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Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP
Secretary of State

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Hetan Shah
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22 FEB 2018

Dear Hetan R.L.,

Thank you for your kind letter of 15 January, congratulating me on my appointment and sharing your thoughts on numeracy and quantitative skills.

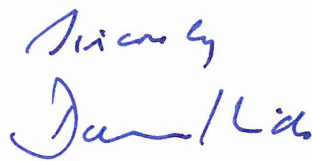
I am delighted and honoured to have been appointed as Secretary of State for Education. Having had a long-standing passion for education and improving social mobility, I am determined to break the link between low income and low achievement. Given the changing world economy, it is vitally important that we provide all young people with the education, skills and training they need.

I agree that mathematics equips young people with the essential knowledge and skills demanded in employment, further study and adult life. In primary schools, we are introducing measures to improve pupils' mathematical skills, such as strengthening our focus of fractions and times tables, and removing calculators from 11-year-olds' mathematics tests. For pupils in secondary schools, we have introduced a greater focus on mathematical problem-solving, alongside introducing a more challenging mathematics GCSE. We are also taking forward work across the range of recommendations set out in Adrian Smith's review of post-16 mathematics.

With regard to your point about teacher recruitment and retention, I agree that high-quality professional development is vitally important for teachers. Decisions relating to teachers' professional development rightly rest with schools, headteachers, and teachers themselves, as they are in the best position to judge their own requirements. However, we are investing approximately £75 million in the new Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund, which will support high-quality professional development for teachers and school leaders in areas of the country that need it most. We hope this will further support teachers with their professional development.

I note your concerns about quantitative skills in higher education and the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF). The Government is committed to ensuring that the TEF develops iteratively. The National Student Survey (NSS) is one metric we use within the TEF, and this gives us a consistent measure of students' opinions. However, we have explicitly said that the NSS is the least important metric and have cautioned assessors not to overweight it. My department has announced that the weighting of NSS metrics will be halved from year three of the TEF, in order to achieve a more balanced assessment. Please be assured that we will continue to work closely with the sector as the framework continues to develop.

Once again, thank you for writing on this important matter.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sincerely Damian Hinds'.

Damian Hinds
Secretary of State for Education