Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP

House of Commons

London

SW1A 0AA

Dear Gillian Keegan,

I write to you, as the Secretary of State for Education, to draw your attention to hatching projects, a contentious teaching method used in UK classrooms that offers inadequate educational value and disastrous consequences for animal welfare. Specifically, I appeal to you to address the reference in the primary National Curriculum notes and guidance to ’hatching and rearing chicks’.

Hatching projects are used with the intention of teaching children about the reproductive cycle of animals. A fundamental element of this is the strong attachment birds form with their mother, who is completely absent during a hatching project. Eggs are kept in artificial incubators, hatching in noisy classrooms full of young children but no mother. You can read more about the problems with hatching projects here: [animalaid.org.uk/hatching-projects/](http://animalaid.org.uk/hatching-projects.).

Ultimately, these projects have little value in terms of science education. They merely encourage children to view animals as disposable objects, to be discarded once they have served a purpose. I’m sure you agree that our education system should help foster compassion towards other beings. It is therefore essential that the National Curriculum, which forms the backbone of lesson plans around the UK, reflects these values. Sadly, this is not the case.

The notes and guidance under the life cycles and reproduction topic in the primary National Curriculum programme of study state: *“They might observe changes in an animal over a period of time (for example, by hatching and rearing chicks)”.*

It is unacceptable that such a practice is not only permitted in schools, but actively encouraged. There are so many wonderful educational tools available which teach children how reproductive cycles work in the natural world without simultaneously causing harm and perpetuating negative attitudes towards animals. Many schools place nesting boxes in their grounds with cameras inside, so that students can view in amazement parent birds caring for their young.

A suggested improvement for the wording in the National Curriculum would be: *“They might observe changes in an animal over a period of time (for example, by watching footage from a nest box webcam)”.*

I urge you to make this change to discourage the use of hatching projects and encourage the use of more effective, kinder teaching methods.

Yours Sincerely,

[Your Name]