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**Lord Nash**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools

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Paula Nicholson  
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Durham County Council  
County Hall, Durham  
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3 August 2015

Dear Ms Nicholson,

Thank you for your letter of 21 July, and Mr Welch's earlier letter of 24 March, about the future funding and role of the Durham Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE).

I was glad to receive your feedback and I have noted your concerns about resources. We are aware that many individual SACREs, along with NASACRE, are working hard to make academies aware of the advantages of teaching the agreed syllabus and to encourage them to participate in the family of schools that their local SACRE supports. NASACRE is also identifying and disseminating good practice that can help SACREs develop constructive working relationships with academies in their local areas. We will consider what more we can do to encourage academies who wish to work more closely with their SACRE and also to ensure that academies are aware of their statutory duties to provide Religious Education (RE) for all their pupils.

I am pleased that you support our proposal to commission an analysis of Annual Reports. As you know, local authorities have a statutory responsibility to support their SACREs, which includes providing sufficient financial support. The analysis of the SACRE reports will help us to identify good practice and will also help to ensure that all local authorities are fulfilling their statutory duties, including providing the appropriate level of assistance and resource to their SACRE. If the analysis of the annual reports does identify any significant problems, then we will consider what further action is necessary to address these.

With regard to your specific concern about additional religious education training places, I can confirm that there are providers of school direct RE training in the North East. To check RE course vacancies in your area, you can visit the UCAS Teacher Training website: <http://tinyurl.com/ols65e2>. I would encourage you to work with the schools that currently provide schools-based RE training to accommodate this need. You may also be interested in viewing the published 2015/16 allocations for training places at: <http://tinyurl.com/nozdugu>.

Officials are still allocating RE places to higher education institutions and school-led sectors for the 2015/16 academic year. This means that an Initial Teacher Training provider or lead school can request additional RE places for either the provider-led or School Direct routes through the data management system in order to accommodate additional recruits. Once the request has been forwarded to the National College for Teaching and Leadership, we will assess it against our set criteria.

Thank you for writing to me on these important matters. I hope this response is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN NASH