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[Redacted s.38(1)(b)]
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Document 7- b) DFM reply to STEP Dec 2017

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Thank you for your letter dated 26 November 2017, following my visit to see the STEP programme in action at St. David's RC Primary School in Dalkeith.

It is my belief that high-quality physical education (PE) provides children and young people with the fundamental competences and skills necessary for lifelong participation in sport and physical activity. It is also a key part of our Sports Strategy for Children and Young People. PE can have a positive impact on a pupil's health, educational attainment and life chances, it encourages the development of both movement and thinking skills together and in doing so, contributes to, and reinforces learning across the curriculum. A study by researchers at the universities of Strathclyde and Dundee found links between increased exercise and improved exam success in English, Maths and Science.

With regard to your point about Education Scotland actively discouraging schools from taking part in the STEP programme, the Scottish Government or Education Scotland, do not publicly endorse or reject any commercially-run education programmes. Where there are any questions about the efficacy of specific interventions, Education Scotland's Attainment Advisers and other specialists can provide more in-depth advice and support. Any advice that is offered will be drawn from professional educational expertise.

Education Scotland share different examples of practice at regional events as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. The next round of regional events will take place in February and March 2018. A wide range of workshops will be offered to headteachers and practitioners on different interventions, strategies and resources that schools have used Pupil Equity Funding money to support, and their impact to date. I understand that Education Scotland has offered a workshop slot at one of the events to the STEP programme.



I will also be replying to [Redacted s.38(1)(b)], who wrote to me regarding the STEP programme on 23 November 2017.

JOHN SWINNEY