



RECEIVED 11 MAR 2010

2010/0014202POSoS

Rt Hon Ed Balls MP
Secretary of State

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Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP
House of Commons
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Your Reference: 01100702

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March 2010

Dear Tessa

Thank you for your letter of 19 February, together with an example of correspondence from your constituents, about amendment 70 in the Children, Schools and Families Bill.

I can assure your constituent that faith schools will not be able to opt out of teaching statutory lessons on Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) when the legislation comes into effect in September 2011. This includes education about contraception and the importance of stable relationships, including marriage and civil partnerships. It will also not allow the teaching of homophobia.

All maintained schools and academies will be required to teach the full programme of PSHE education and all head teachers and governors will still have to comply with the three over-arching principles set out in the Bill. These principles include requirements that material presented is accurate and balanced, and that teaching reflects a variety of views, including other faith views, and promotes equality and encourages acceptance of diversity.

The amendment merely confirms that schools can teach the content of the programmes of study in a way that reflects the schools religious character and ethos. It does not diminish the principles already contained in the Bill. Whilst schools with a religious character will, as now, be able to teach their faith's view on issues that arise within the teaching of PSHE, what they will not be able to do is suggest that their views are the only valid ones, and they must make clear that there are a wide range of divergent views.

Yours sincerely

ED BALLS MP



department for
children, schools and families