



2013/0047473POLT

Elizabeth Truss MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education and Childcare

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2 August 2013

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter, addressed to the Prime Minister, about the advantages of playing Scrabble. The Prime Minister has asked me reply on his behalf.

I was pleased to read how successful you have become at Scrabble. I was also interested to read how schools in other countries are using Scrabble as one element towards helping develop literacy and numeracy skills, and in addition to improving spelling and knowledge of vocabulary.

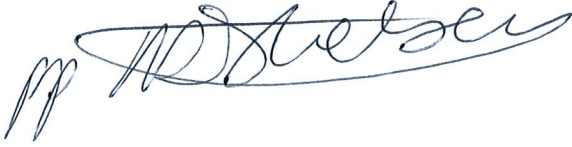
As you may be aware, we have recently published proposals for a new national curriculum, and in preparing those proposals we have looked carefully at what is taught in very successful education jurisdictions, including Massachusetts. I fully agree with you that playing Scrabble, and other word games, has the potential to help young people develop their vocabulary and comprehension skills. We have emphasised the importance of these skills by making them a key part of the new national curriculum. You may like to read the draft content of the new curriculum for English at the following web address: <http://tinyurl.com/n4s7slp>.

I also agree that such games have the potential to help young people develop numeracy skills, their ability to concentrate for long periods and their overall confidence. As you may know, however, it is one of the most important principles of this Government's education policy that teachers should be given more freedom to use their expertise to decide how best to teach their pupils. I regret, therefore, that I cannot agree with your proposal that Scrabble should be included in the new national curriculum, which will set out the essential knowledge and skills that all maintained schools must teach.

I do, however, agree with your suggestion that schools should, wherever possible, consider setting up extra-curricular clubs and societies to give their pupils the chance to play Scrabble and other similar games. If you have not already done so, you may like to discuss this idea with your teacher and local council.

Thank you for writing on this important matter and I wish you the best for your future education.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Truss', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Elizabeth Truss MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education and Childcare