



Department  
for Education

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Date: 23/06/21

**Toby Young**  
**The Free Speech Union**  
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Dear Mr Young,

Thank you for your letter to the Secretary of State, regarding Batley Grammar School.

I apologise for the extended delay in getting a response to you, but we thought it would be best to wait until the independent investigation incident had concluded and Batley Multi-Academy Trust reached a decision.

You will be aware that the Trust has set out a plan to move forward from the events of recent weeks. You can see the executive summary of the independent investigation commissioned by the Trust [here](#).

We would encourage parents, families, the local community and other members of the public to recognise the findings of the independent investigation – that the teachers who used the images in question had no negative intent – and to welcome and support the trust's comprehensive plan to strengthen its oversight of the curriculum.

The findings of the investigation and the Trust's decisions do not impact other schools' discretion to make their own choices about their curriculum and materials used. Schools remain free to include a full range of issues, ideas and materials in their curriculum, including where they are challenging or controversial. This must be balanced against their obligations to ensure political balance and promote respect and tolerance between people of different faiths and beliefs.

With regard to promoting free speech in schools, as you noted in your letter, schools are already required to actively promote the fundamental British values, of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs. Freedom of speech is relevant to, and could be considered, in the context of all these values.

Whilst the requirement to promote these values are included in the Independent Schools Standards and Ofsted's inspection framework, ultimately school leaders and other staff are best placed to make their own decisions about what they teach in this respect, and how.

Importantly, promoting shared values helps pupils to understand the framework in which different views and opinions present and interact in modern Britain - including the importance of freedom of speech.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a horizontal line that curves upwards at the end.

Sachin Shah

Deputy Director, Counter-Extremism and Non-School Education Division