

Date: 29 July 2020

Your Ref:

Our ref: 200729/Barclay S/PR/FC

Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP  
Chief Secretary to the Treasury  
HM Treasury  
The Correspondence and Enquiry Unit  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London  
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# NASUWT

## The Teachers' Union

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Dear Mr Barclay,

### **Funding schools' coronavirus costs**

As you will be aware, a key element of Government policy during the coronavirus pandemic is the re-opening of schools in England to all pupils from the beginning of the autumn term onwards. I am writing to advise you of the growing concern amongst teachers and school leaders that additional funding is needed to support the safe re-opening of schools from September. I am addressing this correspondence to you because the NASUWT's understanding is that the policy of government departments on meeting the costs arising from the coronavirus pandemic has to be approved by HM Treasury.

For the period of March to July 2020, schools have been able to claim for some exceptional coronavirus costs from a list approved by the Department for Education (DfE). Whilst this list has its limitations, the NASUWT's key concern is that, for the 2020/21 School Year, there are no plans to reimburse schools for any of their additional coronavirus costs. The DfE's guidance makes very clear the need for considerable additional expenditure on the part of schools, including that schools must establish a system of controls, including enhanced cleaning arrangements, a rigorous hand and respiratory hygiene regime and the re-ordering of the layout of classrooms and school buildings.

The DfE guidance requires cleaning of *'frequently touched surfaces often,'* and states that this must be in place *'in all schools, all the time.'* In addition, there needs to be more cleaning of areas of the school which are used by different groups, including dining rooms and toilets.

In addition, schools are expected to increase the number of sinks, provide hand sanitisers at many points across the school site, adopt new signage and frequently and rigorously clean outdoor equipment.

The DfE guidance to controlling the spread of the coronavirus in schools recommends that schools establish 'bubbles' of pupils and staff.

Public Health England is very clear with schools, local authorities and academy trusts that the integrity of individual bubbles is crucial to preventing the spread of

infection across the whole school population, thereby preventing the closure of whole schools in instances where a pupil or member of staff tests positive for the virus.

However, in order to ensure the integrity of the bubble, and because social distancing measures need to be enforced, schools where pupils travel on buses will incur considerable additional costs arising from commissioning more home to school transport. For example, in an age 11-18 school, where each year group is a bubble and pupils travel on school transport, the number of buses commissioned would need to be multiplied by up to seven to maintain the integrity of the bubbles.

The DfE guidance further advises that home to school buses will need to be regularly deep cleaned, hand sanitiser will need to be used, pupils will need to be provided with face masks and staff will need to be deployed to supervise organised queuing.

The DfE advises that, where possible, schools should organise 'walking buses', led by a member of staff, to reduce reliance on public transport.

Whilst the DfE's guidance does not recommend the routine use of PPE equipment, it states that it must be used by school staff where there is close pupil contact or in isolation rooms where a pupil is suspected of contracting the coronavirus and is waiting to be collected by their parents. This will impact all schools.

The DfE requires that schools teach an ambitious broad and balanced curriculum with the provision of a sports and PE curriculum, which will necessitate frequent deep cleaning of sports equipment and changing rooms.

School kitchens can continue to operate, but they must ensure that they comply with the Government's 'Guidance for food businesses on coronavirus', with additional deep cleaning.

In addition to the costs arising from full September re-opening, the DfE guidance also expects that schools will continue to build capacity to offer blended learning options for students, with associated expenditure on software such as remote learning platforms and hardware such as laptops for staff and students. All schools will need to contingency plan for the potential for a local lockdown and bear the costs of this.

Whilst the NASUWT accepts that the DfE has provided laptops, tablets and wireless routers to some local authorities and academy trusts, the need for these is far greater than the Government has been able to meet to date.

These and other challenges are placing significant pressures on schools as they prepare to reopen fully whilst ensuring that all appropriate and necessary measures are securely in place to protect the safety of children and staff. If these additional costs are not met, the risk is that schools will either attempt to compromise their coronavirus control measures or make cuts to other areas of expenditure which will compromise the quality of education provision for pupils.

We therefore seek any assurance you are able to provide that all schools will be provided with the resources that they need to meet the additional cost pressures that have been placed on them.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Roach', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr Patrick Roach  
**General Secretary**