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Our ref: Relationships and Behaviour Summits

26 September 2023

Dear Pam, Liam and Willie,

Thank you for your letter of 20 September 2023.

As you will be aware, in my response to Willie's question last week in Parliament I committed to exploring with my officials how we might be able to engage MSPs more directly in the work. Following the final summit, I would be happy to attend a session of the Education, Children and Young People Committee to provide evidence on the themes arising from these summits.

The Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research report will also have published by the end of November, and information can be provided on the results of this. I have also asked my officials to make a note from each summit publicly available on the Scottish Government website so that information on the themes emerging can be accessed by all those with an interest in the summit.

While I welcome your interest in the summit events, I consider that where concerns have been raised about relationships and behaviour in schools, our stakeholders need to feel able to speak freely and openly, knowing that their comments will be treated in confidence. I acknowledge your intention only to listen to contributions, but my concern would be that the perception of politicisation (perceived or otherwise) of these events could inevitably impact on the open and constructive approach with which stakeholders have so far approached the discussions.

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I am sure you agree with me that ensuring an open dialogue among practitioners is of the utmost importance, and anything which risks that spirit of openness should be avoided. Of course, having said that, there is nothing to prevent the Committee from taking evidence in private on this subject. I recall this was used in previous Education Committee meetings when I previously served on the Committee to that end, noting that those who work in our Education system may feel uneasy discussing sensitive issues such as behaviour in a public forum and in front of politicians.

I hope this response shows my continued commitment to work across party lines to address the concerns that are being raised, but in a way that builds trust and cooperation of those participating in the summits in order to achieve the maximum benefit from this engagement.

Best wishes,

JENNY GILRUTH MSP

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