



UNA-UK

United Nations Association – UK
3 Whitehall Court, London SW1A 2EL

t. 020 7766 3454, f. 020 7000 1381
saad@una.org.uk
www.una.org.uk

Rt Hon. Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State
Department for Education
Castle View House
East Lane
Runcorn
Cheshire
WA7 2GJ

cc. Rt Hon. Baroness Warsi, Senior Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Lord Hannay of Chiswick, Chair of the UN All-Party Parliamentary Group,
(Rt Hon. Michael Gove MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 2AA)

8 August 2013

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing in my capacity as Chairman of the United Nations Association – UK (UNA-UK) to convey the concerns of our UK-wide membership regarding the proposed programmes of study for Citizenship under the National Curriculum from 2014.

UNA-UK is a charity that promotes good citizenship and education on international issues, in particular the work of the United Nations. As a long-standing supporter of citizenship teaching under the formal curriculum, we were delighted by the decision to retain Citizenship as a foundation subject for Key Stages 3 and 4. When taught well, the subject enables pupils to understand what it means to be an active and responsible member of their local, national and international communities. It also gives them the chance to learn about global problems and solutions from a multidisciplinary perspective, and to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate our increasingly interdependent world.

We are concerned, however, that references to the UN, which are included in the existing programmes of study for KS3 and 4, have been omitted from the revised draft. Learning about the UN is integral to understanding the UK's relations with the rest of the world. It is a key component of the country's international influence and it remains an effective tool for the UK in addressing global challenges and achieving foreign policy goals, as expressed in the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review.

The UK is party to numerous UN treaties and activities that have an impact on the country, from trade agreements to combating terrorism, environmental protection to pandemic preparedness. UN human rights treaties, such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, contribute to the protection and promotion of fundamental freedoms enjoyed by British citizens.

The UN is also an important institution for pupils to understand in the context of the major challenges their generation will face, such as food security, environmental degradation

and migration. These are not challenges that countries can address individually – concerted global action is needed and the UN will continue to be central to these efforts. The existing programmes of study for Citizenship include the role of the UN “in the context of topical events such as conflict situations affecting the international community”. For many pupils, this may be the only opportunity to study and debate current affairs and the role of the international community.

UNA-UK therefore strongly believes that the programmes of study should retain explicit references to the UN. Whilst we feel that pupils at both KS3 and KS4 would benefit from learning about the organisation, we think that a reference to the UN would sit particularly well in the fourth bullet point under KS4: “local, regional and international governance and the United Kingdom’s relations with the rest of Europe, the Commonwealth, **[the United Nations,]** and the wider world.”

Many voluntary organisations have produced teaching resources on issues such as the UN and human rights that are currently being used by schools across the country. Several offer teacher training and have built strong relationships with schools. UNA-UK, for instance, has an outreach programme for 13-18-year-olds called *Generation United Nations*, which supports teaching and learning about the UN under the Citizenship curriculum and through Model UN and other activities. The programme also provides young people with skills building, career development and volunteering opportunities. However, we can only reach a limited number of schools.

We hope that the final version of the revised programme of study will make explicit reference to the UN so that all pupils following the National Curriculum have the opportunity to learn about this important institution. Copies of our submissions to the formal consultation process are included for information.

I have copied this letter to Baroness Warsi, Senior Minister of State with responsibility for the UN, and Lord Hannay of Chiswick, Chair of the UN All-Party Parliamentary Group.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy Greenstock', written in a cursive style.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock
Chairman, UNA-UK