

June 2017

Dear Principal

**Re: DENI Circular Number: 2016/11 class sizes in post-primary schools – practical subjects (as well as other subjects that include a practical activity).**

The NASUWT has issued guidance to its members in post-primary schools on class sizes in practical subjects. The Union is extremely concerned by the practices in a number of schools which are giving rise to educational, health and safety and workload issues. The NASUWT wishes to make clear that DENI Circular Number: 2016/11 does not allow the existing regulations on class sizes to be ignored.

The NASUWT takes the health, safety and welfare of its members and the pupils they teach very seriously. The Union has reminded members that they cannot conduct a practical activity in a classroom that is not safe due to the numbers of people in the room.

To ensure that staff and pupils remain safe and pupils are able to access the educational opportunities to which they are entitled, we are asking all schools to ensure that they do not timetable more than 20 pupils (and fewer pupils where there are different circumstances in relation to special educational needs (SEN) and the physical capacity of the classroom) in a practical class.

Where an NASUWT member is asked to teach a practical class of over 20 students, the NASUWT, in line with health and safety provisions and with our national action guidance, has instructed members not to carry out any practical activity until they have been provided with the following:

- a copy of the health and safety risk assessment – which has been carried out by a competent and trained person;
- a written statement indicating that the Board of Governors is satisfied that any practical activities in a class of more than 20 pupil is unlikely to present a risk to the health and safety of those pupils or to the teaching and support staff in the class;
- written confirmation from the Health and Safety Officer within the Education Authority that they are satisfied with the health and safety risk assessment.

The NASUWT is aware that some schools rotate pupils out of the classroom during practical activities. The NASUWT does not consider this practice acceptable for educational, workload and safety reasons and has advised members accordingly. Members are covered in resisting such practices by the union action instructions on workload.

We are sharing details of our position on these issues with you to seek to avoid any misunderstandings arising.

Best wishes



Chris Keates (Ms)  
**General Secretary**