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General Secretary

Brian Lightman

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BL/JJ

Ofqual enforcement powers

I am writing in response to the letter from Nick Gibb MP dated 29 September 2011 and the letter from Lord Hill to Lord Lingfield dated 4 October 2011.

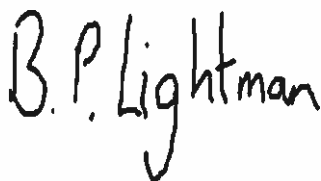
ASCL has serious concerns about this proposal for reasons I will outline below:

The errors in examination question papers this summer were a significant cause for concern for school and College leaders and ASCL therefore welcomed the decision to undertake an inquiry into this matter in order to establish the facts and lessons learnt. We await with interest the report of this inquiry which we note is due by the end of 2011.

It is in this context that we were therefore very surprised to read the proposal to make changes to Ofqual's statutory enforcement powers in advance of this report. We do not yet know the findings and ASCL therefore believes that this proposal is seriously premature.

Should the report lead to a conclusion that Ofqual needs stronger enforcement powers it will be essential to avoid any unintended consequences. The power to fine may seem an 'effective and flexible sanction' but this proposal does not appear to recognise that the costs of external examinations are carried by schools in the form of the examination fees they pay to the non-profit making awarding bodies. The cost of such fines would therefore have to be passed on to schools imposing yet more increases on the already high cost of administering the examination system.

ASCL would strongly urge the government to await the findings of the inquiry before proposing any changes of this kind.



Brian Lightman
General Secretary

