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Lord Nash

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools

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Miss G F Waller  
Chair, Rutland SACRE  
Rutland County Council  
Catmose, Oakham  
Rutland, LE15 6HP

20 April 2016

Dear Miss Waller,

Thank you for your letter of 22 March about the government's continued expectation of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) and the teaching of religious education (RE) in schools.

The government firmly believes in the importance of RE. Good quality teaching of RE can develop children's knowledge of the values and traditions of Britain and other countries and foster understanding among different faiths and cultures. That is why RE remains compulsory for all state-funded schools, including academies and free schools, at all key stages.

Academies are required to have a curriculum for RE which meets the same requirements for locally agreed syllabuses, although they may choose whether to adopt a locally agreed syllabus or develop their own. Schools can use resources to develop and enhance their provision, such as the Religious Education Council's National Framework for RE. Many academies and SACREs have worked together to provide excellent RE for the young people in their local area.

I note your concerns about the impact of RE and the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). The EBacc provides the right foundation for the vast majority of pupils. Other qualifications remain valuable in their own right and we will encourage all pupils to study rigorous, non-EBacc subjects and qualifications alongside it so they benefit from a well-rounded education. I am glad that students in Rutland have been performing well in the Religious Studies GCSE. The GCSE continues to be a popular course, with entries rising by 4% in 2015, demonstrating that schools and pupils value the contribution that RE brings to a broad and rounded education.

You ask about the government's expectation of local authorities in respect of Religious Education. The white paper, 'Educational Excellence Everywhere', sets out the government's ambition that by the end of 2020, all schools will be academies, or in the process of becoming academies. By the end of 2022 local authorities will no longer maintain schools. We do not currently have any plans