

24 October 2016

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Mr P Weir MLA  
Minister for Education  
Rathgael House  
43 Balloo Road  
Rathgill  
Bangor  
Co. Down  
BT19 7PR

Dear Minister

## **NASUWT escalation of industrial action**

As you will be aware the NASUWT announced on Friday that the Union's National Action Committee has decided to escalate the NASUWT's on-going industrial action to a rolling programme of strike action beginning at the end of November 2016. The appropriate legal notices will be sent to the Employers in due course.

The 'final straw' in an unedifying catalogue of failure by the Department of Education and the employers to address seriously the deep and genuine concerns of teachers was the offer, by the employers after months of fruitless discussion, of a zero per cent pay award for 2015-16.

However there are also other fundamental issues which also have to be addressed.

The NASUWT has an unresolved trade dispute with you as the Minister for Education on pay, pensions, and conditions of service including workload and job loss. Our members are engaged in action short of strike action across all schools, which is designed to secure the working conditions teachers need to enable them to focus on teaching and learning, whilst at the same time making clear the unacceptability of the present position on the issues covered by the Union's trade dispute.

I wrote to you on this matter when you took up your ministerial office and I have raised the issues with you in the meeting we had during the summer and in subsequent correspondence.

It is regrettable that to date your response to each of the issues the NASUWT has raised has been to say that these are matters for the NITC. This despite the fact that the NASUWT has raised repeatedly the dysfunctional nature of the teachers' negotiating machinery and the fact that it does not have the locus to resolve a trade dispute with a minister. Such resolution can only be secured through genuine engagement by the Department of Education with the NASUWT directly.

The NASUWT is by far the largest teachers' union in Northern Ireland and we have made every effort to engage with you constructively to seek to address the concerns of our members.

We deeply regret having to escalate the industrial action to strike action but for far too long the goodwill, commitment and dedication of teachers and school leaders has been taken for granted by the Department of Education and the employers.

The planned initial, rolling incremental strike action will begin in November and continue into the spring term. The need for this escalation could be avoided if the Department of Education agrees to genuine engagement to seek to resolve the NASUWT's trade dispute and the employers come forward with a pay award for 2015-16 which improves on the final offer made.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris', with a horizontal line underneath.

Chris Keates (Ms)  
**General Secretary**