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Baroness Berridge of the Vale of Catmose

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the School System
Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/contactus/dfe



20 August 2021

Dear 

Thank you for your email of 16 August, addressed to the Secretary of State, enclosing correspondence from your constituent, 
, regarding the Education Committee's report on 'Strengthening Home Education'. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

The Education Select Committee monitors the policy, administration and spending of the Department and its associated arms length bodies. As such, the Committee is an investigative Committee rather than legislative.

The Department welcomes the recently published Education Committee report on 'Strengthening Home Education' (published on 26 July) and is currently considering its response to the Committee's recommendations, which we will provide to the Committee in due course.

We support the right of parents to educate their children at home. Most parents will educate their children well, sometimes in challenging circumstances. However, this is not the case for all children and in some cases, children are not provided with a suitable education. We cannot overlook the rising numbers of home-educated, and the view of many local authorities (LAs) that this increase is driven by reasons other than commitment to home education.

In April 2019, we therefore launched a consultation on proposals for an LA register of children not attending a state or registered independent school or a non-maintained special school, and support for home-educating families (should they want it). This closed on 24 June 2019.

The consultation did not feature any proposals for LAs to have explicit monitoring powers. The Government's view is that authorities' existing powers, if used in the way set out in the Government's guidance are enough for an LA to determine whether the provision was suitable.

We do remain committed to a registration system for children not in school. The system will help LAs undertake their existing duties, as well as help safeguard all children who are in scope. Further details on this, as well as on proposals for supporting home-educating families, will be in the Government's response to the children not in school consultation, which we will publish in the coming months.

Thank you for writing on this important matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "ER Berridge". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

ELIZABETH BERRIDGE

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE