Gordon Lindhurst, MSP  
Convener  
Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP  

1 June 2017  

Dear Convener  

Gender pay gap enquiry  

Thank you for your letter dated 19 May in which you requested further information to feed into the Committee’s final report on the gender pay gap. The information you require is set out below.  

- The Committee has heard evidence about the role of education in dealing with the gender pay gap, for example, around STEM. Could Education Scotland update the Committee on any steps being taken to encourage a gender spread in subject choice, both in STEM and other subjects, and in choice of the type of post-secondary training or education undertaken, whether in higher education, college or via apprenticeships? What systems are in place to ensure that primary school teachers’ skills in STEM are kept up to date?  

The Institute of Physics Improving Gender Balance project has been designed to help parents, learners and practitioners challenge the culture surrounding gender stereotyping. The project is funded by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and supported by Education Scotland.  

Six school clusters are involved in the programme. Children and young people from ages three to 18 are being encouraged to recognise and challenge gender stereotyping, both in and out of the classroom. They are being supported in exploring the breadth and variety of careers and education routes available with a STEM background. They are also developing their confidence in themselves, in their abilities and in their choices. The project is supported by two education specialists from the Institute of Physics in Scotland. The schools involved are in Fife, West Lothian, Glasgow, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire.  

The project was launched in December 2015 and is being evaluated as part of the SDS Modern Apprenticeship Equalities Action Plan. Findings are being disseminated through Education Scotland, SDS and the Institute of Physics.
e-comms channels and presentations. A programme of local authority support events have included presenting at conferences and twilight sessions in schools. The campaign encourages schools to pledge to take action on gender issues.

Education Scotland has created a package of resources on computing science which can be used in a range of different curriculum areas, focused on subjects with higher uptake of girls during the senior phase. The resources encourage teachers and learners to see how digital and computing science can play a part in a range of sectors, with the aim of encouraging girls into sectors and careers they may not have considered previously.

Since November 2014, Education Scotland has been working with five school clusters to promote coherent and progressive approaches to learning in STEM for children and young people aged 3-18. Early learning centres, schools and clusters participating in the National STEM Project used Education Scotland’s STEM self-evaluation framework to plan joint activities and to improve approaches to skills development, partnership working, professional learning and the embedding of STEM within the curriculum. The clusters within Fife, Glasgow, South and North Ayrshire were also given opportunities to meet regularly to share practice and approaches. Professional learning support from Digital Skills Development Officers and Improving Gender Balance Project Officers, funded by SDS and supported by Education Scotland, was also made available to participating schools. The National STEM Project also provided key STEM partner organisations with the opportunity to trial new approaches to supporting STEM in schools.

- The Committee has heard evidence of the importance of early years, primary and high school in influencing the gender pay gap. Witnesses have spoken about the impact of nursery, schools and teachers on career choices and perceived gender stereotyping. Could Education Scotland tell the Committee what steps are being taken to ensure that teaching staff provide equality of information about and availability of career opportunities to all pupils? Is any training given to assist staff in tackling this?

Education Scotland has worked in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders and Scottish Government to develop a suite of three standards and guidance documents in support of the implementation of DYW, Scotland’s Youth Employment Strategy. These include the Career Education Standard, the Work Placements Standard and the School/Employer Partnerships Guidance.

Kind regards

Kirsty McFaul