

David Bell

Department for Children, Schools and Families

Sanctuary Buildings

Great Smith Street

London

SW1P 3BT

30 April 2010

Dear David,

RE: Development of national sampling surveys for science

I am writing in my position as Chair of SCORE.

On 7 May 2009, the Secretary of State announced the introduction of a National Sampling Survey at the ends of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. SCORE, and SCORE partners, were mentioned as organisations that the DCSF and QCDA would be asked to work with as the science sampling surveys are developed.

On 1 March 2010, 10 months later, SCORE partners attended a QCDA workshop on the national sampling survey. Whilst this workshop was useful to find out more about how the sampling survey is being run in 2010, we feel that there are a number of key issues for future sampling surveys which have not yet been resolved. These aspects are outlined below, and we find it difficult to envisage how QCDA can proceed to develop and commission the sampling surveys for 2012 until these issues are clearly resolved.

In particular:

- What are the surveys attempting to measure? It is difficult to see how a suitable survey can be designed until this is fully clear and we do not yet feel that QCDA has answered the question sufficiently.
- How frequently should the survey take place? Should the sample include whole cohorts, whole classes, or a subset of students within a school? Answers to these questions can have an impact on both the validity of analysis, including any changes over time, and the extent to which schools are required to set aside time for this process in a busy schedule.
- How is QCDA planning to work with those organisations named by the Secretary of State? We are not entirely convinced that QCDA is taking on board input from SCORE and others who need to be consulted, despite efforts on our part.

The SCORE partners are keen to engage in the discussion about the content and structure of the science sampling surveys and would welcome a meeting with you in order to progress this.

Yours sincerely,

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

Graham Hutchings

SCORE Chair

cc Isabel Nisbet, Chief Executive (Ofqual) and Andrew Hall, Chief Executive (QCDA)