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**Nick Gibb MP**

Minister of State for Schools

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Ms Dee Doocey AM  
London Assembly Economy, Culture  
and Sport Committee  
City Hall  
The Queen's Walk  
London SE1 2AA

16 April 2012

Dear Ms Doocey,

Thank you for your letter of 12 March, addressed to the Secretary of State, regarding disabled Londoners' participation in sport and physical activity, and enclosing the Assembly's latest report. I am replying as the Minister of State for Schools.

The Government is concerned that some disabled children are still excluded from physical education (PE) lessons. Schools have a statutory duty to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all their pupils. This includes pupils with disabilities. PE is a compulsory part of the National Curriculum for all pupils aged 5-16, and the programme of study for PE can be adapted for pupils with special needs. When adapting the curriculum, schools should ensure that they set suitable challenges for pupils, respond to pupils' diverse needs, and overcome potential barriers to participation.

I believe that there is more that schools can do within PE for pupils with disabilities. Not all pupils with disabilities will necessarily have special educational needs. Many pupils with disabilities learn alongside their peers with little need for additional resources beyond the aids which they use as part of their daily life, such as a wheelchair, a hearing aid or equipment to aid vision. However, teachers must take action in their planning to ensure that these pupils are able to participate as fully and effectively as possible. Potential areas of difficulty should be identified and addressed as early as possible.

The Department is working closely with the Departments for Culture, Media and Sport and for Health to deliver the School Games across the country. As I am sure you are aware, this is a new, four level school sport competition, using the inspiration of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games to help transform competitive sport in schools and encourage more young people into playing sport. Open to all schools, there are four levels of competition: 1) intra-school; 2)



inter-school; 3) county or city wide festivals of sport; and 4) a National Finals event which will showcase the best of the country's young sporting talent.

We want disability sport to feature at every level of the School Games, and the Department is funding Sport England to help achieve this. Its work focuses on three areas: resourcing national governing bodies of sport to develop clear competitive pathways for young disabled people; resourcing county sports partnerships to support the development of county squads for young disabled people; and resourcing a network of selected schools to develop and deliver school centred continuous professional development for teachers to support inclusion of young disabled people in competitive sport.

Turning to how initial teacher training (ITT) can be modified to help boost sports participation among disabled children, the Standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) set out what trainee teachers must know, and be able to do, in order to be recommended for the award of QTS. While training providers will design and deliver their training of ITT to ensure that trainees are given every opportunity to meet all the Standards, the specific content of these programmes is at their discretion.

New Teachers' Standards will be introduced in September 2012, setting out the minimum requirements for teachers in terms of professional practice and conduct from the point of qualification. Specifically, the new Standards require that, amongst other things, teachers must set goals that stretch and challenge pupils of all backgrounds, abilities and dispositions; know when and how to differentiate appropriately, using approaches which enable pupils to be taught effectively; have a secure knowledge of how a range of factors can inhibit pupils' ability to progress, and how best to overcome these; and demonstrate an awareness of the physical, social and intellectual development of children, and know how to adapt their teaching to support pupils' education at different stages of development. They must also have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, those of high ability, those with English as an additional language, and those with disabilities, and be able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them.

The new Standards will be used in the new appraisal arrangements to monitor teacher performance and to steer professional development. They should also help to ensure that all pupils, including those with disabilities, have access to the best possible teaching to help them to fulfil their potential. In the context of PE, this should ensure that trainees and teachers are developing the necessary skills to know how to take into account individual needs to ensure that disabled pupils are not being unfairly excluded from participating in PE lessons.

Responsibility for teachers' continuing professional development has been devolved to school leaders and teachers because we believe that they are best placed to determine teachers' development needs, based on local needs and priorities identified in regular appraisals.

In addition, in June 2011 we launched a competitive national scholarship fund providing up to £3,500 for individual teachers to pursue masters-level

qualifications or attend expert seminars or courses in the priority subjects of English, mathematics and science, or to extend their knowledge relating to special educational needs, including specific impairments and disabilities.

I hope that the measures we are taking will lead to the improvements in participation for disabled pupils that the Assembly's report calls for.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Nick Gibb'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'N'.

**NICK GIBB MP**