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Our Ref: 201120/Swinney J/PR/FC

General Secretary: Dr Patrick Roach

John Swinney MSP  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills  
Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
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By email: [DFMCSE@gov.scot](mailto:DFMCSE@gov.scot)

Dear John,

With reference to the *Summary of the Evidence on Children, Schools, Early Learning and Childcare Settings and Transmission from Covid-19* report published on 18 November 2020, the NASUWT has reviewed this document, and has concerns regarding the evidence that is being used to validate the Scottish Government's position.

The document asserts that there is no evidence of any difference in positivity rates between staff working in education, including teachers, and other key workers or other professions, and references SAGE analysis of ONS data, which is regrettably not referenced.

As the ONS data source has not been referenced, the NASUWT assumes this to be the *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey, UK: 6 November 2020* report which includes an *Analysis of the number of school workers, key workers and other professions in England who had COVID-19*, as this is the report the Department for Education in England has used to make similarly misleading claims.

Notwithstanding that this report applies to England rather than Scotland, we note that the ONS source does not state the sample size involved which is concerning in itself. Furthermore, the high degree of uncertainty in the figures is clear from the size of the error bars, with the percentage error in several greater than 100%. For example the proportion of secondary school teachers testing positive lies between 0.15% and 0.78%, compared to the prevalence rate in other professions of 0.39% to 0.49%.

To say there is no evidence is therefore misleading at best, as the evidence is clearly inconclusive and within the confidence limits it is possible for the prevalence rate in

teachers to be double that of other professions. The data on which the report relies is also a month old, running up to 16 October, and includes the period at the start of the school year where any school-based transmission is unlikely to show due to the incubation period of the virus.

The document also includes some international comparison, notably Norway, to highlight similar conclusions reached elsewhere. There is, however, no mention of the system of controls in Norway compared to Scotland thus any comparisons are meaningless.

At the end of the document some statistics are provided around the number of positive staff cases on 10 November. The number of staff off work due to a positive diagnosis is quoted as 630 out of a total education staff of 83,100. This represents a prevalence rate of **758 per 100,000 staff**. The NASUWT is extremely concerned by this figure as it appears to be significantly higher than the overall prevalence rate in Scotland. The BBC quotes the average weekly prevalence rate across all authorities to be **95 per 100,000** for the week ending 13 November, with the highest rates being in Glasgow with a prevalence of 278 per 100,000. Although the NASUWT accepts the 630 figure is a snapshot of absence rather than the number of confirmed positive cases in the preceding week, the difference in this and the national average figure is equally striking and alarming. It certainly suggests that contrary to the Government's assertion, education staff are at a significantly higher risk of infection than the general population.

The NASUWT urgently requests that the Scottish Government withdraws these misleading claims with immediate effect. The Scottish Government also urgently needs to explain why the figures provided in the report clearly suggest an extremely high infection rate.

Yours sincerely,

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

Dr Patrick Roach  
**General Secretary**