Further to my letter of 13 November 2017, and following publication of the updated anti-bullying guidance ‘Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-bullying for Scotland’s Children and Young People’, I am writing to provide you with an update on recording and monitoring of bullying incidents in schools.

In the report “It’s not Cool to be Cruel: Prejudice-based bullying and harassment of children and young people in school’ the Equalities and Human Rights Committee highlighted issues around recording and monitoring and this was highlighted in recommendation 28:

We ask the Scottish Government to make it a requirement for every education authority in Scotland to collect and monitor school bullying incidents and to record specifically incidents of prejudice-based bullying. We ask the Scottish Government to ensure consistency by prescribing the type of data recorded. If necessary such a requirement could be placed on a statutory footing. We also believe data collected should be shared with other agencies involved in reducing prejudice-based bullying.

Scottish Government Response:
The Scottish Government agrees with the recommendation to introduce a new requirement for local authorities and schools to record specific information on bullying incidents. It will take forward work with COSLA and ADES to identify how best to do this.

The Scottish Government supports the sharing of data for improvement purposes at the school and local authority level where data sharing agreements are in place and where it helps the development of detailed improvement action.
As you are aware, contained within 'Respect for All' was a commitment to work with local authority representatives, teacher organisations, and key stakeholder bodies to develop a universal approach to reporting and monitoring bullying incidents in schools. In December 2017, I established a Recording and Monitoring Working Group to develop a consistent and uniform approach to recording and monitoring that all schools and local authorities could adopt using the Bullying and Equalities module within SEEMiS, the schools’ information management system.

The Working Group was chaired by Ian Rivers, Professor and Head of the School of Education, University of Strathclyde and was made up of a wide range of expert stakeholders including Education Scotland, Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), respectme, National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFS), School Leaders Scotland (SLS), Scottish Parent Teacher Council (SPTC), Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS), Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER), Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), Scottish Council of the Deans of Education, Youthlink Scotland, Time for Inclusive Education (TIE), Stonewall Scotland, LGBT Youth Scotland, Police Scotland and the Children and Young People’s Commissioner Scotland.

The Working Group considered what changes were required to be made to the Bullying and Equalities module and worked closely with SEEMiS colleagues to update the module. The group was also tasked with submitting recommendations and producing supportive guidance for local authorities and schools on recording and monitoring bullying incidents. I can confirm that I have accepted the recommendations produced by the Working Group, all of the associated documents can be found at: http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/HLivi/behaviour/rambis

As you will see from the recommendations, an Operational Support Group will be established to support the phased approach and support and monitor schools and LA's throughout the pilot and full implementation around the new process. The group will be chaired by Caroline Amos from ADES.

I hope this information is useful to member of the Committee. I will provide another update on the new approach by August 2019 once the roll out of the approach has been completed.

I am very grateful to your Committee for the valuable contribution it has made to this discussion. Please convey my

Thanks to your colleagues, I am,

JOHN SWINNEY