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Our Ref: 210419/Weir P/PR/FC

Mr Peter Weir MLA  
Minister of Education  
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**By Email:** [Private.Office@education-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Private.Office@education-ni.gov.uk)

Dear Peter,

### **Supporting Teachers**

On behalf of members of the NASUWT, I write to thank you for taking the time to meet with me on the 25 February to discuss the reopening of schools. The NASUWT appreciate the efforts made by you and your officials to engage with the NASUWT on a regular basis through the Covid-19 subgroup throughout the pandemic but especially now as schools begin to return to a new normal.

The past 12 months have been difficult for everyone in Education, but teachers have continued to demonstrate their commitment and dedication to children and young people. When schools closed, teachers kept going - designing, delivering, innovating, and continuing to secure children's education in the most difficult and challenging of circumstances.

The NASUWT believe that the reviews arising out of TNC 2020/01 The Agreement provide an opportunity for addressing the working condition of teachers; however, they cannot deliver real change if the work of teachers is not at the centre of the Executive's decision making in relation to Education.

Support for teachers is critically important if we are to secure an education recovery that works for all children. However, teachers' commitment and resilience have been tested to the limit over the last year. The profession and our pupils have already been through a great deal, and many teachers are running on empty, with serious impacts for their mental health and wellbeing. 81% of teachers report they have experienced an increase in workplace stress over the past year and almost half said the job has affected their physical health.

One-third of teachers have had to seek medical help to deal with the detrimental impacts on their health and wellbeing as a result of the pandemic and adverse

employer practices. In this context, there should be no presumption that the profession can simply be expected to soldier on.

Alongside the Executive's plans for easing lockdown restrictions, we want to see the road map, not just for the next few months, but also a road map for exiting the pandemic and securing the longer term recovery.

The NASUWT, therefore, believes that the Executive including the Department of Education should come forward with a plan for a teacher-led education recovery and renewal that will commit to:

- i. Recruiting more teachers and support staff and other children's service professionals to meet the education, pastoral and care needs of children and young people.
- ii. Retaining and recognising teachers who have dedicated their lives to the job supported by pay and conditions of service that reward teachers as highly skilled professionals.
- iii. Ending excessive workload and letting teachers teach.
- iv. Reducing class size.
- v. Ending the long working hours of teachers and removing other factors which continue to drain teaching quality.
- vi. Every teacher to have time for professional development as a contractual entitlement throughout their careers.
- vii. Providing a substantial pay award for teachers to end the real terms decline in teachers' pay over the last decade whilst providing appropriate support and financial and other assistance, including compensation, to those teachers whose health has been adversely impacted as a result of the pandemic.
- viii. Robustly enforcing the employment, health and safety and equalities rights of teachers and hold school employers properly to account.

I am sure that we will both agree that we should aspire for Northern Ireland to be the best country for children to grow up in and that teachers are central to that goal. We trust that you will agree that any impediments to securing this ambition must be addressed.

The NASUWT asks you to work with us to bring forward a plan for education renewal, creating the best conditions that will enable teachers to secure children's learning and development by creating the conditions that let teachers teach.

I look forward to the opportunity discuss further with you our proposals for education recovery and renewal that will enable teacher quality once again to flourish.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Patrick Roach  
**General Secretary**