

SB/CC

27 February 2025

Ms Jenny Gilruth
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Scottish Government

Dear Cabinet Secretary

Thank for your letter of 24th February 2025.

As part of our efforts to resolve the formal dispute that has been declared by the SNCT Teachers' Panel, the Panel seeks clarification on matters raised within your letter.

Following the meeting of SNCT Joint Chairs on 19 February, it is the intention of the SNCT Teachers' Panel to convene on 17th March to determine the timescale it wishes to place on seeing meaningful progress on the implementation of reduced class contact time, predicated on the allocation of that time to the 'preparation and correction' component of teachers' contracts as a means of addressing unsustainable workload.

In paragraph two, you state that "reducing class contact time for teachers will help address critical concerns around teacher workload". As you will be aware, it is the position of the SNCT Teachers' Panel that, in order to alleviate some of the unsustainable workload pressures faced by Scotland's teachers, the resulting reduction of one and a half hours' class contact time must be used, in full, to increase teachers' weekly preparation and correction time, as provided for in Part 2: Section 3.9 of the SNCT Handbook.

I would be grateful if you would clarify if your letter is confirming that the Scottish Government agrees with the SNCT Teachers' Panel on this use of reduced class contact time.

You refer in paragraph two to driving improvement and reform in schools. I must be clear that the SNCT Teachers' Panel believes that the pressure of unsustainable workload must be urgently prioritised. Not to do so will ensure for the foreseeable

future that there will be no capacity within the teaching workforce to engage meaningfully with any reform, whatever form it takes and whenever it is intended that this will take place. When the time comes, ringfenced time should be made available through other means. There is precedent at SNCT for agreement to be reached on additional inset days for teachers to engage with strategic priorities, and it is the view of the SNCT Teachers' Panel that the critical work on embedding any outcomes of reform will be best served by a measure such as this. I would be grateful if you could confirm if this is a view shared by the Scottish Government.

In paragraph four you refer to a "route map" for the full implementation of reduced class contact time which is "informed by the views of our teaching trade union partners". I must be clear that, as equal partners within a tripartite negotiating machinery, it is the expectation of the SNCT Teachers' Panel that any involvement goes beyond simply informing the Scottish Government and COSLA of our views, but rather, results in a negotiated agreement at SNCT. The Teachers' Panel expects equal representation with the Scottish Government and COSLA on the associated working group, with terms of reference and key principles- including in respect of the use of time as outlined above- agreed by all three parties at the outset.

The SNCT Teachers' Panel has sought a further meeting of the SNCT Joint Chairs prior to the meeting of the Panel on 17th March and this has now been confirmed for the afternoon of Wednesday 5th March.

I would be grateful for your response prior to the next meeting of the SNCT Joint Chairs referenced above to ensure that the position of the Scottish Government is completely clear prior to those critical discussions in respect of the current dispute taking place.

Yours sincerely,

Des Morris
SNCT Joint Chair (Teaachers' Side)