Dear Sir/Madam

Response to the Education and Culture Committee
Inquiry into Attainment of School Pupils with a Sensory Impairment – Call for Views

The attainment of school pupils with a sensory impairment sits comfortably within the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils’ Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002.

- **Access to the learning environment**
  Learners with a sensory impairment require to be able to move safely and as freely as possible within the school environment: highlighting of stairs, acoustic treatments etc. Staff need to be planning for this as part of a transition as any adjustments may take time to implement.

  When new schools are being designed, there should be consultation with specialists in sensory impairment to ensure that building standards are met and that basic requirements around, for example, colour contrast and lighting are implemented.

- **Access to Information**
  Learners with a sensory impairment require to have information presented in the appropriate format, for example, large print, audio, British Sign Language. There have to be systems in place for this and staff have to plan for this so that materials are available at the same time as it is for their classmates.

- **Access to the Curriculum**
  Again, staff need to have a good grasp of learners’ need in order to incorporate the appropriate strategies into everyday learning and teaching. Health & Well Being, as the foundation to Curriculum for Excellence, should be considered from the outset:
awareness raising for all stakeholders including parents/carers, careful planning of peer groups.

All the above require staff to have a good level of awareness of the needs of this group of learners which should be promoted by Education's Sensory Support Service. Sensory Support teachers should have the mandatory qualification in either Deaf Education or Visual Impairment.

Continuous professional development should be available for school communities and partner agencies at different levels: generic and learner specific, depending on what is required.

There needs to be a good level of planning at every level: by the class/subject teacher, by the school and by the education authority. Early Intervention is essential, preferably bringing children as young as two into nursery where the sensory impairment is severe.

Yours faithfully

Maria Walker
Director of Education & Children's Services