

John Swinney
First Minister

Ref: AB/LM
20 September 2024
abradley@eis.org.uk

By email only: firstminister@gov.scot

Dear First Minister

I hope that this finds you well.

I write on behalf of the EIS on the urgent and deeply concerning matter of the live dispute between the EIS and City of Glasgow Council.

As you will no doubt be aware, the dispute has been lodged by the EIS in response to the implementation of a package of cuts to teacher numbers in the City, over a three-year period, that we believe will have a deeply deleterious effect on the educational experiences and outcomes of children and young people in the city, particularly those living in poverty and/ or who have additional support needs.

It would appear from recent media reporting that council officials were aware of these risks and have sought to underplay them. Glasgow EIS Local Association and the wider EIS, understand acutely, however, the importance of teachers to the young people in the city- 1 in 3 of whose lives are blighted by poverty, 1 in 2 in some locales, and the profound short and long-term risks in denying them the quality education provision that they need and deserve.

Glasgow's package of cuts- amounting to the loss of 450 teachers by 2027, with 172 already gone from the service from the start of this academic year- will also intensify the pressures that continue to bear down hard upon Glasgow's teachers and headteachers, who are working in incredibly challenging circumstances in regards to workload, responding to rising incidence of violent and aggressive behaviours, and seeking to respond to the growing range and complexity of young people's additional support needs, whilst continuing the critical endeavour to reduce the poverty-related achievement and attainment gap.

As I think you would agree, given the manifesto commitment to increase teacher numbers by 3500 by the end of this parliamentary term, our schools need more, not

fewer teachers if they are to deliver sustainably on the full promise of CfE, GIRFEC, ASL and UNCRC legislation, and to contribute to the realisation of more equitable educational outcomes for our least affluent learners.

Recently published research by an independent group of researchers from the University of West of Scotland, Birmingham City University and Cardiff Metropolitan University, provides yet further evidence that teachers in Scotland continue to work well beyond the limits of their contract - 11.39 hours per week, on average - unpaid, such are the demands upon them. The extensive quantitative and qualitative research undertaken as part of this latest study highlighted that the biggest portion of this unpaid work by teachers is spent on the 'preparation and correction' component of the teacher's 35-hour Working Time. Furthermore, the research concluded that:

"Addressing the needs of all learners (regardless of cultural background, gender, socioeconomic status, or additional support needs arising from disability and health, family circumstances, or social and emotional factors) is increasingly difficult."

The cuts being implemented by Glasgow City Council will doubtless exacerbate what is already an intolerable situation for Glasgow teachers whose family and personal lives, and health and wellbeing, are being seriously damaged by overwork and associated stress, as exemplified by the research.

The rationale underpinning Glasgow's decision to make such large-scale cuts to teacher numbers is purely budget-based- the Council claims that the £27.8m cut over 3 years to the education budget is necessary to satisfy a demand for savings.

The EIS has calculated, however, based on relevant Scottish Government statements regarding teacher number funding arrangements, that rather than make savings from such large-scale cuts, the City stands to lose its share of the Scottish Government funding to local authorities to increase, or at the very least, maintain, teacher numbers. Rather than achieve savings of £8.6 million as its stated aim, the Council stands to lose £7.9 million in 2024-25.

We are therefore left to wonder whether the damage now being wreaked upon young people and their families, and the teachers and fellow school staff who support them, is the result of senseless decision-making based on miscalculation; or is a cynically calculated move to test the strength of the Scottish Government's resolve to withhold grant monies in the event of a council not meeting its side of the bargain by maintaining teacher numbers as a minimum requirement.

Whichever is true, we can be sure that the remaining 31 local authorities are observing the Glasgow scenario with close interest.

On behalf of the EIS, I request that the Scottish Government gives clarity on the funding consequences of the cuts to teacher numbers made and further proposed by Glasgow City Council; and, more widely, on the consequences of any such cuts being made by any local authority in Scotland during the lifespan of the current teacher numbers grant arrangement.

Further, I urge that the Scottish Government otherwise uses its influence in every way possible in order to prompt a reversal of Glasgow City Council's programme of cuts that, if implemented without fetter, will see 450 - a significant portion - of the teacher workforce disappear by 2027, with consequential harm to the educational experiences and outcomes, and life chances of Glasgow's children and young people.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea Bradley". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of "Andrea" and "Bradley" being capitalized and prominent.

Andrea Bradley
EIS General Secretary