

Date: 30th March 2020

Our Ref: 200330/WILLIAMSON G/CK/DLTF

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP
Secretary of State
Department for Education
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General Secretary (Acting)
Chris Keates (Ms)

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Dear Gavin

During last week as the country seeks to come to terms with this unprecedented situation, you and other ministers have rightly observed that teachers and headteachers across the country, despite their personal concerns and anxieties, have magnificently risen to the challenge of seeking to care for the children of other key workers and those children in our schools who are the most vulnerable.

During this time, the NASUWT has seen the best of employers of the school workforce, where there has been a recognition of the need for team working, mutual support, pragmatism, consideration and flexibility.

However, regrettably, we have also seen the worst practices by some employers. The purpose of this correspondence is to highlight these unacceptable practices to you and to ask that the DfE address these as a matter of urgency.

During the last week, the NASUWT has dealt with employers who are:

- continuing with staff restructuring and redundancies, despite the fact that they will not be able fully to meet all the provisions relating to consultation;
- continuing with TUPE transfers;
- proceeding with disciplinary and other management procedures, even though they cannot appropriately make provision for a fair hearing;
- ending fixed term contracts of teachers without paying the teacher to the end of the contract;
- requiring staff to come into schools where there are no pupils and requiring them to stay on the premises for a specified amount of time;
- requiring the majority of staff to come in when there is only a handful of pupils, in one case 6 pupils and 25 staff;

- threatening to deduct pay from teachers who are self-isolating or, in the case of NQTs, advising them that the days they take for self-isolation will be added to the time they will need to complete their induction;
- ending long term contracts of supply teachers, without paying them to the end of the contract;
- withdrawing job offers from teachers who have already resigned from their current post and were due to start the new job after Easter;
- determining that teachers with vulnerable health conditions, as defined by Government, only have a 'mild' condition and therefore should be in work;
- encouraging the early ending of maternity leave and then cancelling the contracts of teachers who have been employed to provide the maternity cover.

A number of independent schools are pressing ahead with withdrawal from the Teachers' Pension Scheme. Some are also putting their staff on furlough without pay.

The NASUWT has been inundated with calls on all of these issues.

In some cases I am pleased to say, our representations have resolved the situation. However, there are too many other cases where employers are callously proceeding, making adverse life changing decisions for teachers at a time of national crisis when teachers are at their most vulnerable, when their prospects of securing alternative employment are negligible and when access to their legal rights and remedies is restricted. This is nothing but naked opportunism from employers who are either incapable of grasping, or are choosing to ignore, the reality of the situation the country is facing.

The NASUWT can provide the names of these employers to the DfE.

The NASUWT requests that you take action to address these issues by requiring employers to cease these practices.

We look forward to your urgent and positive response.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely



Chris Keates (Ms)
General Secretary (Acting)

