

Rt. Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3 BT

12 June 2012

Dear Secretary of State,

National Curriculum Review

SCORE¹ welcomes the informal consultation launched yesterday by the Department for Education on the draft primary Programmes of Study. SCORE will be submitting a detailed response to this draft. However, an initial inspection of the draft shows that it has come a long way over the last year. It has been a long and difficult process but the Department have taken on many suggestions and the draft is now a useful document on which to base discussions with the community.

However, we still have some major concerns with the pace and transparency of the Review process. This is an important and complicated review and it may still be too ambitious to produce a useful new National Curriculum by 2014. This is illustrated by the progress to date: this informal consultation comprises only the revisions to primary science; we have no further information on the secondary Programme of Study which is also scheduled to be in schools for first teaching in 2014 but, being larger and more complicated, is likely to take longer to produce.

The development process has been opaque and piecemeal. Over the last year versions of the Programmes of Study for the sciences have been drafted and critiqued by informal advisory groups, sub-groups and individuals. We understand that those involved have not always had a clear idea of where they fit in the process, how their contribution was being used or who else is involved. Additionally, appointed authors (who remain unknown to us) have been working with the civil servants to finalise these drafts. This level of complexity, coupled with unnecessary confidentiality, has caused concern within the science community. And we know, via the Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education (ACME) and Education for Engineering (E4E), that similar concerns are shared by the mathematics and engineering communities.

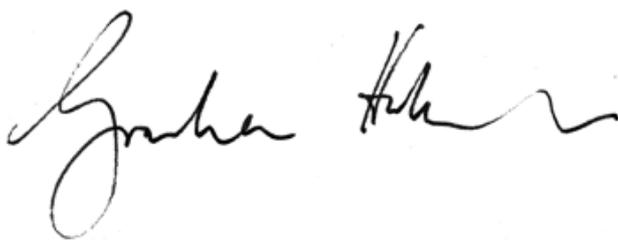
¹ The Association of Science Education, Institute of Physics, Royal Society, Royal Society of Chemistry and Society of Biology

We would therefore urge you to take a more open and transparent approach in the next stage of the Review. In particular SCORE recommends the following:

- The evidence on which officials have drawn and the names of any advisors consulted should be publicly available, with any potential commercial interests of individuals involved fully disclosed.
- Any further development of the National Curriculum should be informed by a range of individuals with appropriate expertise in the sciences and science education. They should be selected through a transparent process, with individuals chosen to represent a range of knowledge, experience and qualifications in science curricula and pedagogy.
- SCORE member organisations have an important role to play in this Review. Any Programme of Study for the sciences should have the support of these organisations prior to publication.
- The work should be adequately funded so that the selection of those who work on it can be made purely on merit rather than being restricted to those whose circumstances allow them to work unpaid.
- The process for commenting on the Programmes of Study should be well defined and the lines of communication between the Department of Education, the individuals involved in the drafting process and the various subject communities should be explicit.

SCORE continues to support the aims of the National Curriculum Review, and we remain committed to seeing it through. But if we, and others, are to effectively engage in the process we urgently need clarity about the next stages of development and we would advise a more open and measured approach in the coming months.

Yours sincerely,

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

Professor Graham Hutchings FRS
SCORE Chair