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RECEIVED  
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Mr John Gilbert  
Director of Children's Service  
Sanford House  
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April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010

Dear Mr John Gilbert,

I am writing to you to encourage you to make the co-opted humanist representative to your SACRE a full member of your Committee A.

As you may be aware, in January the government published new guidance on Religious Education. The guidance solidified many positive improvements that have been made in recent years.

Significantly, it deleted the prohibition on humanists serving as full members of SACREs and Agreed Syllabus Conferences (ASCs), which had appeared in the previous guidance (Circular 1/94). It also observed that SACREs could include members to represent non-religious views (p.13) and noted how this could be done in the interests of inclusion (p.21).

With regards to RE syllabuses the guidance also reaffirmed the government's view that RE should examine both religious and non-religious perspectives. It noted that:

- 'Religious education provokes challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God, the self and the nature of reality, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human. It can develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity, of other principal religions, other religious traditions **and worldviews** that offer answers to questions such as these' (p.7).

The Government had already set out that RE should examine non-religious perspectives in:

- the new secondary curriculum published in 2007, which noted that RE should study a 'secular world view' (p.7 of the KS3 programme of study)
- the new RE programme of learning for the primary curriculum published in September 2009, which recommended that 'over the primary phase as a whole, children should draw on both religious **and non-religious world views**' (p.2)

- the 2004 national framework for RE, which recommended that there should be 'opportunities to study secular philosophies such as **humanism**' (p.14). The framework was endorsed by a wide range of RE professional and religious groups, including the Church of England, the Catholic Education Service and the Muslim Council of Britain.

Following the release of the updated RE guidance we are writing to all those SACREs in England that do not currently have a humanist representative as a full member of their Committee A to urge that you admit one.

We believe that the new guidance has removed any sound reason SACREs may have had about not admitting a humanist as a full member and that as non-religious views should be taught in RE lessons, it follows that humanists should have the same full role in monitoring how their views are taught alongside those representatives of religious groups on your council.

We believe that admitting a humanist as a full member will ensure that your SACRE is both being fully inclusive and acting fairly, while strengthening the position of your co-opted humanist will enable them to better contribute to your work to help ensure that the RE in your area remains broad and balanced. This is the experience of SACREs that do have humanists as full members.

Humanists have had a long history of contributing towards and improving RE. The British Humanist Association has been a member of the Religious Education Council for well over thirty years, while some of our representatives have served on SACREs as full members throughout this period with distinction, including as Chairs and Vice-Chairs of both SACREs and ASCs. We hope that you will let your co-opted humanist member now join this growing list.

If the status of your humanist representative changes in due course I would be very grateful if you could let my colleague Paul Pettinger know so that we can update our records accordingly. You can contact Paul at [paul@humanism.org.uk](mailto:paul@humanism.org.uk) or on 020 7462 4993.

Best regards,



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