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Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
Minister of State for School Standards

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Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
By email: george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk

21 October 2020

Dear George,

Thank you for your email of 1 July, addressed to the Secretary of State, on behalf of several of your constituents, regarding environmental issues and the National Curriculum. I am replying as the Minister of State for School Standards.

It is vital that young people are taught about environmental issues and for this reason, related topics are included throughout both the science and geography curricula in both primary and secondary school.

In primary science and geography, pupils are given a firm foundation for the further study of climate science in secondary school. During Key Stage 1 (KS1) pupils are taught about the seasons and habitats, including content about daily weather patterns in the UK. The KS2 science curriculum further develops pupils' understanding of the climate and habitats of plants and animals. Pupils also look at how environments can change, including the positive and negative impact of human actions. Geography at KS2 includes teaching on climate zones.

At KS3, pupils will study aspects of the climate and ecosystems in both biology and chemistry. Crucially, pupils will also be taught about the production of carbon dioxide through human activity and the effect that this has on the climate. This is expanded on in chemistry and biology at KS4, where pupils consider the evidence for anthropogenic causes of climate change. They also study the impact of increased levels of carbon dioxide and methane and how this can be mitigated. In biology, they will continue to study ecosystems, including positive and negative human interactions with ecosystems and their impact on biodiversity.

The KS3 geography curriculum includes study of the climate through topics such as change in climate from the ice age to the present. Pupils are taught about the ways in which human and physical processes interact to influence and change landscapes, environments, and the climate.

KS4 geography also covers changing weather and climate. For example, pupils will study the causes, consequences of, and responses to, extreme weather conditions and natural weather hazards. They will gain an understanding of the interactions between people and environments, change in places and processes over space and time.

In 2017, we introduced a new environmental science A level. This will enable pupils to study topics that will further support their understanding of climate change and how it can be tackled.

In addition, citizenship continues to be a compulsory subject in maintained secondary schools. The programmes of study for citizenship education are designed to prepare pupils to be responsible citizens by raising their awareness of ways to work together to improve their communities. Schools may choose to focus on matters such as waste reduction, litter collection, and general civic pride.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Neil', written in a cursive style.