

Date: 15 September 2020

Your Ref:

Our ref: 200915/Williamson G/PR/FC

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson, MP
Secretary of State
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
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NASUWT

The Teachers' Union

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General Secretary
Dr Patrick Roach

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Dear Gavin,

I am writing to you to raise concerns about the demands being placed on schools in respect of planning for and, where needed, providing remote education.

The NASUWT supports the use of inclusive, remote education for pupils who are unable to attend school for reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Union has concerns about the proposal to introduce a Direction on remote education and the expectations set out in the Guidance on the full opening of schools.

The NASUWT does not believe that a Direction is needed given that guidance has been issued to schools on remote education. Furthermore, the Union has significant concerns that some employers will use the Direction and guidance to introduce extremely workload intensive and punitive management practices. We are especially concerned that some employers will make hugely unrealistic demands of teachers and link the requirements to performance management.

The expectation that school leaders can establish contingency plans by the end of September and put in place arrangements to deliver high-quality remote education by November is completely unrealistic. Schools currently are not resourced to enable teachers and school leaders to do this. Teachers and school leaders already face inordinate challenges coping with the demands of full opening, including supporting children's wellbeing and their return to learning.

Without additional staffing, the expectation that teachers should prepare and deliver remote lessons while also preparing and teaching pupils face-to-face will increase workload substantially. While the Oak Academy provides a potential source of resources for remote education, the extent to which these resources will support schools in providing comprehensive remote learning offers is not yet clear. Indeed, it is very clear from the feedback received from our members that schools will need additional funding and resources in order to meet additional demands for remote education. The NASUWT reiterates its view that the Government must provide schools with additional funding.

It is vital, at a time when schools are seeking to manage the additional pressures arising from the full reopening of schools, that the Government sends a very clear message to employers and leaders in schools that implementing high-quality education, including high-quality remote education, must be implemented appropriately and that it is not appropriate to seek to implement reforms by further increasing workloads or extending the accountability pressures on teachers and school leaders.

The extraordinary pressures on schools that have arisen as a result of the pandemic have intensified the workload pressures that teachers and school leaders were already facing prior to the crisis. Schools will not be able to establish sustainable and effective remote learning offers without also taking action to reduce and remove other sources of excessive and unnecessary workload. The Government must set out a clear expectation that schools continue to exert downward pressure on the drivers of excessive workload alongside action to develop and implement remote and blended learning provision.

I look forward to receiving your response to the issues raised in my letter. I would also be happy to discuss the concerns in further detail.

Yours sincerely,

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

Dr Patrick Roach
General Secretary