



26 February 2012

Duncan McNeil MSP  
Convenor of Health and Sport Committee  
Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

Dear Sir

In my capacity as Education Director for the Catholic Bishops of Scotland, I write with reference to the recent submission of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board to the Scottish Parliament's Inquiry into Teenage Pregnancy. I wish to express the gravest concerns about statements contained therein with regard to learning and teaching in Catholic schools.

I ask you to note the contents of my recent letter to Mr Robert Calderwood, Chief Executive of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board. In this letter I dispute the misleading claims and question the evidence base for them. I also question whether the authors sought comment or confirmation from the six education authorities in their area.

I would be grateful if you could, in your capacity as Convenor of the Health and Sport Committee in the Scottish Parliament, draw the attention of your committee to my concerns.

Yours sincerely

Michael McGrath  
Director

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26 February 2012

Mr Robert Calderwood, Chief Executive  
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board  
J B Russell House  
Gartnavel Royal Hospital Campus  
1055 Great Western Road  
GLASGOW G12 0XH

Dear Sir

In my capacity as Education Director for the Catholic Bishops of Scotland, I write with reference to the recent submission of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board to the Scottish Parliament's Inquiry into Teenage Pregnancy. I wish to express the gravest concerns about statements contained therein with regard to Catholic schools in your area.

Your submission claims that Catholic schools may not be providing "the same high quality level of SHRE to children, young people and parents" as non-denominational schools. Further, it claims that "the outcomes and experiences for children and young people in Curriculum for Excellence under the Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood organiser may not be being fully implemented" in Catholic schools.

These statements imply that young people in Catholic schools may be at risk due to some deficiencies in the programmes of learning, the training of teachers and the involvement of parents in Catholic schools. These are very serious accusations for which I assume you have significant evidence.

Your submission fails to make clear that the provision of Relationships and Sex Education in all schools is governed by Education Circular 2/2001. This states unequivocally that the Head Teacher of a school is responsible for the content and delivery of such programmes. It also recognises that, in Catholic schools, Church authorities have a right to provide guidance on the content of such programmes, ensuring that they are appropriate to the ethos and values of the Catholic school.

I would be grateful if you can clarify a number of points in relation to your submission:

1. Which of the six education authorities in your area did you consult on your submission?
2. Which of these authorities agreed with your claims regarding Catholic schools?
3. Did you seek confirmation from Education Scotland that your claims about the weak implementation in Catholic schools of some Health & Wellbeing outcomes and experiences are consistent with the evidence published by HM school inspectors?
4. Can you provide any evidence on which your claims are based?
5. If you are unable to obtain access to Catholic schools, as your submission claims, how were you able to state in the report of your 2010 Health & Wellbeing survey of 30 Glasgow secondary schools that 83% of S1-S4 pupils had received relationships education?

/over

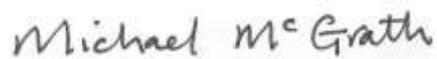
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I am aware that your submission to the Scottish Parliament has caused considerable consternation among parents, teachers and headteachers in Catholic schools. I believe that it is incumbent on you to apologise for this upset and to investigate the circumstances which have led to a public body making unfounded claims to the Scottish Parliament.

I would encourage your colleagues to contact my office if they wish to check their facts about Catholic schools and how they operate. I would also ask them to be more respectful of our school values and ethos.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael McGrath". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Michael McGrath  
Director

cc

Andrew Robertson OBE, Chairperson, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board

Duncan McNeil MSP, Convenor of Health and Sport Committee, Scottish Parliament

Alex Neil MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Well-being

Michael Russell MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education

General Secretariat, Bishops' Conference of Scotland

Catholic Primary Head Teacher Association

Catholic Secondary Head Teacher Association

Catholic Education Commission

**Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board**

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**Mr Michael McGrath**  
**Director**  
**Scottish Catholic Education Service**  
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Date: 28<sup>th</sup> March 2013  
Our Ref: CR/GD

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Dear Mr McGrath

Thank you for your letter of 26<sup>th</sup> February 2013 to Robert Calderwood about our submission to the Scottish Parliament Inquiry into Teenage Pregnancy. I am sorry you are concerned about the statements in that submission but they accurately reflect our experience. I do not believe the statements are disrespectful and I am happy to amplify the basis for the views which we expressed.

NHS Boards are required to work in partnership with local authorities to ensure that every child in Scotland has access to sexual health and relationships education (SHRE) throughout their schools life.

In our Board, the direct communication with local authorities occurs through the sexual health strategy groups in each area and detailed work is taken forward by the health improvement team for sexual health with support from the CH(C)P health improvement teams and also by school nurses in some areas.

In all six local authority areas, very considerable progress has been made in working both strategically and at school level to improve the:

- taught curriculum delivered by teachers;
- confidence and skills of teachers to deliver SHRE;
- policy guidance for staff in delivering SHRE;
- communication between schools and parents and carers;
- information provided to children and young people on sexual health and relationships.

However, in all six local authority areas this work has only covered the non denominational school sector. In all areas there have been expressed tensions about the national guidance in relation to the best practise in teaching and information about SHRE and the approach in denominational schools. There are also issues about equalities legislation and how this can appear to be at odds with the guidance which Roman Catholic schools are provided by the Scottish Catholic Education Service on behalf of the Bishops of Scotland.

Despite our best efforts development work has consistently excluded the denominational schools sector. One of the outcomes of this is that it is not known what SHRE is delivered in denominational schools. We have consistently raised these concerns with local authority partners and with the Scottish Government, our submission simply confirmed concerns already expressed.

In addition to these issues around SHRE material and teaching we have two further sources of concern:

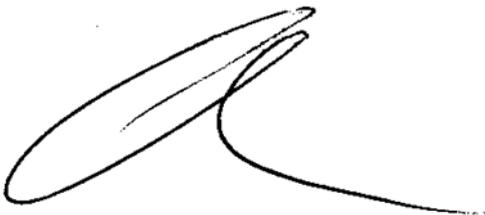
- we have surveyed our health improvement and school nursing staff to get an assessment of their relative experience of working in denominational and non denominational schools. This has highlighted in a range of significant ways that differential practise is required within denominational schools which, in our view, degrades the services we can offer to young people in those schools;
- we have been unable to agree the provision of basic information about our sexual health services within denominational schools, again this disadvantages young people in those schools in terms of access to the NHS services they might need.

Finally, in terms of your specific questions:

1. We did not consult over our submission but its content fully reflects our discussions in local sexual health planning groups.
2. The details of our experience, outlined in this letter, are simple matters of fact, I am not aware that they would be disputed.
3. We were confident of the basis of our submission and remain so.
4. I have set out the evidence for our submission in this letter.
5. Our submission related to sexual health education not to the Health and Wellbeing Survey.

I hope this information provides you with clarity on the basis of our submission. We have made well founded statements to the Scottish Parliament which may be challenging to the Scottish Catholic Education Service but are none the less accurate. This position should be of concern and we are happy to engage with your service and with denominational schools through our local authority partners to address these issues and try to ensure that progress is made on the quality and breadth of teaching material, information and access to services in denominational schools.

Yours sincerely



**CATRIONA RENFREW**  
**Director of Corporate Planning and Policy**

cc: Andrew Robertson OBE, Chair, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board  
Duncan McNeil MSP, Convenor of Health and Sport Committee, Scottish Parliament  
Alex Neil MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing  
Michael Russell MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education  
General Secretariat, Bishops' Conference of Scotland  
Catholic Primary Head Teacher Association  
Catholic Secondary Head Teacher Association  
Catholic Education Commission