



Diana Johnson MP

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Dear Andrew

Report on the consultation on Level Descriptions carried out under Section 96 of the Education Act 2002

Thank you for your letter of 30 September, addressed to Ed Balls, enclosing the report of QCDA's consultation on revised level descriptions for National Curriculum subjects. I am replying as the Minister responsible for the National Curriculum.

I note that in all subjects except modern foreign languages (MFL) there was broad support for the proposed changes to the level descriptions, and broad agreement that they maintain standards and provide appropriate progression.

Respondents to the consultation did not support the proposed addition to the MFL level descriptions to include inter-cultural understanding. Respondents were concerned that inter-cultural understanding should not be assessed only in relation to learning a language as it was also likely to be taught through other subjects, such as English, history, geography, citizenship, arts, music and RE.

Given the strength of feeling of the consultation, I accept QCDA's recommendation that, for MFL, we should revert to the 2007 post-consultation agreed version of the levels and attainment targets. However, in doing so, the QCDA should work up guidance and exemplification of teaching and pupil attainment in inter-cultural understanding for both primary and secondary schools.

In light of the broad support for the proposed changes to the level descriptions of all other subjects, I accept the revised level descriptions as submitted with your letter of 30 September.



department for
children, schools and families

It is important that secondary teachers are made aware of the new level descriptions well in advance of having to use them to make accurate judgements from 2011. The QCDA should ensure that the revised level descriptions are disseminated to secondary teachers in the New Year. They should also be disseminated to primary teachers who will continue to use the subject level descriptions for English, mathematics and science.

The consultation raised concerns that the level descriptions for mathematics and science do not sufficiently encourage or support teacher assessment of children's use and application of subject knowledge in these subjects. Children's ability to use and apply mathematical and scientific knowledge to solve problems in real-life contexts is crucial and has been strengthened in the draft programmes of learning for the primary curriculum. The QCDA should work with the mathematics and science communities to provide guidance on how pupils' use and application of subject knowledge can be related to the standards in the level descriptions and attainment targets.

The revised level descriptions will be introduced by Statutory Order. We shall consult on the draft Orders, as required by Section 96 of the Education Act 2002, at a later date.

Yours sincerely


DIANA JOHNSON MP