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LONDON SW1A 2AA

- 4 FEB 2009

cc: SJL

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Peter Coghlan

Nick Barnes

29 January 2009

✓ 4/2/09

THE PRIME MINISTER

Dear Lord Rees

Thank you for your letter of 18 December about the future of GCSE Mathematics.

I can assure you that the Government remains committed to the implementation of the Adrian Smith report, and have enclosed a timetable for the development and introduction of the linked pair model of GCSE Mathematics, which I hope you find helpful.

Whilst I agree that earlier roll-out of a second GCSE pathway would in many ways be desirable, I know that my Ministerial colleagues at the Department for Children, Schools and Families have discussed the timetable in detail with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the Office of the Qualification and Examinations Regulator. They are convinced that we need to take this time to pilot the qualifications properly to ensure that they are fit for purpose before making them available to up to 700,000 learners a year. In particular, we need to allow time for centres to prepare to offer the new qualifications to ensure that young people get a good learning experience and the best possible chance of achieving good results, and for a full cohort to go through the pilot and move to level 3 provision so that we can assess the impact of the new qualifications on progression. At the end of the pilot we also need to ensure we have enough available time to revise the criteria and specifications, if necessary, to reflect the lessons learnt, and to give all schools the time to prepare to offer the new qualifications.

I have considered carefully your concerns that the linked pair model might be undermined by the single GCSE, should the pilot of the linked pair prove successful. I want to give you my assurance that once we have sufficient evidence from the pilot, we will want to review the situation with a view to making a decision on which model is the right

GCSE offer for all learners. Assuming that the pilot evidence supports full roll-out of the linked pair, this might mean continuing with the single GCSE plus the linked pair model or moving to a position where only the linked pair model is available.

I am grateful to you for writing to me on this issue. I am confident that with the continued advice and support of the Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education and the mathematics community we can achieve a GCSE mathematics system that is fit for purpose and provide suitable opportunities for all learners to succeed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. B.', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the second name.

Lord Rees of Ludlow OM FRS

Timetable for the development and Introduction of the Linked Pair Model of GCSEs for Mathematics

between now and autumn 2009	Pilot framework for the new GCSEs is finalised, contracts issued to awarding bodies, and pilot specifications developed and accredited
autumn 2009 - September 2010	Pilot centres identified and prepare to start teaching the pilot GCSEs
September 2010	First teaching
August 2012	Results for first cohort of learners
August 2013	Results for second cohort of learners (and information on impact on progression for first cohort)
between August 2013 and September 2014	Criteria for GCSEs amended, consulted on and finalised in light of evaluation evidence, and final specifications developed and accredited
September 2014	Specifications available to all centres to prepare for delivery
September 2015	Full roll-out