

bursary of £1,600 to help with living costs. I know that the Commission highlighted these as areas where we should review our funding, so hope this will be welcome news.

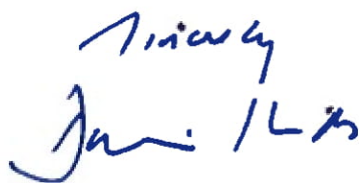
I have considered the Commission's other recommendations carefully, mindful that one of my top priorities, for the duration of this Parliament, is to reduce teacher workload. Indeed, I made a commitment in March to make no further changes to the national curriculum, statutory assessment, GCSEs or A levels, beyond those changes that have already been announced. In considering the Commission's ambitious proposals for a new statutory basis for "RE and worldviews" in the curriculum, I have to balance this against what would be needed to do to implement them; and the consequences for teachers.

I have therefore concluded that now is not the time to begin these reforms. This would commit the government to making radical change which requires primary legislation; requires the development of new programmes of study for "RE and worldviews"; and lead to all state-funded schools having to implement a long-standing subject in our schools in a new way. As your report highlights, there would be a consequent need for extensive training and continuous professional development to equip teachers to teach this revised curriculum well. My priority is to provide stability to schools while the significant and necessary reforms we have already made to curriculum and qualifications are being embedded.

As with full GCSEs for other non-EBacc subjects, RE counts towards both the headline Attainment 8 and Progress 8 measures. I have no plans to review current school accountability measures such as the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). The EBacc does not preclude pupils from taking RE GCSEs, which remain popular.

In relation to the recommendation that my department produce guidance for headteachers on managing the parental right to withdraw their children from RE – I support your reasons for this. In the meantime, I know that the NAHT and NATRE have produced excellent guidance which meets this need and rather than duplicate their efforts, my department will do what it can to promote and to make headteachers aware of this new guidance.

I would like to reiterate my thanks to you and your fellow Commissioners for your well-considered and valuable contribution to the RE debate. I appreciate all of the work that you have put in over the last two years to collate views from a range of stakeholders, consider the wider evidence and present this in a succinct and informed way to the department.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Damian Hinds', with a date 'Jan 14/15' written below it.

Damian Hinds
Secretary of State for Education

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