



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Rt Hon Lord McFall of Alcluith
House of Lords
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Greater London
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Lord Greenhalgh
Minister of State for Building Safety and
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Dear Lord McFall,

Thank you for your letter dated 31st of January 2020 regarding the Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement report *The Ties that Bind: Citizenship and Civic Engagement in the 21st Century*. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your letter.

This Government's vision is for a country confident in its own identity and values, where we trust people and communities to take the decisions that are right for them. Our manifesto sets out the range of ways in which we will place power in the hands of people and communities, to improve the lives of all.

In your letter, you raise four specific aspects of the Select Committee report, published in April 2018. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has engaged with the Department for Education (DfE); the Home Office (HO); Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS); and Cabinet Office, Economic and Domestic Affairs Secretariat (EDS) in responding to these.

1. A Single cross-Government champion

In your letter you make reference to the Safe and Integrated Communities Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG). The IMG has coordinated the work of a number of departments to deliver on the commitments in the Integrated Communities Action Plan, including the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; Home Office; Department for Education; Department for Culture, Media and Sport; Department for Work and Pensions; and Ministry of Justice

Following the General Election of 2019, the Government is considering what governance arrangements will best ensure we deliver the commitments made in the 2019 Conservative manifesto – to build a country that has confidence in its own identity and values, and where the Government trusts people and communities to make the decisions that are right for them.

2. Education in Citizenship

Ofsted's new education inspection framework, which came into effect in September 2019, has a strong emphasis on ensuring schools provide a broad and rich curriculum for all their pupils. That means the full national curriculum, which of course includes citizenship, or in the case of academies, a curriculum similar in breadth and ambition. While inspectors will not report separately on each

individual subject, they will undertake a series of 'deep dives' into a sample of subjects selected from across the school's curriculum in order to understand the quality of education.

You are correct that the new inspection arrangements include a new separate graded judgement on pupils' personal development – strengthening the emphasis on this important aspect. The personal development judgement focuses on the development of pupils' character, their confidence, resilience, independence and knowledge. It includes a range of matters including pupils' ability to recognise and respond to online and offline risks to their wellbeing; pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; and how the school prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. The handbook sets the expectation that schools should be providing pupils with meaningful opportunities to understand how to be responsible, respectful, active citizens who contribute positively to society. So whilst citizenship education is part of the academic curriculum and a subject in its own right, it can also play a significant role in supporting the personal development of pupils and in helping them to become responsible members of society. We do not see these two aspects of the subject as being contradictory in any way. We are also clear that all aspects of a school's curriculum and ethos can contribute to the development of a pupil's character development.

You also raise the availability of funding for teachers of citizenship. We have had to take difficult decisions about where to focus our budgets in relation to initial teacher training bursaries and Subject Knowledge Enhancement. As schools enter more pupils for EBacc subjects (English language and literature, maths, the sciences, geography or history, and a language) we expect there will be more demand for specialist teachers in these subjects. We have therefore focused the bursaries budgets on EBacc subjects to secure as many applicants as possible in the subjects that are in highest demand by schools. However, there is now a Specialist Leader of Education (SLE) specialism for citizenship, which should help improve the capacity and capability of teachers so that they have the skills to improve practice and citizenship teaching in their schools.

Ofsted is a separate government department and as I hope you will appreciate, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the Committee's meeting with Ofsted officials and HM Chief Inspector. The Committee may wish to pursue this matter directly with Ofsted.

I would also draw your attention to the wider ways in which the Government is increasing young people's civic engagement. The National Citizen Service (NCS) is the Government's flagship youth programme open to all 15-17 year olds across England and Northern Ireland. NCS addresses three large-scale social issues: social cohesion, social mobility and civic engagement. It offers an opportunity for young people to engage in their local communities and their broader social action journey outside of formal education.

NCS already positively engages with many schools and colleges who promote their students to take part the programme. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport are currently working with the Department for Education to explore what more can be done to ensure the education system promotes NCS as effectively as possible and continue to foster engaged citizens.

The programme has synergies with Citizenship Education, instilling respect for key concepts such as responsibilities, rights, identities and diversity. It is also structured progressively across four weeks whereby young people immerse themselves in their local communities. They identify, research and campaign for social action issues of their choice. Through doing so, they develop skills in enquiry, advocacy, representation, and taking informed action - all key facets in the Citizenship curriculum.

3. English language teaching

The government recognises that language skills are crucial to help everyone to integrate into life in England, as well as to break down barriers to work and career progression.

This is why in 2018/19, the Department for Education supported 120,500 adult learners to improve their levels of English through the Adult Education Budget (AEB), up from 114,300 in 2017/18.

The Adult Education Budget (AEB) is allocated to providers on an annual basis. Colleges and adult learning providers have the freedom and flexibility to determine how they use their Adult Education Budget allocation to meet the needs of their communities and this includes planning, with local partners, the ESOL courses that they will deliver locally.

As set out in the Integrated Communities Action Plan, the Department for Education have developed a set of teaching resources to learners with limited literacy skills. These resources help the sector to meet the increasing demand for this provision and will support learners with very low levels of English, including women, to progress into higher levels. We have also published new guidance on effective practice in coordinating local ESOL provision, to support greater join-up of different providers and types of provision.

Additionally, in March 2020, the Government launched the ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) for Integration Fund. This will fund up to 25 local authorities to enable individuals with little to no English language skills to fulfil their potential and increase their positive participation in their local area.

This Government is committed to the manifesto commitment to boost English language teaching to empower existing migrants and help promote integration into society.

4. Life in the UK Test

Regular amendments are made to the Life in the UK handbook to ensure the content and related test questions remain factually accurate. The 2019 version of the handbook made a number of amendments to update the handbook and clarify issues identified by the Committee and others.

The Home Office is currently considering the review of the Life in the UK handbook. It has noted the Committee's recommendations and intends to write to you/ Lord Hodgson providing further details of the review as soon as a decision has been taken on the review process.

I hope you find this information helpful.

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

LORD GREENHALGH

