

Letter to Andy Gray and Ian Perry

11 December 2020

Dear Andy and Ian

Thank you for sharing this letter, which I have indeed, forwarded to the other teacher union representatives.

To say that staff will be disappointed is an understatement. They will be angry and upset; the one thing they won't be is surprised. I met with nearly 90 school reps last night, and even over Teams the level of distress and, frankly, rage that was being expressed was palpable. This is on top of the vast number of emails and messages I have received from individual members.

I think the issue of moving to remote learning for these two days has, for a very large number of teachers, crystallised the fear and anger they have felt for some months. The overwhelming feeling I have been getting from members is that we are, in public, the recipients of many fine words, but that privately the views of fringe groups such as UsForThem carry far more weight, and that decisions are not being driven by science, nor by care for vulnerable pupils, but by political expediency. Further, the constant discussion about vulnerable pupils and the desire to support those in poverty are rubbing further salt into the wounds. After all, who is it but teachers who have, for years, been putting their own hands into their pockets to make up the deficiencies in the support available to those families; who have been doing 1000s of hours of unpaid overtime to offer extra support to our pupils; who have been doing work that properly belongs to other support agencies who have themselves been devastated by cuts; who have been trying to keep a consistently underfunded school system going when the only thing that seems to increase is the level of expectation being placed on us - expectations that seem to rise as fast as funding falls? As several have said, a bit more concern for those pupils over the other 363 days of the year, and particularly when budgets are being set, would not go amiss.

I hope it was clear in the various communications we have shared that the issue of the Christmas closure was related to staff health and wellbeing - this would have been one single measure our employers could have taken to support us, and which would have enabled staff to at least have a decent break with loved ones, so that they could begin to recover from some of the demands of the last few months, and try to regain some resilience to help cope with the coming months. That support has been denied us. We are left with the clear message that, regardless of what is being *said*, when it comes to *actions*, our health and wellbeing is not a priority. Thus, it is the intention of the Edinburgh EIS Local Association Executive to ballot our members to see whether they are in agreement with our view that the council has failed in its duty of care to us, and whether they support us in declaring a trade dispute.

I will revert to you once we have the outcome of that ballot, which I expect to have before the end of next week.

Kind regards

Alison