

Dear

Thank you for your reply of.....

We are disappointed in the reply from the minister quoting the recruitment figures for ITT for religious education in the exceptional pandemic year, as in that year most subjects over recruited. As the minister knows, the recruitment target has been missed for 9 out of the last 10 years and will be missed by a long way again this year.

The minister states that bursaries are focused on English Baccalaureate subjects as they command most teaching time, without acknowledging the shortage of qualified teachers in RE, which is a statutory subject. The minister himself said in an answer to a Parliamentary question that 51% of those teaching RE spend most of their time teaching another subject.

The target for RE trainees has been increased to 655 for 2023-24, but the NFER predict that we are unlikely to attract 200 for this year. We would like to ask what his department plans to do differently to hit this new target, especially as bursaries for other subjects will continue to draw people away from RE. It is clear to us that restoring bursaries is one measure that should be taken immediately in an attempt to recruit more teachers. The Education Select Committee, who as you know are holding an enquiry into teacher recruitment and retention, recently heard from Deborah Weston, National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) in oral session who explained the issues and suggested some solutions.

We also note that Gillian Keegan, Secretary of State for Education, received an open letter signed by over 30 parliamentarians from across the house expressing similar concerns to those in our initial letter and adding that

'pupils are 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.'

In the light of the above we continue to ask that the minister ensures the department takes proactive steps by offering funding for teacher training bursaries for those wishing to pursue a career in RE. We would also like to see funding to support those already teaching the subject to build their confidence, which we do not believe is the role of the Oak national academy. We look forward to hearing from you and would be very happy for you to come and meet with SACRE to discuss this further. Alternatively do please meet with representatives from the religious education teaching community who will be at the Conservative Party conference. Email ceo@natre.org.uk to arrange to meet at conference.