

Councillor Doreen Dart
Chair of Swindon SACRE

The Ash, Mill Lane,
Stanton Fitzwarren
Swindon SN6 7SA
Tel: 01793 762033

See List

1st December 2011

Dear

The Swindon Standing Advisory Council (SACRE) has asked me to write to you on their behalf regarding some issues raised at their last meeting.

The SACRE discussed the role that religious education should have in the English Baccalaureate and the wider value that religious education can have within local communities.

The SACRE noted comments attributed to the Prime Minister from a visit to a free school in Norwich, that he and the Secretary of State for Education continue to have open minds as to the inclusion of Religious Education in the English Baccalaureate. The SACRE was disappointed that the lack of inclusion of RE in the English Baccalaureate currently, means that Religious Education is being seen as of lower status than many other subjects and examinations. The SACRE supported the view that RE is an academically rigorous and inspiring subject, which equips young people with valuable skills not only for learning but for life.

In this context, the SACRE discussed the recent riots in London and other parts of the Country. It noted the comments from several political sources nationally about the lack of family guidance many of the rioters, especially those of a younger age, had experienced. At this time it would seem that the teaching of morality is paramount for the wellbeing of our young people and our communities. One of the key aspects of Religious Education is that it asks students to reflect on the moral teachings within Christianity and other World faiths and encourages them to develop their own positive ethics which could help provide them with a social and moral compass under which they could live their lives. Obviously such influences cannot replace the family experience, but nevertheless they could offer valuable help and assistance in this respect.

Therefore Swindon SACRE asks that the vital importance of RE is upheld in future legislation and in advice offered to schools.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Doreen Dart
Chair of SACRE

Conservative Councillor
Blunsdon

LABELS TITLE

Mr Buckland MP

Mr Tomlinson MP

The Most Rev. and Right Hon. the Archbishop of Canterbury

The Most Rev. and Right Hon. Dr the Archbishop of York

The Right Reverend Richard Chartres, Bishop of London

Rt Hon David Cameron MP

The Prime Minister

Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP

The Deputy Prime Minister

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

Secretary of State for Education



10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

www.number10.gov.uk

From the Direct Communications Unit

6 December 2011

Councillor Doreen Dart
Swindon Borough Council
The Ash
Mill Lane
Stanton Fitzwarren
Swindon
SN6 7SA

Dear Councillor Dart

Thank you for contacting the Prime Minister.

Mr Cameron very much appreciates your taking the time and trouble to get in touch.

I hope that you will appreciate that as the Department for Education is best placed to respond to the matters you raise, I am forwarding your letter to them so that they may reply to you directly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chaselle', enclosed within a large, loopy circular flourish.

Correspondence Officer



DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
70 WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AS

From the Direct Communications Unit

8 December 2011

Councillor Doreen Dart
Swindon Borough Council
The Ash
Mill Lane
Stanton Fitzwarren
Swindon
SN6 7SA

Dear Councillor Dart

I am writing on behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister to thank you for your letter of 1 December.

It is good of you to take the time to write to Mr Clegg. I hope you will understand that as the points you raise are a matter for the Department for Education, he has asked me to forward your letter to them so that they may respond directly.

Thank you, once again, for writing to the Deputy Prime Minister.

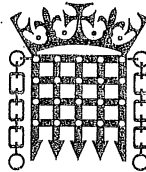
Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Shirley'.

Correspondence Officer



Justin Tomlinson MP
Conservative, North Swindon
www.justintomlinson.com



Robert Buckland MP
Conservative, South Swindon
www.robertbucklandmp.co.uk



Cllr Doreen Dart
Swindon Borough Council
Euclid Street
Swindon
SN1 2JH

14 December 2011

Dear Doreen,

Thank you for your recent letter to me covering the issues raised by SACRE. I am in regular correspondence with Stephen Henderson and have written him letters in April and November.

The November letter said that we need to see what happens with the changes to RE over the next couple of years. I was not happy with what was being proposed and I lobbied hard to both the Minister for Schools, Nick Gibb MP, and the Secretary of State, Michael Gove MP, for RE to be left untouched in its current form and for it to be given the same status as other Humanities such as Geography and History in the new Baccalaureate qualification. Unfortunately my advice was not heeded in this case but I did try.

Regarding your comments about the recent riots in London and other cities, I completely agree with SACRE about the lack of family guidance first and foremost. Religious education and the teaching of Christianity and other world faiths is completely crucial in asking pupils to reflect about morals. I think that the overwhelming sense of consumerism, of the chance to get something for nothing, the chance to get power over the police and the fact that people saw their contemporaries getting away with it were very powerful influences in the riots that took place in the summer. Effective parenting has to happen but we will only see the effects of this in 20 years' time.

Thank you again for contacting me and I hope that this reply has been helpful.

Yours sincerely

Robert

Robert Buckland MP

THE
ARCHBISHOP
OF YORK



Bishopthorpe Palace
Bishopthorpe
York
YO23 2GE

Tel: (01904) 707021
Fax: (01904) 709204

www.archbishopofyork.org

14 December 2011

Dear Mr Doreen Dart,

Thank you for your letter regarding the issues discussed at the last meeting of the Swindon Standing Advisory Council on the role of religious education in the English Baccalaureate. It is my view that religious knowledge forms and creates a culture.

With every blessing,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Sentamu'.

Councillor Doreen Dart
Chair of SACRE
The Ash, Mill Lane
Stanton Fitzwarren
SWINDON SN6 7SA



2011/0082601POGibb

Nick Gibb MP

Minister of State for Schools

Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 0012345 ministers@education.gsi.gov.uk

Councillor Doreen Dart
Chair of Swindon SACRE
The Ash
Mill Lane
Stanton Fitzwarren
Swindon
SN6 7SA

19 December 2011

Dear Councillor Dart,

Thank you for your letter of 1 December, addressed to the Secretary of State, on behalf of the Swindon Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) regarding the English Baccalaureate. I am responding as the Minister of State for Schools.

I acknowledge the concerns that you and members of the Swindon SACRE have voiced and I would like to reassure you that the Secretary of State and I consider it important for all pupils to be taught Religious Education (RE). We recognise the many benefits that this can offer pupils. In particular, it is important for children to understand the role of religion and the part it plays in shaping people's values, attitudes, words and actions in their personal lives and that of the wider community.

All state schools must provide RE as an essential component of their curriculum for all children throughout their schooling. The Government is fully committed to maintaining the unique status in the school curriculum that RE enjoys. This applies equally to Academies and other maintained schools. Every Academy must provide RE as a requirement of their funding agreements and as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.

I am clear that the English Baccalaureate provides absolutely no excuse for any school to fail to meet its statutory duty and we would expect every school in practice to do so. If schools are not teaching RE, then there are well established complaints procedures that parents and others can follow.

The fact that Religious Studies (RS) GCSE does not count in the English Baccalaureate does not mean that schools are not recognised for

achievements in this subject. The accountability measure for schools remains 5 A*-C (including English and mathematics) and the achievement of all the pupils who choose to take RS GCSE, as with any other GCSE that is not included in the English Baccalaureate, will continue to be rewarded.

Ultimately, of course, the choice of which GCSEs pupils are entered for is a matter for them, their parents and for schools. I can, however, reassure you that we are carefully monitoring the impact of the English Baccalaureate on other subjects including RE. We will continue to monitor the teaching of RE as we do at present through the School Workforce Census, which collects information annually on the subjects being taught by all teachers in secondary schools. We are also examining trends in GCSE entry.

You also raise concerns about the riots in August, and the lack of family guidance many of the rioters had experienced. The disorder and violence we witnessed over the summer was shocking and unacceptable. The overwhelming majority of young people, however, are not involved in criminal, anti-social, or selfish behaviour. Most young people share and exemplify our country's values of hard work, self-discipline, aspiration, respectability, and respect for others. The young people involved in the riots are very much in the minority and it is essential that they are held responsible for their actions and dealt with effectively.

For the most troubled families who are struggling with their parental responsibilities, we are encouraging local authorities and other organisations to build on and develop successful approaches that entail a 'key worker' supporting each of them in addressing barriers to successful parenting. There is funding for family intervention services in local authorities' Early Intervention Grant. On 15 December, the Prime Minister reiterated his ambition to turn around the lives of the 120,000 most troubled families in the country by the end of this Parliament. A new Troubled Families Unit in the Department for Communities and Local Government, headed by Ms Louise Casey, will drive forward this commitment.

I agree that good behaviour in schools is essential if pupils are to achieve at school and grow up to be responsible members of society. RE is taught like any other subject in the curriculum, in an objective and inclusive way, which recognises and respects the diversity of religious beliefs, which form a part of our contemporary society.

I hope that this letter reassures you, and the members of Swindon SACRE, that the Government continues to place importance on good behaviour in

schools, as well as on the effective teaching of RE.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

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

Nick Gibb MP

Department for Education

Castle View House
East Lane
Runcorn
Cheshire
WA7 2GJ

Tel: 0370 000 2288
www.education.gov.uk/contactus

Councillor Doreen Dart
Chair of Swindon Sacre
The Ash
Mill Lane
Stanton
Fitzwarren
SWINDON
SN6 7SA

Our ref: 2011/0083370

4 January 2012

Dear Councillor Dart

Thank you for your letters of 1 December, addressed to the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, about Religious Education and the English Baccalaureate. Your letter has been forwarded to the Department for Education and on this occasion I have been asked to reply.

I am aware that you also wrote to the Secretary of State and I can only reiterate the response that was sent by the Minister of State for Schools. The Department acknowledges the concerns that you and Swindon Sacre have raised and we would like to reassure you that the Secretary of State and I consider it important for all pupils to be taught Religious Education (RE). We recognise the many benefits that this can offer pupils. In particular, it is important for children to understand the role of religion and the part it plays in shaping people's values, attitudes, words and actions in their personal lives and that of the wider community.

All state schools must provide RE as an essential component of their curriculum for all children throughout their schooling. The Government is fully committed to maintaining the unique status in the school curriculum that RE enjoys. This applies equally to Academies and other maintained schools. Every Academy must provide RE as a requirement of their funding agreements and as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.

We are clear that the English Baccalaureate provides no excuse for any schools to fail to meet its statutory duty and we would expect every school in practice to do so. If schools are not teaching RE, then there are complaints procedures that parents and others can follow.

The fact the Religious Studies (RS) GCSE does not count in the English Baccalaureate does not mean that schools are not recognised for achievements in this subject. The accountability measure for schools remains 5 A*-C (including English and mathematics) and the achievement of all the pupils who choose to take RS GCSE, as with any other GCSE that is not included in the English Baccalaureate, will continue to be rewarded.

You also raise concerns about the riots in August, and the lack of family guidance many of the rioters had experienced. The disorder and violence we witnessed over the summer was shocking and unacceptable. The overwhelming majority of young people, however, are not involved in criminal, anti-social, or selfish behaviour. Most young people share and exemplify our country's values of hard work, self-discipline, aspiration, respectability and respect for others. The young people involved in the riots are very much in the minority and it is essential that they are held responsible for their actions and dealt with effectively.

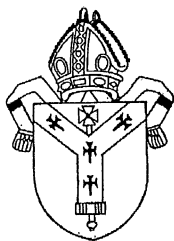
Good behaviour in schools is essential if pupils are to achieve at school and grow up to be responsible members of society. RE is taught like any other subject in the curriculum, in an objective and inclusive way, which recognises and respects the diversity of religious beliefs, which form a part of our contemporary society.

I hope that this letter reassures you that the Government continues to place importance on good behaviour in schools, as well as on the effective teaching of RE.

Yours sincerely

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

Leona Smith
Public Communications Unit



LAMBETH PALACE

The Revd Helen Dawes

*The Archbishop of Canterbury's
Deputy Secretary for Public Affairs*

Our Ref: 97793

26th January 2012

Councillor Doreen Dart
Chair of Swindon SACRE
The Ash
Mill Lane
Stanton Fitzwarren
Swindon

Dear Councillor Dart,

I am writing in response to your letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury regarding religious education and the English Baccalaureate. Unfortunately, due to the very large number of letters Archbishop Rowan receives, it is not possible for him to reply to each one personally, much as he would like to. I have therefore been asked to respond to your letter on his behalf.

Archbishop Rowan shares your concern at the exclusion of RE from the English Baccalaureate, and has spoken of the importance of understanding one another and the way in which good religious education can foster such understanding, on a number of occasions. Please be assured that where he has opportunity, he will press for the inclusion of religious education in the English Baccalaureate.

Thank you for taking the time to write to Archbishop Rowan.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Dawes