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Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State

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Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP
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4th December 2012

Thank you for your letter of 31 October, addressed to Vince Cable, enclosing correspondence from your constituent, Mr Martin Chandler of 108 Selwyn Avenue, Highams Park, London, E4 9LS, about design and technology (D&T) in the National Curriculum. Please accept my apologies for the unacceptable delay in sending you a response.

I am grateful to you for passing on Mr Chandler's concerns. I am aware that some teachers are concerned about the status of specific subjects in light of the Government's review of the National Curriculum and the introduction of the English Baccalaureate.

I agree with Mr Chandler that children and young people should understand and appreciate good design. I agree we must nurture creative designers, equipped with the knowledge and skills they need for the UK to be at the very cutting edge, leading the world. Our country has a rich heritage of great design, and a strong tradition of pioneering designers who have shaped our identity and contributed significantly to the prosperity of our country.

The Government is absolutely committed to supporting engineering and providing a solid foundation for more young people to work in this vitally important sector of our economy. Mr Chandler will no doubt be pleased to know that on 2 November, the Chancellor announced Government support for the Royal Academy of Engineering's proposals to update the Engineering Diploma. The Academy is working to redevelop level 2 Principal Learning in Engineering into four new rigorous qualifications that will meet the needs of employers. Mr Chandler can find out more information at: <http://tinyurl.com/ccmq3zw> and <http://tinyurl.com/c89b9sg>.

Turning to the curriculum, our intention is to refocus the National Curriculum on the essential knowledge that all pupils need in order to succeed in education and in life. To succeed in any area, including D&T, young people must have a solid and deep foundation in core academic disciplines. Without good numeracy and literacy skills they will struggle to grasp the basic concepts of design and will be unable to communicate their ideas effectively in academia and the workplace. We do, however, also want to strike a balance between ensuring that this core content is taught, and allowing teachers the flexibility to design a wider school curriculum which best meets the needs of their pupils. Mr Chandler will be pleased to know that I announced on 11 June that all of the subjects that are currently part of the National Curriculum in primary schools should remain so in future. This means that D&T will remain compulsory in maintained schools across the primary years. Decisions on the subjects to be included in the secondary National Curriculum will be announced in due course. If Mr Chandler is interested in the National Curriculum review, he can find out more information at: <http://tinyurl.com/4b3ltxs>.

Thank you for writing on this important matter, and I hope my reply is helpful.

Yours,
Michael Gove

MICHAEL GOVE

