



**The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith
Minister for Skills**

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The Rt Hon. the Lord Baker of Dorking CH
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

Tuesday 3rd June 2025

Dear Lord Baker,

I wanted to write to you further to our exchange during Second Reading of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill last month, following our meeting of 22 April, to reaffirm the commitment I made before the House and set out some further detail.

The government recognises the valuable and distinctive contribution that University Technical Colleges (UTCs) and studio schools make, and that they could struggle to deliver the full National Curriculum alongside their specialist curricula. That is why I was pleased to commit that, unlike other academies, UTCs and studio schools will not be required to teach every part of the National Curriculum, subject to the passage of the Bill, and in line with our manifesto commitment to vocational education.

It is our intention to do this using the power to create exemptions by regulations under section 91 of the Education Act 2002, which power will be extended to cover academies by clause 47 of the Bill. As I mentioned at Second Reading, we will work with UTCs and studio schools – and the Baker Dearing Trust – to agree the details. Following this, these regulations will be subject to two specific consultation periods (which are statutory requirements under section 96 of the 2002 Act) before they can be laid in Parliament under the negative procedure. Once these regulations are in effect, a future government would be subject to the same public consultation requirements should it wish to consider revoking them.

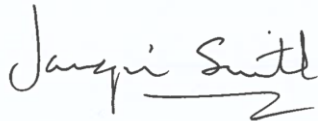
As you will be aware, UTCs and studio schools are already required (through their funding agreements) to offer the core subjects of the curriculum, and I am sure you will agree that that is an important condition we should retain. Also, as the Curriculum and Assessment Review is still ongoing, we do not yet know what the final revised National Curriculum will include, and it may be that there are other parts which we all agree that UTCs and studio schools can and should deliver, consistent with their ambitions.

In particular, we want to wait until we have the revised National Curriculum, so we can discuss it with the Baker Dearing Trust, UTCs and studio schools, to consider the content with them and agree which subjects should be included in the exemption. That is why we do not consider an amendment to the Bill to be appropriate (as it would pre-empt the Review's outcomes and above consultation process) or necessary (as it would duplicate the existing exemption power).

We are committed to giving schools, including academies, plenty of time to prepare to deliver the revised curriculum after it is published, so there will be plenty of time to agree the details of the exemption and for UTCs and studio schools to prepare for any agreed changes.

I hope this further detail and assurance is helpful, but I would be happy to discuss it further if necessary, as would my officials, who have a good relationship with the Baker Dearing Trust. I will place a copy of this letter in the House of Lords library.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Jacqui Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith
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