and touchstone to ensure that this crucial balance is maintained and community cohesion promoted and practised.

Plymouth SACRE is an active and engaged group. Most of its Members have served for a number of years and bring a wide variety of professional and educational expertise and experience. Their perspective is of great value and I wish to share with you our concerns which, we assert, have blocked and impeded the development of the important work you outline and which we support and promote.

Despite all that you say, and to which we are wholly committed, within a curriculum that is solely focused on attainment through English, Maths and Science the value of RE, (along with other non-core subjects) is regarded as less important and therefore given scant regard. As long as Ofsted fail to follow up on schools who blatantly disregard RE and its statutory nature, but more especially its vital educational value, our efforts will be continually undermined.

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Successive Governments have also, through, let us say, the law of unintended consequences, severely weakened the status and value of RE, in the eyes of schools, teachers and trainees, parents and pupils. It is as though SACRE and RE continue to succeed, where it undoubtedly does, in spite of what has been done politically rather than through the support of successive Governments and Ministers. With an election looming, in whose hands is RE safe?

Plymouth SACRE feels strongly, that if you can ensure that your Department directs and requires Ofsted to inspect RE for all the statutory, academic, SMSC and Community Cohesion reasons above, it will be THE major factor in ensuring the realisation of all that you and we seek.

In short, at the end of your penultimate paragraph, you raise the issue of whether; "...all SACREs are fulfilling their statutory duties." Well...the message from Plymouth SACRE is; are Ofsted fulfilling theirs!?

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Aspinall', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Mary Aspinall
Vice Chair Plymouth SACRE