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Dear Stephen,

I am writing to you on behalf of Derby City SACRE following discussions which took place at our Spring Term SACRE meeting.

Firstly, we wish to thank you for chairing this important group and for recognising the importance of the challenge that faces Religious Education in schools in England and Wales. We wish you and your colleagues every success.

Secondly, we wish to add our voice to the concern which we know has been expressed by so many people in the Religious Education community for some months now about the challenges faced by those who teach and those who wish to learn about this most important curriculum subject. Our concerns are fourfold:

1. The local and national partnership working for RE, started under a Conservative government in 1993, improved RE greatly. The decision by this Government to exclude RE from the English Baccalaureate has severely undermined this relationship and there is clear evidence already that fewer students are opting to take RE as a public examination at Key Stage 4 and that in turn this is having a significant impact on the recruitment and retention of specialist RE teachers in the profession.
2. All schools are being encouraged to become academies. Academies no longer have to teach the locally agreed syllabus of RE but can teach almost whatever RE they want, making the syllabuses and SACREs, the bedrock of RE provision and quality since 1944, redundant and irrelevant. GCSE RE is not allowed to count towards the English Baccalaureate, putting RE in secondary schools and at A Level at serious risk. The government has excluded RE from the new round of curriculum development, and in December 2011, all the QCDA guidance and support material for RE was removed from the Dfe/NC websites. The number of trainee RE teachers has been drastically cut and the majority of university courses for training RE teachers is likely to disappear in the next two years.
3. As more schools become Academies the role of SACREs will be progressively undermined and what limited authority SACREs had to provide for and monitor

the quality of RE teaching will diminish rapidly. At a time when OFSTED are no longer required to observe or make judgments about the contribution of RE to the school curriculum and its contribution to attainment and achievement this is particularly worrying.

4. RE, whilst remaining part of the basic curriculum, is in great danger of becoming insular and fragmented at a time when religion and belief have a very high profile, and which the majority of young people learn about only in schools mostly through their RE. Without some action, RE will decline in provision and quality, going the way of daily Collective Worship, the most widely flouted educational requirement of all.

Derby City SACRE encourages the APPG to work with the Religious Education Council to:

- to actively support the resourcing and provision of high quality Religious Education for pupils of all ages in schools in England and Wales
- carry out a review of RE alongside the NC review which will, among other things, develop a new framework for RE provision consistent with the thinking on the new National Curriculum
- give further thought on how best to position the Council and the RE Community itself to ensure that RE can thrive in the new educational context
- to provide clear guidance to local authorities about the function and role of SACRE in the context of the changing world in which SACREs now find themselves

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Higginbottom', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cllr Lisa Higginbottom (Chair of SACRE)