



OPEN LETTER TO THE PERMANENT SECRETARY

17 April, 2022

Dear Dr Browne,

A consequence of the unacceptable pay settlement that was offered to teachers and school leaders in February is the industrial action that NASUWT is about to take.

The NAHT recognises the right for any trade union to take lawful industrial action.

Following this development, I am writing an open letter to you to make the NAHT's position very clear.

NAHT is the trade union for school leaders. We represent the frontline education workers who run and lead our schools, who fully anticipate that the forthcoming industrial action will seriously curtail activities and development across our schools.

In previous (and indeed, current) industrial disputes, there has been an unacceptable expectation from management that school leaders would pick up the workload of others to keep services unaffected. Not only was this expectation unacceptable, it was unsafe, unreasonable and impossible.

As the industrial landscape evolves in coming months without any fair pay settlement for our school workforce, the system must not be under the illusion that services will remain unaffected.

For the last decade, our school leaders have welcomed their children to the new school year knowing that they are also receiving a pay cut. Similarly, the tools, resources and the support systems required for them to do their jobs have been decimated, despite the truth that expectation, complexity and intensity of their roles have increased immeasurably. School leaders can no longer be asked to fill in the gaps of a broken system; frankly, we will not allow it.

It is our view that the Northern Ireland Teaching Council (NITC), which is the collective bargaining body of the teaching unions, is showing immense restraint at the moment, remaining cognisant of the current short-term restrictions of wider public pay policy as well as the context across Europe and the political context within our own jurisdiction. The employers have been given a reasonable period of time to provide a fair pay settlement. The Department of Education and the wider employing authorities must not, however, take this restraint for granted.

The TNC Review of the Impact of Workload on School Leaders will be completed soon. The members of NAHT have a full and very justifiable expectation that the forthcoming recommendations from that review will deliver tangible, meaningful and sustainable change to their working conditions.

My message must be read with the upmost seriousness: a fair pay settlement must be pursued with urgency and the opportunities to improve school leader working conditions that will be presented by the TNC Review must be grasped with speed, commitment and gravity in order to avoid our school leaders across all sectors moving towards industrial action.

Yours sincerely,

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

Dr Graham Gault
Interim Director