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*M* March 2011

*Dr Grant*

Thank you very much for your letter of 21 January, about school sport partnerships, enclosing a statement from Mr David Bartlett, Chairman of the Welwyn Hatfield Sport and Physical Activity Alliance. Please accept my apologies for the delay in sending you a response.

There has been a huge amount of misunderstanding about the Coalition Government's approach to supporting sport in schools, so I am grateful for this opportunity to make our position clear.

The Coalition Government is totally committed to high quality physical education and PE will be a compulsory subject at every key stage in our new National Curriculum. We are also providing £65 million funding starting from the summer term 2011 for 2 years, to ensure that the good work of school sports partnerships can be properly embedded for everyone's benefit. The existing partnerships were specifically encouraged by the last Government, to concentrate primarily just on increasing participation. I want to ensure that we aim even higher. I want all children not just to participate in physical education, but to benefit from involvement in competitive team sports.

One of my concerns about the situation we inherited is the low level of participation in team sport. This is emphatically not the fault of teachers, coaches or others in the field, but is a direct consequence of measures insisted upon by the previous Government. We are now working with the Youth Sports Trust, Sport England and others to reform schools sports and address the lack of competitive sport in schools. We want to encourage not just high level competitions between schools but competitive structures which

allow every child to benefit from team games. There are already many schools where the majority of pupils take part in competitive team sports and we are determined to ensure that more schools provide this opportunity.

We are also taking a range of other steps to encourage sport in schools. We are launching a new Schools' Olympics competition with the aim of involving every school in the country. We are reforming health and safety rules so that it is easier for schools to organise the sort of sporting events that, in the recent past, have been prevented from happening. We have also radically reformed the Vetting and Barring Scheme, making it much easier for coaches and volunteers to support youth sport.

Of course, in meeting these ambitions we have to secure the best possible value for money. That means being determined to cut back bureaucracy, free schools from red tape and bear down on costs. This is important and unavoidable because of the difficult economic situation which we inherited. The last Government left us the biggest deficit in history and we had the worst economic position in the G20. Servicing the debt requires us to pay £120m in interest charges every day, equivalent to the cost of building 40 new primary schools.

I hope that you will recognise that we are determined to extend opportunities for children in sport and physical education, just as we are determined to extend opportunities in every other area of education.

Yours,  
Michael

**MICHAEL GOVE**