

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Jenny Gilruth MSP

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Convener
Education, Children and Young People Committee
Scottish Parliament

By email: ecyp.committee@parliament.scot

19 December 2023

Dear Sue

I am writing to follow up a letter from my predecessor, Shirley Anne Somerville MSP, of 6 February 2023 regarding the regulations that govern the process for placing requests for school admissions, and placing request and exclusion appeal hearings.

Ms Somerville's letter explained that the use of remote means for such appeal hearings, - video and telephone conferencing, or wholly in writing where all parties agree - has remained a feature of the current system since their introduction as a temporary measure during the pandemic. The letter also let the Committee know the Scottish Government planned to consult on whether the use of remote means in appeal hearings should become a permanent feature of the schools admission system.

Our original intention had been to consult during this calendar year. We now plan to hold a short consultation exercise to understand the views of stakeholders, parents, children and young people to commence early next year. The consultation will focus on whether the use of remote means should remain and whether any changes should be made to the circumstances where they are used, specifically, whether the agreement of both parties to their use should be required (currently this only applies to the use of wholly written means for appeals).

If, following the consultation, changes to the relevant regulations are required, these will be taken forward in time for the 2025 school admissions round. The current regulations will remain in place for the upcoming 2024 schools admissions round.

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www.gov.scot

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I will keep you informed of the publication of a consultation and would welcome the Committee's comments on this matter.

Yours sincerely

JENNY GILRUTH

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