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Elizabeth Truss MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education and Childcare

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Professor Julia Buckingham
Chair
SCORE
6-9 Carlton House Terrace
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13th September 2013

Dear Professor Buckingham,

Thank you for your letter of 8 August, responding to the most recent consultation on the national curriculum and enclosing SCORE's proposed revisions to the key stages 1-3 programmes of study for science.

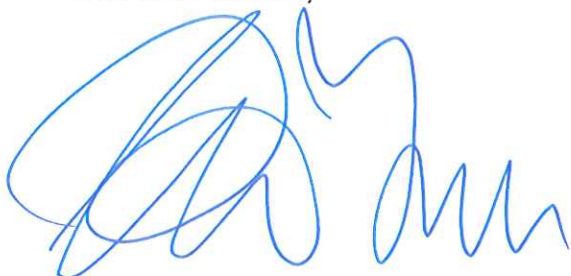
I am sorry that SCORE has concerns about the process of the review, as we have greatly valued the advice that SCORE has provided through the review. As you know, securing significant and lasting improvements in the national curriculum, is one of the Government's highest priorities. International comparisons of performance in science show that the performance of England's pupils has been falling behind that of our competitors. Across the whole of the national curriculum, our core rationale for the choice of content in the draft programmes of study has been to address this, to set expectations which match those in the highest performing education jurisdictions in the world, and to challenge pupils to realise their potential in an increasingly competitive global market. The drafts also address the serious flaws that exist in the current national curriculum. In particular, there has been too great a focus on acquiring generic skills at the expense of securing deep knowledge and understanding of a subject.

I believe that we have been clear about our plans for reviewing the key stage 4 curriculum and qualifications. We have held back consultation on the key stage 4 programmes of study until this autumn so that we can consider the content of these programmes of study alongside the requirements for subject content of the GCSEs, once these are finalised. The contents of the science key stage 3 programme of study will allow us to make sure that there is proper coherence between the science key stage 3 and 4 programmes of study, and the suite of science GCSEs.

I do not agree that there has been insufficient time in the review to allow proper consideration of the progression between key stages or that the final programmes of study lack consistency and coherence. We extended the original timetable for the preparation of the new programmes of study by one year to ensure that there was enough time to discuss important issues such as these. I believe that has led to a final draft of the new national curriculum that represents a significant improvement on its predecessor, setting out the essential knowledge that should be taught in science at each key stage and placing England on a par with the strongest jurisdictions around the world.

I am grateful for the support SCORE has given to the review, which I hope will continue as we now turn to helping schools to prepare to teach the new curriculum.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Truss', written in a cursive style.

Elizabeth Truss MP
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