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Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
Minister of State for School Standards

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Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne
By email: willmottk@parliament.uk

6 August 2020

Dear Emma,

Thank you for your letters of 2, 12 and 26 June, addressed to the Secretary of State, regarding relationships, sex and health education (RSHE). I am replying as the Minister of State for School Standards.

We want to support all young people to be happy, healthy and safe, and to make a positive contribution to society. From September 2020, relationships education will be made compulsory in all primary schools, relationships and sex education compulsory in all secondary schools, and health education compulsory for all state funded primary and secondary schools.

We recognise that matters regarding gender identity are complex and sensitive. Schools are best placed to decide how these subjects should be taught to their pupils and the RSHE statutory guidance provides clear advice on choosing resources. The guidance states that schools should assess each resource they intend to use, to ensure that it is appropriate for the age and maturity of pupils, and sensitive to their needs. We expect schools to consult with parents when designing and delivering the new subjects and to make reasonable decisions about the content of their curriculum. Schools should also be aware of their duties regarding impartiality and balanced treatment of political issues in the classroom, to ensure content is handled in an appropriate way.

While it is not clear which materials you are referring to as being circulated countrywide, the resources mentioned in your letter of 12 June will have been developed by a third party and not recommended or endorsed by the Department. We are committed to supporting schools in their preparations and will be publishing guidance on how to implement the RSHE curriculum, alongside teacher training materials to help all teachers increase their confidence and quality of teaching. The RSHE school support package will be published on GOV.UK and will also feature advice for schools about selecting appropriate classroom resources.

With regard to the Government Equalities Office's (GEO's) anti-homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying programme, in 2016 the GEO launched a £3 million programme focusing on primary and secondary schools in England that had few or no effective anti-bullying measures in place. At that time, the PSHE Association was selected to assess the work of six organisations funded to carry out the programme. This programme ended at the start of 2019.

I understand that you and a number of MPs, including Andrew Rosindell, had requested a meeting to discuss issues around RSHE with the Secretary of State. I regret that neither he nor I can commit to a meeting at this time. However, I hope that the information in this reply has helped to address some of your concerns.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Neil', written in a cursive style.