

Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson
Secretary of State
Department for Education
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

09 July 2024

Dear Secretary of State

I am writing to congratulate you on your appointment as Secretary of State for Education and to highlight some pressing opportunities and concerns relating to biology and wider STEM education on behalf of the Royal Society of Biology (RSB). The RSB is committed to supporting and encouraging the study of biology at primary, secondary and tertiary levels across the UK, together with our individual members, member organisations and the broader scientific community and as part of the Science Education Policy Alliance.

The Society welcomes commitments in the Labour manifesto and reiterated in your speech to Department for Education staff to breaking down barriers, more teachers and better training, and comprehensive review of curriculum and assessment. In all these areas, RSB has worked with our members, committees and partners in other science and education organisations to develop policy positions and a curriculum framework to support our two overarching aims:

- all young people should have an unbroken chain of experts teaching the science disciplines
- All young people should experience curricula and assessments which prepare them to be scientifically literate, able to make scientifically informed choices and ready them for a diverse and evolving world of work

Ahead of the election we prepared a [briefing note for all parliamentary candidates](#) detailing priorities for the first year of a new Government. We urge you to set out a plan and timeline that ensures:

- Reform the National Curriculum, GCSE and A level qualifications, drawing on the expertise of RSB and other science specialist to inform curricula and qualifications
- Set out a co-ordinated STEM education strategy, with investment in all teachers, to tackle the recruitment and retention crisis. In the sciences, this must include an ambition to remove the need for teaching outside areas of expertise, and a long-term commitment to a £20,000 ITT bursary for biology specialists and expansion of the teacher training scholarship scheme to more subjects, including Biology.

The Royal Society of Biology looks forward to working with you, your Ministers and the Department and would be keen to meet to discuss these issues further.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Downs PhD DSc (Hon) CSci CBiol FRSB
Chief Executive