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Your reference: 210218/Swinney J/PR/TF

22 February 2021

Dear Dr Roach,

Thank you for your letter of 18 February about support for supply teachers.

Firstly, I would like to assure you that I value and support all teachers. Our education system is reliant on the hard work and dedication of teachers, and I recognise the effort and resilience they have shown during these challenging months.

I am firmly of the view that we will need all possible teaching resources at our disposal to compensate for any loss of learning suffered since the start of the pandemic, as well as to bring much needed resilience to the education system at this challenging time.

Since the start of the current school year, the Scottish Government has provided £80 million of additional investment in education staff, sufficient for the recruitment of around 1,400 additional teachers and 200 support staff this year. All local authorities have received their share of this funding and have recruited additional staff. Current figures indicate that over 1,400 additional teachers and over 200 support staff have now been recruited.

In addition, a further package of £45 million of new funding was announced in January to support the delivery of remote learning. This funding is sufficient to employ an additional 2,000 teachers during this financial year, and a further £25 million has been made available to local authorities to support this to the end of the school year. To ensure that local authorities and schools can recruit the staff they need most to support our children and young people depending on local circumstances, the new funding can be used flexibly by local authorities to recruit teachers, classroom assistants, administrative staff, home/school link workers or other support workers who are vital to education recovery.

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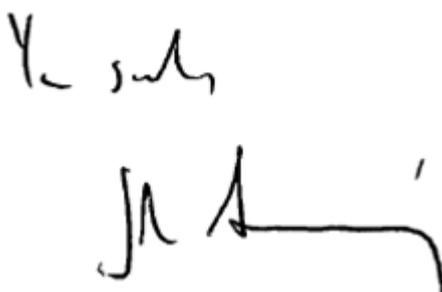
This money is additional to the £160 million that we have already committed for education recovery since the start of the pandemic. A further £100 million for 21/22 was announced on 16 February to support education recovery.

My officials have been discussing this issue with COSLA. COSLA has advised that the majority of local authorities are offering supply teachers employment and that some local authorities have in fact exhausted their supply lists. We also need to recognise that the need for supply teachers will differ from one local authority to another, depending on the size and needs of the local authority. That said I can assure you that I am pressing local government on this issue.

You have raised issues around re-introducing the SNCT Job Retention Pay scheme. This issue is currently under discussion within the SNCT however we believe the situation is very different to the lockdown in March 2020, when all schools were closed apart from education hubs for vulnerable children and children of key workers.

All schools are currently open for vulnerable children and those of key workers, remote learning also needs to be supported, and the fact that we have welcomed some pupils back into school from 22 February, I would therefore expect supply teachers to be in high demand. Given the significant additional funding we have made available to local authorities for additional teachers, we would expect employment opportunities to be made available for supply teachers and I have made that point clearly to local government.

I hope this reply is helpful.



JOHN SWINNEY