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Douglas Ross MSP  
Convener, Education, Children and Young People  
Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
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18 March 2026

Dear Convener,

I am writing to inform the Committee that three new pieces of guidance have been published today as part of the Relationships and Behaviour in Schools Action Plan 2024-27.

- [Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: Improving attendance in Scotland's schools](#). This updates guidance last published in 2019. The focus for the update has been to clarify approaches to supporting attendance and engagement. The guidance also responds to several emerging issues including new guidance on part-time timetables, updates to existing guidance on persistent absence and strengthened guidance in response to emerging concerns about children being in school but not in class.
- [Whole school approach to racism and racism incidents](#). This guidance incorporates the previously-published [Addressing Racism and Racist Incidents](#) interim guidance, published in June 2025, which focused on addressing racist behaviour between children and young people in schools. The Whole School Approach now incorporates this previous guidance, and additionally provides guidance on creating a whole school anti-racist environment and ethos; racist incidents experienced by school staff; and racist incidents experienced by parents, carers, and families in a school setting.
- [Responding to substance use \(including vapes and other nicotine products\) in schools](#). This guidance provides a principles-based approach on preventing and responding to substance use in schools, emphasising a whole-school, trauma-informed approach that prioritises wellbeing and safety. It recognises the importance of partnership as part of a shared, preventative approach to supporting healthy choices and long-term wellbeing. It is a response to the [2023 Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research](#) (BISSR) identified vaping and substance use as emerging areas of concern for school staff.

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I am pleased to confirm that the [second annual progress report](#) on the Relationships and Behaviour in Schools Action Plan 2024-27 was also published today. The progress report details all activity that has been taken to support the Relationships and Behaviour in Schools Action Plan 2024-27 in the second year of the plan, between April 2025 and March 2026.

The Programme for Government 2025-26 committed to publishing annually on progress against the action plan. The final progress report will be published in 2027.

To support implementation of the new guidance, over the coming months Education Scotland will deliver professional learning sessions on the guidance. New information has also been published on Parent Club for parents on [how to support their child if they experience racism at school](#) and [what to do if your child is struggling with their behaviour at school](#).

I hope the Committee finds this update helpful.

**JENNY GILRUTH MSP**  
**Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills**

Cc Presiding Officer

Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans  
Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business Manager  
Scottish Green Party Business Manager  
Scottish Labour Party Business Manager  
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