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Document 5 – b) DFM reply to STEP – Dec. 2017

December 2017

Thank you for your letter dated 23 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.

As part of the Scottish Government's measures to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap in Scottish schools, we have committed £750 million over the course of this parliament to help to close this gap. This funding includes £120 million of Pupil Equity Funding in the current financial year.

In respect of the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), the Scottish Government believes that decisions about using specific interventions or programmes are best made by head teachers, based on the needs of the children within their respective schools. The Scottish Government, or Education Scotland therefore do not endorse or reject any commercially-run education programmes. We are aware there are currently a wide range of physical activity and literacy programmes being promoted to schools, and their choices should be based on a sound understanding of the effectiveness and impact of any specific programmes they plan to use.



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 shares 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 head teachers and practitioners on different interventions, strategies and resources that schools have used PEF 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.

In respect of your request for the initiation of a nationwide study into the impact that the STEP programme can have towards the Attainment Challenge, I understand that the Wood Group and the Aberdeen Standard have already agreed to fund a pilot study of the STEP programme in the Aberdeen City area and we will be willing to consider the results of this pilot study once it has been published.

I will also be replying to [Redacted s.38(1)(b)], who wrote to me regarding the STEP programme on 26 November 2017.

**JOHN SWINNEY**