

Date: 6 April 2021

Your Ref:

Our ref: 210406/Williamson G/PR/FC

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP
Secretary of State
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
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NASUWT

The Teachers' Union

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General Secretary
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Dear Gavin,

Supporting Teachers

On behalf of members of the NASUWT, I write to thank you for your address to our Annual Conference 2021. Members appreciated you taking the time to address them directly at this time and for your stated commitment to work with the NASUWT to take forward plans for exiting the pandemic and securing the best outcomes for children, young people and their teachers.

Teachers have continued to demonstrate their commitment and dedication to children and young people. When schools closed, teachers kept going - designing, delivering, innovating, and continuing to secure children's education in the most difficult and challenging of circumstances. We appreciate your appreciation for the efforts made by the profession, but we ask you to now go further.

At our Conference, you spoke about the importance the Government attaches to teacher quality and highlighted the challenge of teacher retention at a time when too many teachers are leaving the profession. Building the resilience of schools and the profession is important, and we would want you to recognise also that in order to do that, teachers need to be assured of the essential working conditions that enable them to develop and thrive.

The NASUWT agrees that support for teachers is critically important if we are to secure an education recovery that works for all children. However, teachers' commitment and resilience have been tested to the limit over the last year. The profession and our pupils have already been through a great deal, and many teachers are running on empty, with serious impacts for their mental health and wellbeing. 81% of teachers report they have experienced an increase in workplace stress over the past year and almost half said the job has affected their physical health. One-third of teachers have had to seek medical help to deal with the detrimental impacts on their health and wellbeing as a result of the pandemic and adverse employer practices. In this context, there should be no presumption that the profession can simply be expected to soldier on.

Alongside the Government's plans for easing lockdown restrictions, we want to see the Government's road map, not just for the next few months, but also a road map for exiting the pandemic and securing the longer term recovery which will secure the teacher quality you have called for.

The NASUWT, therefore, believes that the Government should come forward with a plan for a teacher-led education recovery and renewal that will commit to:

- i. Recruiting more teachers and support staff and other children's service professionals to meet the education, pastoral and care needs of children and young people.
- ii. Retaining and recognising teachers who have dedicated their lives to the job supported by pay and conditions of service that reward teachers as highly skilled professionals.
- iii. Ending excessive workload and letting teachers teach.
- iv. Reducing class size.
- v. Ending the long working hours of teachers and removing other factors which continue to drain teaching quality.
- vi. Guaranteeing the right of pupils to be taught by qualified teachers and for every teacher to have time for professional development as a contractual entitlement throughout their careers.
- vii. Providing a substantial pay award for teachers to end the real terms decline in teachers' pay over the last decade whilst providing appropriate support and financial and other assistance, including compensation, to those teachers whose health has been adversely impacted as a result of the pandemic.
- viii. Scrapping the link between performance and teachers' pay and securing, recognising that the current system has failed to incentivise teachers and building on the actions taken by a number of employers who have done so.
- ix. Strengthening regulation and providing national statutory pay and conditions entitlements for all teachers, supply teachers and headteachers which build on the praise and commendation you have expressed for the past, present and future contribution made by the profession.
- x. Robustly enforcing the employment, health and safety and equalities rights of teachers and hold school and college employers properly to account.

I am sure that we will both agree that we should aspire to be the best country for children to grow up in and that teachers are central to that goal. We trust that you will agree that any impediments to securing this ambition must be addressed.

The NASUWT asks you to work with us to bring forward a plan for education renewal, creating the best conditions that will enable teachers to secure children's learning and development by creating the conditions that let teachers teach.

I look forward to the opportunity discuss further with you our proposals for education recovery and renewal that will enable teacher quality once again to flourish.

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