

Dear Ms Bellos

Thank you for your mail of 8 January, addressed to the Secretary of State about history in the curriculum. As I am sure you can appreciate the Secretary of State receives a large amount of correspondence and is unable to reply to each one personally. It is for this reason that I have been asked to reply.

Firstly, I can assure you that the Department is not discouraging schools from teaching Black History Month, and there are no plans to discourage this in the future. In the current history Programme of Study for Key Stage 2, teachers can choose between a study of Victorian Britain or Britain since 1930. For the teaching of Victorian Britain there is a requirement to study the impact of significant individuals, events and changes in work and transport on the lives of men, women and children from different sections of society. Within the non-statutory guidance notes Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale are listed, along with a range of other individuals, as examples for possible inclusion within the study. Schools can therefore choose to teach about Mary Seacole but this is not a statutory requirement within the Programme of Study. There is no doubt that Mary Seacole is an important historical figure but schools are not, and have never been, required to teach about her.

We are currently reviewing the contents of the Programmes of Study for all of the National Curriculum subjects, including history, to ensure that young people are taught the essential knowledge and skills in key subjects, whilst giving teachers greater flexibility to design lessons that inspire, engage and challenge their pupils. In history, that essential knowledge will of course include the teaching of British history, as well as requiring schools to teach about significant individuals who have helped shape that history – however we do not think that it is right or desirable that the Government should attempt to prescribe every significant historical figure that pupils should be taught about.

We will announce proposals for the new National Curriculum shortly, and following that there will be a public consultation in which everyone will have a chance to contribute their views. Details will be available in due course on the Departments [website](#).

As you indicate in your letter, the Equality Act 2010 does set out the equality duties on schools which includes promoting good relations. Specific duties set out how schools must demonstrate compliance with the duties through publication of equality objectives and information but the duties do not prescribe how this should be done and it would be for schools to determine how they will demonstrate compliance.

Once again, thank you for writing with your views.

Your correspondence has been allocated reference number 2013/0001129. If you need to respond to us, please visit: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, and quote your reference number.

As part of our commitment to improving the service we provide to our customers, we are interested in hearing your views and would welcome your comments via our

website at: www.education.gov.uk/pcusurvey.

Yours sincerely

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