



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State

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Rt Hon Hugo Swire MP
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Hugo Swire

19/11 April 2013

Thank you for your letter of 21 March, addressed to the Minister of State for Schools, enclosing correspondence from your constituent,

about including animal welfare in the primary science curriculum.

The new primary national curriculum aims to raise expectations for all children. It lays firm foundations in English, mathematics and science in particular, and gives teachers more freedom to use their professional judgement. It will enable schools to define their own broad and balanced curriculum that includes the knowledge and skills outlined in the individual subject programmes of study.

The current national curriculum includes too much prescription, squeezing out room for innovation, creativity, deep understanding and intellectual exploration. The aim of the national curriculum review is to specify only content which reflects essential knowledge in key subjects, and does not absorb the overwhelming majority of teaching time in schools. In science, at primary level, essential content includes teaching pupils about the requirements that must be met for animals to be able to survive. These include an appropriate habitat, and food, water and air. Schools and teachers are best placed to choose the most relevant contexts and applications for teaching this content to their particular pupils.

Schools and teachers will continue to have the flexibility to include content on caring for animals as part of the wider school curriculum where this is appropriate. We fully expect teachers to consider tackling issues of social and environmental importance, including animal welfare. The science curriculum, however, is rightly focused on the scientific aspects of animal welfare, and it would be inappropriate to prescribe the teaching of wider aspects of the topic as part of science.

Further information about the proposed new national curriculum can be found at the following web address: <http://tinyurl.com/cxw6s45>. We also consulted on our proposed changes to the national curriculum. This consultation closed on 16 April and I hope [redacted] was able submit her views on this matter before it closed.

Thank you for writing to me on this important matter, and I hope my reply is helpful

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M. G

MICHAEL GOVE