

Deborah Annetts
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10th January 2022

Dear Ms Annetts

Thank you for your letter of 5th January, which was sent to me at my Ofqual address. I appreciate the concerns you raise and hope you will allow me to respond with the points that follow.

The case study was offered to the Department for Education in my capacity as the Chief Executive of a multi-academy trust, not in my other, entirely separate, role as chair of Ofqual. As you rightly point out, Ofqual has no role whatever in advising schools about curriculum or organisational matters. I had hoped that the introduction to the case study made this clear by stating that the case study was the result of our reflection on how to manage potentially high levels of staff absence in our trust and schools. Indeed, Ofqual was not mentioned at all in the case study.

I would like to be clear, again as the CEO of a multi-academy trust and a former secondary headteacher, that I entirely support your views about the importance of music in the curriculum. Throughout my career as a school leader, I have been committed to investing in music and to ensuring high levels of participation in music both within the taught curriculum and beyond. The benefits that musical education and participation bring to children and young people are in my view profound.

I also share your concern about the impact the pandemic has had on music education in schools and beyond, and hope that the full range of musical activities that children and young people benefit so much from, including performance, are able to be re-established as soon as possible.

The piece was written to offer a range of emergency and very much short-term approaches which school and trust leaders might consider as a way to avoid simply running out of staff at a time when sickness or isolation levels might be high. As I said in the case study, there is no single right way to do this, and differing contexts will call for different decisions by headteachers and trust leaders. Music, and RSHE or PSHE, which I also mentioned, were examples only, and certainly not intended to imply any hierarchy whatsoever. My own view as a trust leader is that changing the normal timetable for pupils for a short period, undesirable as it is, would be a decision a headteacher would take only if doing so avoided an even less desirable outcome resulting from simply not having enough staff safely to cover all classes during a period of intense pressure.

Once again, thank you for writing to me, and I hope that these comments address the concerns you raise.

Yours sincerely



I R Bauckham CBE
CEO

