

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills submission of 9 December 2023

PE1934/G: Develop an educational resource on gender-based violence for all year groups in High School

Thank you for your letter of 7 July 2022 on behalf of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee regarding Petition PE1934 to develop an educational resource on gender-based violence for all year groups in high school.

Specifically, the Committee requested an update on the work of the Gender Equality Taskforce in Education and Learning to establish what educational resources already exist that cover gender inequality, and an indication of what the taskforce's next steps will be when it completes this work.

The Taskforce has undertaken a range of work, including engaging with the Children's Parliament and Scottish Youth Parliament in order to gain a detailed understanding of the ways in which gender inequality is still sadly impacting upon girls and young women in school settings. The reports from the [Children's Parliament](#) and [Scottish Youth Parliament](#) contain experiences which make for challenging reading. However, the issues highlighted, and suggestions for solutions, are articulated clearly in them and they will help the Taskforce make the most of their opportunity to tackle head on any deep-rooted gender inequality which girls and young women continue to face in education settings.

The Taskforce acknowledges that this work is complex, and long term. Creating a robust plan of action to drive the suggested systemic change outlined in the reports necessitates a joined up and cross sector response, underpinned by an intersectional approach.

Following the publication of the reports, the Taskforce appointed my predecessor, Shirley-Anne Somerville as chair. Since my appointment as Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, I have been considering how the Taskforce should continue with the ambitions in the report, namely that all girls and young women have a gender equal experience of education, and I look forward to outlining that shortly.

While the Taskforce has committed to working with organisations in the education and gender equality sectors to develop professional learning and curriculum resources in the context of education reform, in terms of educational resources which already exist that cover gender inequality, while the Taskforce does not hold a definitive list, in the first instance I would direct you to Education Scotland's [Improving gender balance and equalities 3-18 | Resources](#) .

The Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research (BISSR) report published on 28 November 2023. We commissioned BISSR in order to obtain a clear and robust picture of teachers' and support staff's experiences of relationships and behaviour in publicly funded mainstream schools. While the results of the 2023 report highlight that most children and young people are well behaved in class and around the school, it also tells us that low level disruptive behaviour, disengagement and some forms of serious disruptive behaviours have increased since 2016. This includes an increase of reported sexist abuse towards staff, and new and emerging patterns of behaviour including a rise in misogynistic views expressed by male pupils. I am absolutely clear that our schools should be safe and consistent learning environments for all, and that violent and abusive behaviours towards pupils or staff is unacceptable.

In previous correspondence regarding this petition, I have highlighted that Scottish Government are working in collaboration with the Gender Based Violence in Schools Working Group to develop a framework document to help ensure consistency in messages on sexual harassment and gender based violence for everyone working with children and young people in schools. The Framework includes guidance on responding to GBV experienced by a member of school staff, and will play an important role in responding to the concerns raised within BISSR. Good progress has been made with this work and we anticipate publication of the Framework in the next few weeks. Following publication of the Framework, we have committed to commissioning an independent review to establish positive practice and further areas for improvement, during this parliamentary session.

The Committee will wish to be aware the Scottish Government consulted on revised statutory teaching guidance for relationships, sexual health and parenthood (RSHP) education between 3 August and 23 November 2023. We are currently analysing the responses received. The revised teaching guidance included a specific section with guidance to support learning and teaching on consent and healthy relationships in response to the recommendation of the Personal and Social Education

Review, which recommended current guidance is reviewed to strengthen delivery of consent education that is stage and age appropriate.

I hope the Committee finds the information in this letter helpful, and the Committee is reassured we are taking forward a range of actions to ensure that young people leave school with the tools to help create a safer society for all.

Jenny Gilruth MSP