

PS Minute for case: 2018/0010429

1. To provide you with a recommendation in response to [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] letter to you, dated 13 March 2018, in which he requests that you meet with him. [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] letter includes a STEP data return based on pupils who have completed 1 year of the programme in Columbus, Ohio. The letter also highlights the latest situation in respect of the programme's roll-out across Scottish local authority areas and informs that Carmarthenshire Council in Wales is to pilot the programme following a visit by the council's head of Education Service to schools in Midlothian which use it.
2. As well as asking for a meeting, the letter effectively repeats the request made by the STEP programme at the tail end of 2017 i.e. that you to consider writing to local authorities to introduce [Redacted s.38(1)(b)], and the STEP programme, which would then allow [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] to contact all local authorities directly to explain how the STEP programme works and how it "differs from any other educational resource currently in use".
3. You last wrote to [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] on 22 December 2017 in response to their claims that Education Scotland had been dissuading use of the STEP programme. Your reply stated that neither the Scottish Government or Education Scotland endorse or reject the use of any commercially-run education programme. You issued a similar reply to [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] at the same time, who had written to you about the same issue.
4. Dalmilling Primary School, which participates in the STEP programme, featured at the Pupil Equity Funding event in Kilmarnock on 26 February - as [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] letter acknowledges. The STEP programme has also applied for a seminar slot at the Scottish Learning Festival in 2019, however Education Scotland colleagues have informed me their application was unsuccessful and they will be notified about this outcome in due course.
5. I recommend that you reject [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] offer to meet to further discuss the STEP programme. Our previous letters have clearly stated that the Scottish Government does not endorse or reject any commercially-run education programmes. Also, I do not think it would be appropriate for the Scottish Government to write to local authorities about the STEP programme since we have also clearly said that head teachers are best placed to decide how Pupil Equity Funding money is spent. If the STEP programme wishes to contact local authorities directly that is up to them decide, however our reply will not invite them to do so.