

Secretary of State for Education  
Gillian Keegan  
20 Great Smith St,  
London,  
SW1P 3BT

September 15<sup>th</sup> 2023

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to you to raise the critical issue facing the teaching of Religious Education today.

A postcode lottery in the provision of RE currently exists in the UK. Some of our children are receiving a comprehensive, well taught education in RE. They appreciate the place of religious and non-religious worldviews in our culture and have been supported as they develop their own worldview. Religious Education helps children take their place in **society**; supports them in being effective and engaged in the **workplace**, their **community** and in discussing and debating issues related to religion and belief.

Other children, however, receive either tokenistic RE or none at all, leaving school without the knowledge and understanding of their own worldviews, or others necessary for life in modern Britain. They are consequentially ill-prepared to play their part in our complex religious and non-religious society, with all the opportunities created by its diversity.

A core contributor to the current crisis in RE is the lack of government support in comparison to the narrow group of subjects included and prioritised in the English Baccalaureate. This is in stark contrast to the views of parents, with a 2022 Savanta Survey finding that around **seven in ten parents regarded what their child learnt in RE as important**.

When compared to the professional development opportunities made available to colleagues in other subject areas, teachers of RE are often disadvantaged. Between 2016 – 2021, whilst Music received £387 million of Government funding, Maths received £154 million and Science received £56 million, RE received no funding for school projects. In the absence of this, the RE community has had to resort to seeking grants from Charitable Trusts, **an unsustainable model moving forwards**.

The crisis in RE is exacerbated by **missed recruitment targets in 9 of the last 10 years**. The National Foundation for Educational Research estimates that by the end of this recruitment year, RE will recruit fewer than 44% of the target for the year. This has led to **51% of RE lessons in secondary schools being taught by non-specialist teachers**, with pupils now three times more likely to be taught Religious Education by someone with no qualification in the subject. The latest report on the working lives of teachers lists **RE as one of the subjects most affected by the lack of confidence in teachers**.

The lack of funding for RE school projects, combined with a shortage of well trained RE teachers, has resulted in a postcode lottery of RE provision across the UK. In the absence of consistently high quality RE, our children miss out on an essential opportunity to learn knowledge and skills that will equip them to create tolerant and cohesive workplaces and communities, especially in the context of a diversifying and globalised world.

In light of the above, we call on the Government to offer funding for teacher training bursaries for those wishing to pursue a career in RE. Secondly, we would like to enquire about what steps the Government is taking to improve teacher recruitment into RE, including the evaluation of current systems offered to inform potential trainees. Finally, we would ask whether you would be willing to meet with our representatives, to discuss these matters further.

Kind regards,

## ***Members of the House of Commons***

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### **Mohammed Yasin MP**

*Member, Education Select Committee*

### **Andrew Lewer MP**

*Member, Education Select Committee*

### **The Rt. Hon Sir Jeffrey Donaldson MP**

*Leader of the Democratic Unionist Party*

### **Emma Hardy MP**

*Shadow Minister for Environmental Quality and Resilience*

### **Jim Shannon MP**

*Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on International Freedom of Religion or Belief*

### **Wera Hobhouse MP**

*Liberal Democrat Shadow Leader of the House of Commons*

### **Sammy Wilson MP**

*Democratic Unionist Party Chief Whip in the House of Commons*

### **Sir Peter Bottomley MP**

*Father of the House*

### **Tim Farron MP**

*Liberal Democrat Spokesperson (Environment, Food and Rural Affairs)*

### **Ian Paisley MP**

*Shadow DUP Spokesperson (Culture, Media and Sport, Communities and Local Government)*

### **The Rt. Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP**

### **The Rt. Hon Sir Robert Buckland KBE KC MP**

### **The Rt. Hon Sir Edward Leigh FCI Arb MP**

### **Kate Osbourne MP**

### **Nadia Whittome MP**

### **Rachael Maskell MP**

## ***Members of the House of Lords***

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### **The Rt. Hon The Baroness Garden of Frognal**

*Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords and Deputy Chairman of Committees*

### **The Rt. Hon The Lord Navnit Dholakia OBE DL**

*Co-Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords*

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### **The Rt. Hon The Lord Moylan**

### **The Rt. Hon The Baroness Hooper CMG**

### **The Rt. Hon The Lord Naseby PC**

### **The Rt. Hon The Lord Stunell OBE**

### **The Rt. Rev. and Rt. Hon The Lord Harries of Pentregarth**

### **The Rt. Hon The Lord Boateng**

### **The Rt. Hon The Lord Patten of Barnes KG CH**

### **The Reverend and Rt. Hon Lord Griffiths of Burry Port**

### **Viscount Bridgeman**

### **The Rt. Hon The Lord Cormack**

**The Rt. Hon The Lord Alton of Liverpool**

**The Rt. Hon the Lord Knight of Weymouth**

***The Religious Education Community***

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**Dr Kathryn Wright**

Chief Executive, Culham St Gabriel's Trust

**Dr Linda Whitworth**

Chair, Culham St Gabriel's Trust

**Fiona Moss**

Chief Executive, National Association of Teachers of RE

**Katie Feeman**

Chair, National Association of Teachers of RE

**Indy Nottage**

Executive Officer, Religious Education Council of England and Wales

**Malcolm M Deboo**

President, Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

**Andrew Copson**

Chief Executive, Humanist UK and President of Humanist International

**Sarah Lane Cawte**

Chair, Religious Education Council of England and Wales

**Derek Humphrey**

Hockerill Educational Foundation

**Derek McAuley**

Chair, The Hibbert Trust

**Suzannah O'Brien**

Trust Director, The Bishop Radford Trust

**Derek Holloway**

Chair, Association of Church College Trusts

**Professor Graham Handscomb**

Chair, Free Churches Group Education Committee

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**Barbara Easton**

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**Judith Fenn**

CEO, Methodist Independent Schools Trust

**Linda Rudge**

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Advisory Councils on Religious Education

**The Revd Dr Tania ap Siôn**

Chair, The Welsh Association of Standing  
Advisory Councils on Religious Education

**Professor Nicholas Adams**

Professor of Philosophical Theology,  
University of Birmingham

**Tanuja Shukla**

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**Jo Backus**

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**Dr Sheila Gewolb DL**

Chair of Outreach Education. Board of  
Deputies of British Jews and Executive  
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SACREs