

# Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills submission of 24 April 2023

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

Thank you for your letter of 21 March 2023 which sought further information in relation to the above petition.

As the Committee is aware, the Bullying and Equalities Module on SEEMiS, which is the schools management information system, was updated to reflect national guidance on a uniform approach to recording and monitoring these issues. The improvements made to SEEMiS for recording and monitoring incidents of bullying also allow schools to record any instances of sexual harassment that a pupil reports. The guidance published at the time also outlines the responsibilities of local authorities and head teachers to monitor incidents at a local level.

Education Scotland undertook a thematic review on approaches to recording and monitoring incidents of bullying in schools, the findings of which were published in February 2023. The report is published at [Approaches to recording and monitoring incidents of bullying in schools \(education.gov.scot\)](https://www.education.gov.scot/publications/Approaches-to-recording-and-monitoring-incidents-of-bullying-in-schools/).

The Scottish Government has taken the findings of the review very seriously and have put a range of actions in place immediately to respond. The report shows that staff across schools are committed to promoting positive relationships within an inclusive environment and seek to prevent and address bullying, and that schools which have systematic approaches to monitoring report a reduction in incidents of bullying and are using the data they collect to drive improvement.

These are extremely positive findings and we should build on them. However, we absolutely acknowledge that there is room for improvement and we have taken immediate action to ensure schools and school staff have the right support in place to prevent and respond to bullying.

We have therefore begun our planned review of our national anti-bullying guidance, Respect for All, in partnership with respectme, Scotland's national anti-bullying service. Through the review we will utilise the experiences and expertise of a wide range of stakeholders to understand what updates are required to the guidance to better support schools to respond to the concerns and recommendations identified in the report, and to ensure learners and parents have confidence in how bullying is dealt with. We have also begun to engage with SEEMiS, the schools information management system, to consider whether improvements can be made to the system to address the concerns raised in the report.

More widely, we are seeking the advice of the Teachers Panel and our Advisory Group on Relationships and Behaviour in Schools about the findings and next steps required to further improve our approach to recording and monitoring bullying incidents in schools.

We are also in the process of gathering evidence that will help us better understand the extent of bullying and other behaviour at a national level. Our longitudinal Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research (BISSR) is underway with fieldwork beginning in schools this month.

HM Inspectors will undertake a second phase of the thematic inspection which will look at good practice in how schools are responding to bullying. Education Scotland will publish this report later this year. The findings will inform our future work.

Our earlier response also set out the work that we are undertaking through the Gender Based Violence in Schools Working Group to develop a national framework for schools to help tackle sexual harassment and gender-based violence. I am advised that the group has progressed well with this work, and it is expected that the framework will be published later this year.

In addition to the work being taken forward by the Gender Based Violence in Schools Working Group, the Gender Equality Taskforce in Education and Learning will be taking forward an exercise to establish what educational resources already exist which cover gender inequality, of which gender-based violence is of course both a cause and a consequence. The Taskforce is aware that there are already a number of resources on the subject, including those developed by Equally Safe in School and Education Scotland's Improving Gender Balance and

Equalities Team, and that it is essential to be clear what those are before commitments to create new ones are made.

I hope that this information is helpful to the Committee in its further consideration of this matter.

**Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, Jenny Gilruth MSP**