

Date: 10 February 2021

Our Ref: 210210/Weir P/PR/FC

Telephone: 028 90 784480

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

General Secretary: Dr Patrick Roach

Peter Weir MLA
Minister of Education
DENI
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
Bangor
BT19 7PR

By email: Private.Office@education-ni.gov.uk

Dear Peter,

School and college reopening during the pandemic

Over the last 11 months, NASUWT members have worked tirelessly to provide education and support to children and young people during the Coronavirus pandemic. Nevertheless, we are acutely aware and concerned about the continuing impact of school closures and disruption to provision that has been caused as a result of efforts to control and minimise virus transmission in schools and in the wider community.

The NASUWT is committed to ensuring the safe reopening of schools and colleges at the earliest opportunity when it is safe to do so. We know that the best place for children and young people to be educated is in school/college. This is vital not only for educational progress but also for children's health and wellbeing. We are also aware of the impact of workload pressures on the education workforce and the vital need to move to a position in which teachers, headteachers, together with the wider workforce, parents and the public can be confident that further disruption to children's education is minimised and where the further widespread closure of education provision can be avoided. We trust that you will agree that the safety of the workforce and pupils must continue to remain paramount.

We are grateful for the opportunity to meet with you and your officials to discuss our priorities for the safe reopening of schools and colleges. Whilst we welcome a number of commitments you have made to date, we also believe that securing the wider reopening of all provision will require a clear and shared understanding of what is expected, rigorous and consistent application of measures to ensure safe return to face to face teaching and learning, and a credible plan that garners the confidence of the workforce, parents and the general public. We believe that this can only be achieved where there is continued effort to work constructively with the NASUWT

and other education workforce representatives and employers to ensure that the requisite conditions and assurances are established to effect the safe and sustainable reopening of schools and colleges as national restrictions are lifted.

The NASUWT has set out 5 key measures which we believe are essential to secure confidence for the wider reopening of schools and colleges and which we urge you to act upon. We invite you to work with us prior to wider reopening of provision in order to:

1. Demonstrate that decisions on the reopening of provision are clearly led by the scientific evidence and advice.
2. Ensure effective and consistent action is taken in all schools and colleges against the spread of the virus.
3. Ensure the same protections for teachers and support staff as for workers in other occupations.
4. Ensure effective controls are in place to minimise the spread and impact of Covid-19 and any new variants.
5. Ensure that appropriate and effective risk assessments and controls are in place.

Further detail on each of these proposals is attached.

I look forward to discussing our proposals with you in the interests of children and young people and the workforce who continue to support their education, wellbeing and progress.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Patrick Roach
General Secretary