

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid
Recovery
John Swinney MSP



T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Cllr Katie Hagmann
Cllr Tony Buchanan

Copy to: Cllr Shona Morrison
Sally Loudon

7 February 2023

Dear Katie and Tony

Protecting teacher numbers, pupil support staff and learning hours

As you will be aware, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills updated Parliament this afternoon on the actions that the Scottish Government will take to protect teacher and pupil support staff numbers, and the number of learning hours for pupils. This letter confirms that position and, further to the Deputy First Minister's correspondence of 15 December 2022, confirms the revised terms of the local government finance settlement for 2023-24.

We have been clear during recent dialogue that this government's vision for education in Scotland remains to deliver excellence and equity for all. A key element of that is to ensure there is no reduction in the fundamentals of education delivery, including the number of teachers and support staff, and the amount of time children spend learning in schools.

We are agreed that delivering positive outcomes, including raising attainment and closing the attainment gap, is a shared endeavour and one in which we are making positive progress. In particular, we would like to place on record our thanks to colleagues in local government and across the education workforce for their dedication to the delivery of a first-class education for our children and young people.

We have also heard clearly your position on the financial pressures facing local authorities, and understand that they are wrestling with difficult decisions.

However, ministers are equally faced with difficult choices to support vital services, and it is essential that all funding that is allocated supports the outcomes it is provided for. Within this context, we have made our expectations clear that:

- Teacher numbers and the number of pupil support assistants are at least maintained at their current levels in the year ahead, as we continue to work towards our aim to increase teacher numbers by 3,500 and support staff by 500 by the end of this Parliament.
- Places remain available for probationer teachers who need them through the Teacher Induction Scheme.
- There is no reduction in the number of pupil learning hours delivered by teachers in the school week.

Further details are as follows.

Teacher numbers/pupil support assistants/Teacher Induction Scheme

Firstly, turning to teacher numbers, pupil support assistants and the Teacher Induction Scheme. Local authorities already receive £88 million per year to (i) maintain teacher numbers and (ii) provide places on the Teacher Induction Scheme for all probationers who need one (£37 million of the £88m is allocated for this specific purpose).

In addition, we provide a further £145.5 million each year explicitly to fund teacher numbers and pupil support staff.

This funding will be maintained in full, but from April 2023 both components (giving a total allocation in 2023-24 of £233.5 million) will now be conditional upon the successful delivery of the following expectations.

1. Maintain teacher numbers at 2022 census levels, as published in the Summary School Statistics in December 2022 (details provided at Annex A).
2. Maintain pupil support staff numbers at 2022 census levels, which we will publish on 21 March 2023 based on the data collected from local authorities in September 2022.
3. Ensure that places remain available for probationer teachers who need them through the Teacher Induction Scheme

As a result, it is our intention to distribute £151 million as part of the 2023-24 Local Government Order which will remain with local authorities, contingent on them delivering the first two of these expectations. A further £45.5 million will also be distributed following confirmation that those conditions have been met in full. The remaining £37 million will continue to be distributed depending on the number of teachers that receive a place on the Teacher Induction Scheme in August 2023 as has been the case in previous years.

Officials will work with COSLA officers to agree an appropriate monitoring process for those conditions, which is likely to include but not be limited to the data collection for the 2023 school census. In the event of these requirements not being met, then the Scottish Government reserves the right to recover or withhold relevant monies allocated to individual authorities for these purposes. In assessing whether these conditions have been met, we will consider any mitigating circumstances individual councils may wish to put forward, and Ministerial judgement will be applied.

A full breakdown of the teacher numbers we expect to be maintained, both nationally and locally, is attached at Annex A, with the relevant financial allocations set out in Annex B.

Officials will be writing to individual local authorities in the coming days to set out what this means for them specifically.

During our recent discussions you have raised concerns over the decision to remove £32.8 million from the Local Government Settlement for 2023-24. Having reflected upon those concerns we can confirm that £32.8 million will again be transferred from the Education and Skills portfolio to support councils with the continuing cost of previous teacher pay settlements.

Learning hours

Similarly, we are aware that pressure on budgets means that some local authorities are reportedly considering reductions in the number of learning hours for pupils. As with the above, we know they will not have considered that lightly. However, it gives us very serious concern given the significant negative impact it would have on children and young people, and on their families. It would, in our view, be incompatible with our shared mission to provide equity and excellence for all Scotland's pupils.

Therefore, we propose to commence section 21 of the Education (Scotland) Act 2016, which confers powers on the Scottish Ministers to specify by regulations the minimum number of learning hours which must be made available to pupils in a school year. We intend to consult shortly on proposals to make regulations under that power which would ensure that there is no reduction in the number of learning hours made available to pupils.

Decisions over the delivery of the school week are primarily for local authorities and I am aware that many authorities have already used a degree of flexibility in order to adapt provision, for example, to implement an asymmetric week. We would not intend to restrict that flexibility, but to ensure that the current levels of provision, which are so important to pupils and parents, are protected.

It will be important to gather accurate information on current provision in order to inform our consultation and ensure that new regulations would have their intended effect. Officials have prepared short surveys that local authorities are asked to complete via SmartSurvey to provide information on the number of learning hours per week currently taught in schools. The surveys can be accessed here:

Primary schools - <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/4M7LJ6/>

Secondary schools - <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/53W3L7/>

Special schools - <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/60KAF4/> .

We would be grateful if these are completed by Wednesday, 22 February.

All other terms of the Local Government finance settlement offer for 2023-24, as set out in the Deputy First Minister's letter of 15 December 2022, remain unchanged. This includes our firm commitment to delivering a New Deal for Local Government.

There have been positive discussions between Ministers and the COSLA Leadership in recent weeks and we are keen to build on these and seize the opportunity to agree an outcomes-based partnership and new fiscal framework.

We are content to discuss any of the above further if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely

SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE

JOHN SWINNEY

ANNEX A

Teacher FTE from the 2022 census (as published in December 2022), including ELC:

Local Authority	Teacher FTE
Aberdeen City	1,836
Aberdeenshire	2,747
Angus	1,156
Argyll and Bute	835
City of Edinburgh	3,725
Clackmannanshire	556
Dumfries and Galloway	1,389
Dundee City	1,395
East Ayrshire	1,243
East Dunbartonshire	1,393
East Lothian	1,031
East Renfrewshire	1,393
Falkirk	1,651
Fife	3,724
Glasgow City	5,779
Highland	2,356
Inverclyde	781
Midlothian	1,081
Moray	977
Na h-Eileanan Siar	320
North Ayrshire	1,434
North Lanarkshire	3,726
Orkney Islands	257
Perth and Kinross	1,419
Renfrewshire	1,780
Scottish Borders	1,067
Shetland Islands	339
South Ayrshire	1,164
South Lanarkshire	3,516
Stirling	974
West Dunbartonshire	950
West Lothian	2,075
All local authorities	*54,071

*This total does not include teachers in grant-aided schools. All FTE shown rounded to nearest whole, All local authorities total calculated from unrounded FTE.

ANNEX B

Provisional financial allocations

	145.5m	Historical allocation*	total
Aberdeen City	5.013	1.732	6.745
Aberdeenshire	7.369	2.591	9.961
Angus	3.046	1.091	4.137
Argyll & Bute	2.156	0.787	2.943
Clackmannanshire	1.365	0.525	1.890
Dumfries & Galloway	3.991	1.310	5.302
Dundee City	4.007	1.316	5.323
East Ayrshire	3.314	1.172	4.487
East Dunbartonshire	3.298	1.314	4.612
East Lothian	2.950	0.972	3.922
East Renfrewshire	3.356	1.314	4.670
Edinburgh, City of	10.558	3.514	14.072
Eilean Siar	0.719	0.302	1.021
Falkirk	4.441	1.557	5.998
Fife	10.295	3.512	13.807
Glasgow City	16.461	5.451	21.912
Highland	6.421	2.223	8.643
Inverclyde	2.094	0.736	2.830
Midlothian	2.720	1.019	3.739
Moray	2.458	0.921	3.379
North Ayrshire	3.785	1.353	5.138
North Lanarkshire	9.992	3.514	13.507
Orkney	0.641	0.243	0.884
Perth & Kinross	3.606	1.338	4.944
Renfrewshire	4.775	1.679	6.453
Scottish Borders	2.936	1.007	3.943
Shetland	0.753	0.319	1.073
South Ayrshire	2.934	1.098	4.032
South Lanarkshire	9.383	3.317	12.700
Stirling	2.589	0.919	3.508
West Dunbartonshire	2.532	0.896	3.428
West Lothian	5.541	1.957	7.498
	145.500	51.000	196.500

*This is the ongoing allocation of £88m to maintain pupil teacher ratios, minus £37m which is allocated separately to support the Teacher Induction Scheme.