



Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State

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Darren Jones MP
Chair, Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee
House of Commons,
London
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14 June 2021

Dear Darren

Many thanks for your letter dated 29th April and for your interest in the Department for Education's approach to climate education. I find the committee's interest in this matter very reassuring, for tackling climate change is very much a team effort and something we must approach together.

We think it is vital that all people have the opportunity to learn about climate change. Indeed, as UNESCO has said, climate education "enable[s] informed decision-making, play[s] an essential role in increasing adaptation and mitigation capacities of communities, and empower[s] women and men to adopt sustainable lifestyles". For this reason, topics relating to climate change are included throughout both the science and geography curricula and in GCSEs.

All schools in the country are required to follow a broad and balanced curriculum, as exemplified by the National Curriculum which is mandatory in all state maintained schools. The National Curriculum was reviewed to ensure that it sets expectations which meet those in the highest-performing education jurisdictions in the world. The curriculum is knowledge-rich and focuses on the core scientific principles which children need to learn to understand how the world around them works. Furthermore, through the Citizenship programmes of study pupils cover core knowledge to help prepare them to play a full and active part in society and how to explore political and social issues critically through evidence, debate and reasoned argument. Pupils are taught that resources can be allocated in different ways and that these economic choices affect individuals, communities and the sustainability of the environment. We have also introduced a new environmental science A Level in 2017, which will enable pupils to study topics that will support their understanding of climate change and how it will be tackled.

We also feel that engaging young people in climate change is particularly important given the role they will play in tackling this global challenge in the decades to come. The Department for Education's Sustainability and Climate Change Unit are in close contact with the COP26 Organising Committee and

we will be determining ways of engaging and representing young people in the lead up to COP26. The Department recognises the importance of providing high quality training for teachers. That is why we are putting significant investment into our teacher development reforms, including a new Early Career Framework and reformed National Professional Qualifications. The Department also invests in specialist training including Science-specific CPD which is available through the national network of Science Learning Partnerships. We also fund bursaries for science teachers to attend the National STEM Learning Centre under Project Enthuse.

With regard to your question concerning coordinating with the Devolved Administrations, I'd like to remind the committee that education is a devolved matter and invite you to engage with the Northern Ireland Executive, Scottish Government and Welsh Government to ascertain approaches outside of England.

With regard to the CCC recommendation you raised, we feel that awareness of climate change and transition to net-zero are important issues, and that all education settings will want to give it appropriate weight in their teaching. As mentioned above, all schools in the country are required to follow a broad and balanced curriculum, as exemplified by the National Curriculum- within which climate change and the environment are covered. In further and technical education, The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has convened a Green Apprenticeships Advisory Panel to encourage trailblazers to align apprenticeships to net zero and wider sustainability objectives. The group comprises of employers with a strong footprint in the clean energy industry and introduces them to other crucial stakeholders to help identify which apprenticeships currently directly support the green agenda and which apprenticeships may need refocussing. Furthermore, the Department for Education and Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy launched the Green Jobs Taskforce in 2020 to help the UK build back greener and deliver the skilled workforce needed to reach net zero emissions by 2050. The taskforce, working with employers and relevant stakeholders will develop an action plan to support 2 million good quality, green jobs and the skills needed by 2030, and so support the UK to transition to a net zero economy and deliver a green recovery.

The institutional autonomy of universities is protected by law, meaning that what they include in their course content is at their discretion. Universities though, play an important role in supporting evidence-based decision making, informed by valuable Scientific research. The Cabinet Office is working closely with the COP26 Universities Network to make research available to citizens and decision makers globally.

I hope the above reassures the committee that this Government is actively facilitating climate education in classrooms. We do feel that tackling climate change and building a greener world is very much a global effort, and would warmly welcome a dialogue with Teach the Future should they wish to discuss the matter further with The Department.

I am copying this letter to the Education Select Committee.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Williamson', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education