Dear Councillor,

I write to you today to highlight the continued concerns Glasgow teachers have regarding how schools will operate in Level 4 areas.

As you are no doubt aware, in December Glasgow EIS members voted overwhelmingly in favour of declaring a formal dispute against Glasgow City Council on Health and Safety grounds. I have included the wording below:

*The Local Association Executive believe that Glasgow City Council is not fully exercising its duty of care to staff with regard to risks from coronavirus. For example, the Council has rejected EIS requests to adopt a wholescale remote learning platform for the pre- and post-Christmas period, in the interests of minimising infection risk; and has rejected considering further a move to blended or remote learning as a consequence of schools operating in a Level 4 area. You are now being consulted on whether our EIS Local Association should declare a trade dispute against the Council on the failure of the Council to fully exercise its duty of care to employees.*

The move to remote learning in January was a decision taken by Scottish Government so has overtaken the first part of the dispute however the second part is still live as we will, at some point, come out of lockdown.

We continue our call for clarity around what, specifically, would trigger blended learning or a school closure with the resultant move to remote learning: this is in reference to the National Guidelines which state, ‘the use of targeted remote learning remains an important contingency for schools at all levels of the Strategic Framework.’ Ultimately, EIS Local Association in Glasgow are seeking agreement that Level 4 would mean blended or distance learning across all establishments, with further agreement on establishing protocols for moving to remote learning in Level 4 if necessary and blended or remote learning in other Levels where necessary.

National guidance is that schools remain open throughout all Levels of Covid-19 restrictions. My colleagues and I overwhelmingly support face-to-face learning and teaching and have grasped this challenge with enthusiasm, invention, and unremitting goodwill. We have given our utmost to keep children safe, to support learning, and to serve our local communities. However, despite stringent mitigations via Risk Assessments, which are regularly reviewed in response to constant change, the outbreaks in schools have been relentless. Due to the alarming emergence of a second strain which is far more transmissible, if we go back to full schools’ opening after lockdown, with the same measures in place, then there can only be one realistic outcome.

One example given for closing schools was as a result of staffing due to absences (predominantly due to COVID-related absences) being at a level which would prohibit proper delivery of learning and teaching. We would argue that by that point our employer has already failed in its duty of care to its employees. This would prove that a school has not been a safe workplace.

Our concerns are around the fact that Level 4 calls for enhanced mitigations which to many in schools do not appear to go any further than those they had already seen, and which have not prevented an increase in numbers of staff and pupils absent because of Covid-19. The only clear changes from moving from Level 4 down to Leve 3 in the last weeks of 2020 were that some visitors were allowed into schools and indoor PE was allowed.

The one key mitigation of physically distancing continues to challenge, without the ability to reduce the number of bodies in classrooms at any time. A strong EIS survey result ([The Educational Institute of Scotland School-based Member Survey Results (eis.org.uk)](https://www.eis.org.uk/Content/images/corona/Nov20Report.pdf)) clearly shows that teachers believe this can only happen with a move to blended learning. It is important that staff feel confident within a system which is proactive, transparent, and focussed on the Health and Safety of all who use the facilities within education.

Teachers seek clarity on Glasgow Education Department’s position on a move to blended or distance learning in Level 4 and wish to agree established protocols for moving to blended or distance learning in other Levels when schools remain open with ‘enhanced mitigations’. These trigger points need to be defined and acted on.

We are still waiting on building-specific guidance on appropriate ventilation within our school buildings. Important information on air flow and air changes are too vague and, as the cold weather will no doubt continue, more relevant information is necessary.

Thank you in advance for your attention to our concerns. Please, as elected members of Glasgow City Council, raise these at Education Committee and in Council as continued matters of urgency.

Yours faithfully,