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Education and Skills Committee
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The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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20 June 2019

Ms Clare,

Thank you for your letter of 12th June 2019 regarding the timing of further substantive subordinate legislation relating to St Mary's Music School.

It may be helpful if I explain that the Aided Places Scheme was first set out in legislation in 1986, and the Government and its predecessors' approach has been to make a full instrument periodically (in 1986, 1989, 1995, 2001 and 2015), when substantial updating is required and when minor updates were required in the intervening years to bring forward shorter Amendment Regulations. These Amendment Regulations, such as the St Mary's Music School (Aided Places) Amendment Regulations 2019 recently considered by the Committee, have sometimes been made annually and in other cases less frequently when fewer changes were required.

Given that the Aided Places Regulations were last subject to significant revision in 2015 through the St Mary's Music School (Aided Places) Regulations 2015, the Government has no current plans to revisit these. Minor updates will continue to be required at regular intervals and I would anticipate that further Amendment Regulations might next be proposed in 2021.

I should note that the Regulations deal largely with technical issues regarding applications and eligibility for an Aided Place at St Mary's Music School, and complex provisions regarding parental income and the tax and benefits system. In terms of the financial cost of the Aided Places Scheme, the Regulations provide that Scottish Ministers specify the maximum number of aided places that may be supported in any year, and give Scottish Ministers the power to approve the fees and other charges which apply to aided places. These decisions are taken annually, in consultation with the school, and allow Ministers to manage their financial support to St Mary's Music School in line with the budget for this purpose set out in the Scottish Budget. This is scrutinised by Parliament each year as part of the Budget Bill process.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot



I hope this is helpful.

YN

JS

JOHN SWINNEY

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