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Secretary of State

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5/12 December 2012

Des Cheryl

Thank you for your letter of 20 November, on behalf of your constituent Mr Tom Perry, about safeguarding and protecting children in the education system.

I absolutely agree that intervening early to prevent the abuse of children is one of the most important jobs of a civilised society, and one this Government takes very seriously. My officials are aware of the work Mr Perry is doing to raise awareness of the importance of safeguarding.

The statutory guidance, *Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Teachers and Other Staff* is issued under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 for maintained schools, and under section 157 for independent schools. Statutory guidance means that schools and further education colleges are under a legal duty to have regard to this guidance and should follow it unless they have compelling reasons to act differently.

The guidance makes clear that as part of the initial considerations, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) should be informed of all allegations that come to a school or further education college's attention and appear to meet the criteria so they can consult police and children's social care services as appropriate. Whilst I can understand the concern of those who would like to see this requirement put beyond doubt by introducing mandatory referral of any allegation, I believe we must be careful not to swamp LADOs with every incident reported. Schools should be trusted to use their own professional judgement in order to decide whether allegations brought to their attention meet the criteria for referral to the LADO.

The criteria for referring cases to the LADO are set out in paragraph 4 of the guidance. This guidance was re-issued on 1 October, and at this stage my

Department has no plans to make any further changes. Mr Perry can view the updated guidance at: <http://tinyurl.com/coppgrz>.

Thank you for passing on Mr Perry's concerns on this very important matter.

*and for bringg this to my attention in
the lobby last night,*

Yours,

Mich

MICHAEL GOVE