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SCHOOL BUILDING PROGRAMME: ANNOUNCEMENT OF FIRST PHASE OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS

With the announcement of the first phase of 14 secondary schools on 28 September 2009, the focus is now on announcing the first phase of named primary schools, under this new programme, as soon as possible. The principal driver behind this whole programme, as signalled in the Cabinet Secretary's statement to Parliament on 17 June, is to lift as many pupils as possible out of being educated in poor accommodation.

A copy of a statement issued by Scottish Government and agreed by COSLA on the announcement on the 28th is attached in the annex. It makes mention that COSLA and Scottish Government are embarking on a joint process to identify the primary schools by applying the same criteria used for the first secondaries (see below). As you will appreciate, a process such as this requires accurate local information on the school estate.

The Scottish Government already holds considerable information on the national condition of the primary estate; however, this is not detailed enough to allow us to make an informed decision on improvements needed in each local authority. This letter therefore invites you to indicate the level of need in your authority, and where appropriate to identify two primary schools that are in poor condition or are very unsuitable, for consideration as part of our process. We would ask that you clearly specify which school would be your top priority for attention.

To allow us to accelerate the process and make an announcement before December, we would appreciate this information by 23 October. We will then pool this detailed information with the more general data already held by Scottish Government, and apply the criteria detailed below to arrive at the final decision. Consideration will begin immediately after the 23rd, possibly with the assistance of an independent 'expert' to assist with the processes of reaching a decision.

The school building programme has been discussed at length in the media with varying degrees of accuracy. We think it is therefore also worth reminding you of some of the parameters of the programme. The offer of Government funding is for 50% of the cost of construction of a primary school – whether new build or refurbishment, whatever you feel is most appropriate in the particular circumstances. Government funding for the first primary schools will be phased over the financial years 2010-11 to 2013-14. As has been indicated to those who have received offers of funding for a secondary school, given the principal driver indicated above, the offer extends broadly to upgrading on a like for like basis in terms of range of facilities and school capacity.

The criteria that will be taken into account in the process of identifying the first primary schools are listed below. We have described against each criteria what factors will be taken into account, and the additional information from councils that we would find helpful:

Distribution of needs, nationally - insofar as condition is concerned, the latest indications are set out in the new *School Estate Statistics 2009* published on 29 September 2009.

Information about schools' condition - please give the 'history' of the school's condition ratings as submitted in the Core Fact returns 2004, 2007, 2008 and 2009 eg "BCCC". This can be augmented/explained in the 'pen picture' which we are also asking for. For an example of this please see the annex.

Information about schools' "unsuitability" - some of the worst secondary schools were selected on grounds of known, extreme unsuitability to deliver a modern education. If your plans for primary investment, and your 2 priority primaries have been selected because they are unsuitable (rather than simply on the ground of condition) please set out the reasons – configuration, inflexibility, lack of capacity etc – and give the condition ratings and a suitability rating, if it has been assessed.

Additionality - the point here is to support acceleration of investment programmes by identification of the top priority school(s) for which funding has yet to be secured or put in place as part of school investment plans.

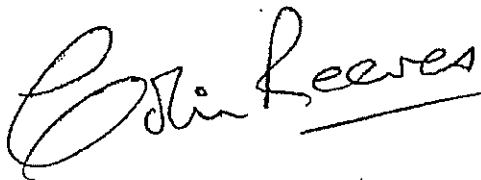
Authorities' own priorities - this is why we have asked in this letter for an indication of your priority primary school for investment.

Aspects of readiness to proceed - bearing in mind that decisions will be made and announced by the end of the year and the Government funding is phased over the 4 financial years indicated above, please provide detail of practical issues, possible timings of planning, procurement, construction phases etc if known at this stage.

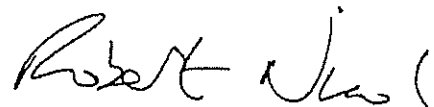
Also attached is an example of the 'pen picture' developed by Scottish Government for the first 14 secondary schools, and which describes why this particular school was selected. Something similar for the primary school(s) which you submit would also be helpful

If you would like further clarification of, or to discuss anything in this letter, please contact either of us. Submissions should be made to Bill Scott-Watson, Area 2-D South, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ or schoolestates@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely



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