

Date: 19 June 2020

Your Ref:

Our ref: 200619/Williamson G/PR/FC

NASUWT

The Teachers' Union

Hillscourt Education Centre
Rose Hill
Rednal
Birmingham
B45 8RS

General Secretary
Dr Patrick Roach

Telephone: 0121 453 6150 Facsimile: 0121 457 6208

E-mail: nasuwt@mail.nasuwt.org.uk Website: www.nasuwt.org.uk

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP
Secretary of State
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Dear Gavin,

I regret that it was not possible for us to meet as scheduled this week to discuss the next steps in planning for the return of schools in September. As you will know, the NASUWT is committed to work with your Department to secure the safe return to schools of all children and young people.

Whilst your announcement today of additional financial support to enable schools to support children and young people whose education has been disrupted due to the Coronavirus emergency is welcome, we would also urge you to consider further ways to address the immediate and longer term challenge to transform education, level up opportunity for disadvantaged children in the longer term and provide greater school-level resilience in the face of a second wave of Covid-19 and in the event of any similar crises in the future.

As you know, the NASUWT is committed to ensuring high quality education for all. We recognise that child poverty is a major barrier to achievement and a concerted national effort will be needed to end child poverty. We welcome the focus on disadvantaged children in your additional financial support package for schools. At the same time, we look to the Government to develop further plans to support areas of social and economic disadvantage, ensuring that children from the poorest households benefit from improved access to facilities within and beyond the school, including opportunities to continue their learning, personal and social development through access to play, recreation and youth and community provision.

We believe that all publicly funded schools have a role to play in helping to meet the needs of children in their local areas. To that end, we would ask you to consider the benefits of introducing a new statutory duty to cooperate to enable local authorities to ensure the appropriate coordination of local area provision in the interests of every child and so that no child is left behind.

It is becoming clear that the Coronavirus emergency is creating risks to community cohesion and the promotion of equality. A legal duty to cooperate would help to address these concerns. However, we would also ask you to consider how the distinctive and powerful contribution that schools can make in tackling these risks

can be further encouraged and supported as part of the Government's Covid-19 response.

In supporting children and young people to re-engage successfully back into formal education, we look forward to discussing with you action to address the following:

- the entitlement of every child to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum offer in schools;
- the provision of personal, social and health education and mental health support to enable the transition back into formal learning for children who have been affected during this crisis;
- ensuring that schools remain covid-safe for all staff and pupils now and beyond September 2020;
- promoting a COVID-resilient pedagogy based upon proven approaches to blended learning;
- freeing teachers to teach and removing excessive workload burdens, bureaucracy and other tasks that distract teachers from their core role of teaching and leading and managing teaching and learning;
- the provision of extra facilities including the ongoing provision of free school meals, breakfast clubs, and support for children at the end of the school day, recognising the significant contribution this can make to improving outcomes for disadvantaged children;
- improving education outcomes for the most disadvantaged by enabling children to receive individual attention and support, for example by reducing class sizes;
- delivering a national technology offer to assist teachers to provide enhanced support for children's learning and inviting technology companies and suppliers to invest in technology and support for children's learning;
- extending work-based learning and apprenticeship opportunities for 16-19 year olds;
- enhancing guidance and support for young people who are transferring to work, training/apprenticeships and into higher education;
- introducing additional measures to address teacher shortages and guarantee the provision of sufficient numbers of qualified teachers, including supply teachers, to meet future needs and challenges;
- investing in teacher preparation and development to equip teachers with skills and resilience to continue to support children's learning during this period; and
- enabling school leaders to lead the collaborative and collegiate working practices that will be needed in the face of the impact of the virus on provision within individual settings.

We would also welcome the opportunity to discuss with you how the system as a whole can learn from the COVID-19 crisis in order to better withstand future shocks, crises and emergencies that could impact on children's right to education.

The NASUWT looks forward to the opportunity to work with your Department on the effective implementation of additional tutoring support and other interventions as a result of the package of financial measures you have announced. We believe that it is essential that this additional funding is used to enable schools appropriately to address the needs of pupils and not diverted for other purposes. We would note, too, that whilst you are looking to schools to prepare for and deliver new programmes of support, it is also essential that additional interventions to support children and young people are delivered in an appropriate and sustainable manner by schools, complementing and not diverting from the important work that continues to be undertaken by teachers.

I look forward to the opportunity to share our ideas and to discuss these and other matters with you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Roach', written in a cursive style.

Dr Patrick Roach
General Secretary