



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Equalities and Human Rights Committee

**Christina McKelvie MSP
Convener**

John Swinney MSP
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Via email only

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Dear John,

Bullying and harassment of children and young people in schools

This morning the Equalities and Human Rights Committee took evidence from a variety of key stakeholders about bullying and harassment in schools on grounds of protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010 (such as sexual orientation, disability, gender etc.).

The Official Report of the meeting is not yet available, however, the Committee agreed I write to you at the earliest opportunity to highlight some of our views on this topic. I have asked the clerks to provide a copy of the Official Report to your staff as soon as it is available.

At the session this morning, some witnesses expressed concerns about the lack and consistency of information and data available across Scotland about the extent of the problem of bullying and harassment in schools. This is especially the case in relation to instances motivated by race and disability, and a concern was expressed that there may be major underreporting of such incidences of bullying and harassment towards students.

We also heard concerns about the provision of teacher training, and prioritisation of ongoing professional development of teachers, to help reinforce teachers' confidence in dealing with these issues of prejudiced-based bullying and harassment in the school system.

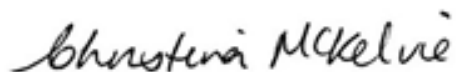
We understand the Scottish Government's National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People is currently being refreshed and will be published shortly.

Many of the witnesses highlighted the fact that bullying and harassment can have a very significant impact of lifelong mental health and educational attainment. This is an issue the Committee feels needs some further consideration.

Therefore, in order to explore these issues in more detail, we would ask you to consider putting the publication of the National Approach on hold, to allow the Committee to input into this process in a meaningful way.

I would appreciate a prompt response to this request.

Yours sincerely,



Christina McKelvie MSP
Convener
Equalities and Human Rights Committee

Cc: Angela Constance MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities.

James Dornan MSP, Convener, the Education and Skills Committee