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Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP
Secretary of State for Education
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7 December 2023

Dear Secretary of State

You will be aware that ahead of his Autumn Statement, we wrote to the Chancellor (on 9 November 2023) urging him to prioritise funding for education. We are extremely concerned that the Chancellor has subsequently failed to announce any new funds for schools. Our concern is now compounded by your failure to issue a remit letter to the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB).

I am sure that I do not need to remind you of the commitment you made to the education unions when settling our pay dispute last summer, namely to "align the timing of the STRB process with the school budget cycle to make it easier for schools to plan ahead, make effective choices and reduce nugatory contingency planning." (Your 14 July 2023 letter to education union General Secretaries).

Your remit letter to the STRB is already three weeks late compared to last year. At this point in the pay review cycle, statutory consultees should have been invited to submit written (and supplementary) evidence to the STRB, so that it can review that evidence and then report on pay matters in sufficient time to settle pay matters ahead of the new academic year. The commitment you made to us on 14 July 2023, clearly indicated your intention to settle pay matters ahead of the school budget cycle this year (i.e. by the end of April 2024).

It is difficult to see how you can abide by this commitment to conclude the statutory process earlier than previously when you are already starting it at least three weeks later. Failure to engage with us on pay matters in a timely fashion not only, once again, frustrates the ability of school leaders to plan ahead and offer their staff and parents the certainty they deserve. It also further undermines the rights of our members to be represented by their union over their pay.

But the most worrying aspect of this delay in the pay review process is that it forestalls any meaningful attempt to address the multiple crises facing our schools. As we stated in our 9 November letter to the Chancellor, currently schools will barely be able to afford a teacher pay rise of one per cent in September 2024. We currently expect schools' costs to rise by at least 5.8 per cent in 2024-25, in the event of a pay award equivalent to that awarded in 2023-24. Unless this year we take a meaningful step towards the full restoration of the pay teachers have lost in real terms against inflation since 2010, schools will simply not be able to recruit and retain teachers nor avoid making further cuts in provision. Today's news that the Government's teacher training recruitment targets

have been missed yet again confirms this beyond all reasonable doubt. We would expect your remit letter to the STRB to direct it to review the critical issue of pay lost in real terms since 2010.

So, your delay issuing the remit letter to the STRB not only fails teachers and leaders. It fails pupils and parents too.

In our view, it constitutes an attempt to frustrate the statutory scheme and, in light of the commitments you made last July, constitutes a very serious act of bad faith.

I trust that you will now confirm how and when you will ensure you honour the commitments you made on 14 July 2023, most specifically by issuing the STRB with an appropriate remit to immediately address the matters relating to teachers' pay and conditions for 2024-25 that the crisis in education demands.

Teachers, leaders, pupils and parents will not forgive any further delay.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Kebede".

Daniel Kebede
General Secretary