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Colleagues,

I am determined to ensure that the benchmark guidance currently being developed by Education Scotland is of genuine assistance to teachers in their individual professional practice and helps to improve consistency throughout the curriculum. The guidance must be clear, concise and definitive. It should not add to teachers' workload, nor should it restrict professional judgement or lead to a "tick-box" approach to teaching.

As the benchmarks provide guidance on assessing learner progress through five levels, from early learning to S3, they are also required to be comprehensive.

Attached are a sample of the benchmarks. I would welcome your views on whether the correct balance has been achieved in the draft Benchmarks.

I would be particularly keen to hear your views on how best to organise and present the guidance in order to ensure they meet the specific requirements of different teachers – for example, it would be possible to present the Benchmarks by level, which may be more appropriate for primary teachers, or by curriculum areas, which may be of more use to secondary teachers. I would also be grateful for your thoughts on whether providing the benchmarks in an electronic format which teachers could customise for their own use would be useful.

It is crucial that we achieve the right balance between clarity and thoroughness on one hand and avoiding clutter and bureaucracy on the other. I view the input of members of the Teachers Panel as being crucial in coming to this judgment. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN SWINNEY

