

Stewart Maxwell, MSP
Convener, Education and Culture Committee
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP



By email only

5 March 2015

Dear Stewart,

Thank you for your letter dated 25 February 2015 requesting further information on the Scottish Government's new £100m Attainment Scotland Fund and what it is designed to achieve. The Scottish Attainment Challenge was launched by the First Minister to drive forward improvements in educational outcomes in Scotland's most disadvantaged communities to help narrow the attainment gap. The Challenge will be supported by the Attainment Scotland Fund.

I can confirm that the £100 million Attainment Scotland Fund is in addition to the current funding and support for the range of activities that are already underway to raise attainment and close the equity gap across Scotland.

The first tranche of £20 million will be targeted at the seven local authorities with the highest concentration of primary age children from households in deprived areas – these have been identified as Glasgow, Dundee, Inverclyde, West Dunbartonshire, North Ayrshire, Clackmannanshire and North Lanarkshire. We will continue to work with other authorities to identify additional areas for inclusion in future years and fully recognise that there are pockets of deprivation in all areas of Scotland.

We intend to work closely with these local authorities to develop a clear, bespoke improvement plan for their particular context. In addition to significant financial support, authorities can expect the dedicated support of educational and improvement experts with easy access to evidence and research. As part of this work we will identify the necessary resource investment required and work out allocation on the basis of need.

It is intended that the funding will be focused on primary aged children because we know that if we can close the attainment gap when children are young, the benefits will continue into secondary school and beyond.

Authorities will be expected to have robust approaches to data gathering and improvement. A plan for measurement of impact will be developed and agreed with each participating authority, depending on the nature of the intervention and the support agreed. Given the need for flexibility for local authorities to develop solutions and interventions which suit their own context it will be important for each measurement plan to be bespoke.

I am confident that everything will be in place to ensure the success of the Scottish Attainment Challenge and will be monitoring progress closely. My officials have already started working with the authorities to take this work forward and I will be in a position to update you more fully in due course.

ANGELA CONSTANCE