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Community Union

14 February 2023

Dear Colleagues

Firstly, I would like to put on record the huge value I place on the vital contribution teachers and school leaders make to improving children's lives and outcomes in our schools. Teachers and school leaders have a key role in raising attainment, closing the gap and improving outcomes for all of our children, and I hugely value their contribution.

I understand that teachers, and the entire SNCT workforce, will be frustrated and disappointed that a pay settlement of 2022-23 has not yet been agreed. I am in no doubt that all public sector workers should be fairly rewarded.

However, as you are aware, we are all experiencing unprecedented pressures on public finances, which have been further exacerbated by high inflation and the situation in Ukraine. On this basis, it is simply not possible to meet demands for a 10% increase for all teachers in 2022-23 – including for those on the highest pay.

Notwithstanding financial challenges, the Scottish Government has demonstrated our commitment to teachers to provide a fair pay offer in 2022-23, and is now providing additional funding to enable the two year pay offer to teachers, which the employers have now made.

For the reasons set out below, I firmly believe that we have arrived at an offer that is fair, affordable and sustainable for everyone involved, and demonstrates that both Local Government and the Scottish Government value the teaching profession.

This offer will provide the most experienced teachers at the top of main grade pay scale – 70% of all teachers – a pay increase of over £5,000 compared with January 2022.

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In comparison to the previous offer, this new offer significantly increases the financial envelope and provides 11.5%, with an overall cumulative increase of 11.83% for the majority of staff, over two years. This offer would mean a cumulative pay increase of almost 30% for the majority of teachers since January 2018.

I believe this also builds on our strong record of supporting the profession. We have the highest starting salary in the UK for a fully qualified/registered teacher, rising to £37,719 under this offer, with a teacher on probation receiving over £31,000. Our most experienced classroom teachers on the main-grade scale would also receive significantly more than their counterparts in other parts of the UK. Under this offer a new fully registered teacher in Scotland will progress from point 1 of the main-grade scale (£37,719) to the top of the scale (£47,344) within 5 years, through automatic progression.

The additional funding from the Scottish Government to support this new offer of £156 million will be managed within the Education and Skills portfolio and is on top of the £50 million that the Scottish Government has already provided to local authorities in support an enhanced pay offer for your members. It will require difficult decisions to be made in order to free up the required resources. I hope this demonstrates the priority that I place on reaching a fair agreement on teacher pay and avoiding further disruption to children's education.

We have also taken recent action to protect teacher numbers and school hours, demonstrating this Government's unyielding commitment to closing the attainment gap

Finally, and as I am sure you will agree, industrial action is in no one's interest, particularly those young people, parents and carers who have already faced significant disruption during the pandemic.

It is for that reason that I ask that your members are given the opportunity to consider this new offer. While doing so I ask you to suspend any industrial action planned whilst this offer is being considered. This would minimise any further disruption to learning particularly in the run up to the SQA exam diet.

I hope this information is useful to you and that agreement can be reached as soon as possible.



**SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE**

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