

-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: 04 October 2018 19:26  
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>  
Subject: Teaching in Scotland

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

I am a Primary School teacher and firstly I would like thank you for the invitation to contact the Scottish Government regarding the state of Scottish Education. Let my opinion be stated clearly from the offset: education in Scotland is in a dire state.

Quite frankly, I find it laughable at best, but in truth entirely unbelievable, that you are contacted positively by teachers regarding the education system in Scotland. Do not misunderstand me, I entirely believe that individual teachers- and even schools are doing their best in these troubling times, however, I do not know a single teacher who has a positive word to say about education in general. We are all struggling to keep our heads afloat, and below the water we are drowning.

The pressure we are under to redesign the curriculum every single year at every single stage is absolutely ridiculous. Where is the sense in having thousands of employees across the country reinventing the wheel every academic year? Financially, it's an absolutely disaster. And it is no wonder that new teachers like myself burn out and leave the profession, particularly those of us who are qualified to work in a different (private) sector.

Couple this with the behaviour issues raised by The Anonymous Teacher and it is no wonder that experienced teachers are leaving the profession in their droves. I do not wish to reword the eloquent letter written by my anonymous colleague, I simply wish to state that I wholeheartedly agree with their sentiments. Further, I believe I can confidently state that every single teacher at my present school feels exactly the same.

We remain at present for the love of teaching and the love of children. But this love cannot be limitless, for it would rob us of our mental health if it were. As it stands, I see the mental health of myself and my colleagues eroding on a weekly, if not daily, basis. Education in Scotland must change, or else we will soon find ourselves in a state of emergency.

I sincerely hope that other teachers respond to your invitation to contact you directly. And I hope that our education system is subject to a rigorous overhaul as a result.

Regards,  
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: 04 October 2018 19:34  
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>  
Subject: Teaching in Scotland

Dear Nicola,

I am a teacher and SNP member. I watched FMQs this afternoon and thought you answered Ms Davidson's questions competently. I am writing since you urged teachers to get in touch to voice their concerns.

Like yourself, I am from Ayrshire, but have worked in Fife since 2009 when I started as a probationer. I love being a teacher but found myself agreeing with a lot of the concerns raised in that anonymous letter. I think it's fair to say we are on our knees at the moment. When I first started in my school almost 10 years ago, there was a sense that, as teachers, we were valued and we had the necessary tools and support to do our jobs well. The school I work in now is almost unrecognisable to that. A new head teacher has recently started and his trying his best but has been forced to make massive cuts. Ours is one of the schools worst hit in Fife.

This August I returned to work from maternity leave. While apprehensive about leaving my daughter, I was excited to be back in the classroom. Since my daughter has started nursery she has picked up practically every bug going, and I have been called home to collect her on three occasions this term. Today, I had to leave work because she had been sick and two of the three classes I had to leave did not have cover. As of this morning, there were no teachers left to cover classes for the rest of the week. I have now used up the two full days paid leave I am entitled to in order to look after my daughter so any subsequent absences this session will be unpaid. That, on top of paying £50 per day for my daughter not to be in nursery.

I went to Pittencrieff Park in Dunfermline to listen to you speak a few years ago and it was clear that education is something that is close to your heart. Like yourself, I am from a working class background and have benefited from an education system which rewards talent and hard work. You said that you benefited from that system and wouldn't deny others that privilege. I truly think that you believe that. I believe that has always been one of the defining features of our education system; no matter where you are from, everyone has the chance to achieve.

In the past ten years there has been a lot of change and I am enjoying delivering the new courses but I think in order to see the benefits we need to go back and tackle the basics. We need to encourage experienced staff not to leave the profession, and I think that starts with making sure they feel valued and supported. We need support teachers, psychologists, attendance support officers, sufficient off-campus facilities. We need time to think about how we can deliver our lessons and how best to support the pupils in our classrooms, instead of being bogged down in box-ticking tasks. I think your government is doing a great job in a lot of areas and I welcome your policy to double childcare for 3-4 year olds, that will be a massive help for us.

I hope this finds you well,

Kind Regards,  
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

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From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: Friday, October 5, 2018 5:34:45 PM  
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP  
Subject: Teaching

Dear Madam,

I was very interested to read of your encouragement for teachers to get in touch with yourself with any issues that they face. This is the very reason I am emailing.

I am very happy that the EIS are campaigning for a 10% increase in pay. However, that is not going to help very much, is it? On average, I personally have worked 59 hours each week, since the beginning of term. This is my third year of teaching and this is me trying to lessen my workload. As I'm sure you'll agree, this is quite a difference to the 35 hours a week I am contracted to. I am not alone with this statement. As I am very sure you are aware, you will struggle to find a teacher that works less than 50 hours a week.

In addition to this, I am very concerned about the attainment gap. I have been working hard along with our ASN teacher (before she left - she's not been replaced) to help support pupils in need. As I'm sure you'll realise, PSA support is also vital if the attainment gap is to be closed. I work in a P1-3 class and have a vast range of needs. However, my PSA has just had her hours cut. So now, I have to choose which children need the most support, while the others are missing out? I'm very unsure how this is a step towards closing the attainment gap. As previously said, I am not alone with this statement. Many other schools in Highland and across the country are facing ridiculous cuts. I don't understand why the cuts are happening to the vital resources that are going to have a devastating impact on future generations.

I absolutely love my job. I work in a very small school so have to do my share of lunchtime supervision, after school clubs, after school supervision, putting out of the bins, (we don't have an on-site janitor) and even sheep chasing! It is a challenging but very rewarding job. However, I really worry that all of the recent changes are going to have a detrimental impact on the future of teaching and learning. As I said I have been teaching for 3 years and in that time I have seen MANY teachers leave the profession. In fact, the best teacher I have ever seen left last year due to the paperwork and sheer unmanageable workload. There are several other members of staff in our ASG alone that have left or are off sick - which obviously increases our workload even more.

It's no secret that teachers are unhappy. I am very unsure how John Swinney can say that teacher and head teacher morale is high. He has clearly not stepped into the shoes of ANY teacher in Scotland. You only have to look at Facebook groups or speak to a teacher about their day-to-day lives to see the pressure we are all under. Teachers are stressed, busy, under-pressure individuals who each have a different situation so can only be of limited support to each other.

Something must be done before there are no teachers left. We are all at our wits' end. Thank you for taking time to read this,

I look forward to hearing from you,  
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

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-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

Sent: 05 October 2018 16:53

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Education

Heard you saying at FMQs that teachers should write directly to you with their concerns. I sent you this email nearly 2 years ago. And received a reply from [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]. So did you actually read it? And will you read the avalanche of emails from desperate Scottish teachers? I really hope so.

I am a fairly recent convert to the SNP, as a result of Brexit, but I am actually embarrassed to have a discussion with my retired teacher friends about the state of education in Scotland.

So please read the letters yourself instead of delegating. Here is my original email: May I direct your attention to today's letters page in the Herald. Most noteworthy is the letter from Carole Ford, the most sensible and passionate expert on education I have ever known.

I have no doubt of your sincerity in wishing to improve on the current state of education but to blindly insist that the Curriculum for Excellence is working or indeed will work is just madness. Can you not just listen to the actual teachers in the schools instead of Ministers with no background in education?

The basic principles of CfE - the 4 capacities are actually what any good teacher has always believed in - encouraging team work, building confidence etc. Nothing new there whatsoever. But the ideas of 'experiences' and cross curricular projects are quite unsuited to the secondary curriculum. Moreover so many schools have changed from offering a broad general education in S1/2 to doing so for three years before specialising. This had meant that the rigour in teaching and learning, the discipline and perseverance required to pass exams is not really required before S4. Indeed the idea of actually needing to pass exams is almost ignored, so intent are schools on ticking boxes.

Please: look at the methods employed in the other countries which outshine us. Teaching methods are traditional, demands are high and pupils are required to learn. Do not just say 'it's strange that they are so successful DESPITE their old fashioned methods and that the CfE is the way forward.' In fact it is BECAUSE of these methods that most other countries are more successful than us. Have the courage to admit the implementation of CfE was a mistake. It is not just a question of more money, less paperwork, more power to head teachers. It is about listening to experienced teachers, not ministers or educationists who have no real experience of schools nor the accountability to pupils and parents.

A whole generation have suffered and it is time to put a stop to this. If only you have the courage.

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

Retired Principal Teacher with 37 years experience.

From: noreply@parliament.scot<mailto:noreply@parliament.scot>  
<noreply@parliament.scot<mailto:noreply@parliament.scot>>  
Sent: Friday, October 5, 2018 11:45:31 PM

To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP  
Subject: Message from Scottish Parliament website  
name:  
Anonymous  
address:  
Not willing to say  
postcode:  
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
email:  
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
message:

I'm emailing as a primary school teacher inspired by the emails that have been sent recently at the current state of teaching in Scotland, I've been a teacher for 5 years and a staunch snp supporter and paid member but feel the time is coming where I will be leaving you.

The debacle that is the education policy is at the end of the road for me, inclusion as a policy is an absolute bust and a cost cutting measure. Regularly myself and colleagues are assaulted and abused constantly and the number of pupils with autism or similar additional needs are entering double figures in ever growing classes and I'm left on my own to deal with them on top of EAL kids and nobody learns or improved or has any positive outcomes. The minute 3pm comes in stress about the following day and the rhetoric you and John swinney repeat makes me feel you've now failed us as a profession. I'm not even that bothered about the pay rise but the inclusion of asn pupils at any cost is killing learning and nobody is winning, you have failed and I'm sorry to say I think the last election was my last time backing you and unless immediate change is announced I will be going anywhere (except the Tory's obv)

Regards

A lost SNP supporting teacher.  
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From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: Friday, October 5, 2018 7:46:38 AM  
To: Swinney J (John), MSP; Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP;  
stvnews@stv.tv<mailto:stvnews@stv.tv>;  
[hope.webb@radioforth.com](mailto:hope.webb@radioforth.com)<mailto:hope.webb@radioforth.com>

Subject: Another Scottish Primary Teacher

Please find attached a letter in support of the viral letter which was written this week by a Scottish primary teacher. Rather than send this to bash the status quo, I hope by anonymously adding support, we can highlight where the key areas for change are and how to help the government get it right for all.  
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I write this letter as another Scottish primary teacher who has read the previous viral letter with deep understanding and a sadness at the Government response, which seems to have missed the key points. Like the previous author, I too have voted SNP and have faith that these issues can be addressed. However, in order for these issues to be resolved, they must be fully understood.

Becoming a primary teacher was one of the proudest moments of my life; to be in a position where I could encourage, inspire, guide and motivate young people to reach their potential was something I'd dreamed about since I was a pupil myself. And when I entered teaching ten years ago, it was everything I thought it would be and more. The relationships you build with your kids – and, let me be clear, they ARE my kids – is unique and rewarding, the task of planning and teaching every subject is interesting, varied and keeps you on your toes, the feeling of watching as children work through struggles, reach conclusions and gain success is indescribable. When pupils announce, unexpectedly, that 'NOW they get it', or have decided that a particular subject gives them joy – THAT is why I decided to become a teacher – to make a difference. And ten years ago, that is exactly what I did, day to day. Of course, I had to plan, teach, assess, display, report – the cornerstones of the role of a teacher. I also had to be a nurse, a councillor, a peace-maker, a mentor, a rolemodel, a nurturer, a decision-maker to name but a few other roles. It was a role that took great responsibility, time and energy – but it was manageable.

Fast forward to 2018, ten years later, and I am sad to say the influence of non-stop political interference, cost-cutting measures and out of touch accountability and monitoring is suffocating teachers like me, so much so that in recent polls 40% of Scottish teachers are considering leaving the profession, never mind the numbers who have already left and the gaping hole in teacher training numbers. Where we used to have a certain degree of trust as professionals, personal autonomy in our classrooms and time to creatively plan engaging lessons which inspired concrete learning and creativity in our learners, we are now bombarded with endless paperwork, meetings, collegiate tasks which have no impact on our quality of teaching or learning, an ever changing curriculum (Curriculum for Excellence) with little or no assessment standards and a never ending list of arbitrary boxes to tick. Of course, the constant stream of 'educational bandwagons' which roll in, and then out again, very quickly with no time to fully understand them, much less embed them doesn't help either. This leads to school improvement plans showing dozens of

priorities which nobody feels they are truly doing well, as opposed to one or two main priorities which could be looked at in-depth. And then there is the annihilation of or lack of support staff for Additional Support, Learning Support and English as an Additional Language – these jobs still have to be done, but with job cuts the role falls to the class teacher who has 33 pupils all with individual needs to cater for. Impossible, and yet we try! We try because our kids are important to us. Their learning and their needs are important to us. And we will never give up. We take on the burden so that our kids don't have to.

You might have noticed that I have not mentioned the cornerstones of teaching in that last paragraph – and there is the crux of the problem. Teachers LOVE teaching and have no problem with the heavy workload that comes with THAT. What the profession is buckling under at the moment is needless tasks which take you away from the real, gritty, meaningful tasks, and prevent any kind of discernible work life balance. As a result, teacher motivation, happiness, relationships and physical and mental health is suffering. We are contracted to 35 hours a week and I'm sure even in an ideal world, most teachers would work longer – we work until the tasks are done. However, in this climate we have staff working on average 50-60 hours a week, which leaves little or no time for anything else, except burnout. I for one regularly work 60 hours a week to ensure my children have the best experiences possible and to stretch and support each individual – a task which leaves little to no work life balance.

Further to this you have the issues of sub-standard classrooms, unsupportive management in some schools, lack of classroom equipment and learning resources and the fact that many teachers I know, including myself, are spending thousands of pounds of our own money to buy resources such as topic books, art materials, furniture for class, conceptual learning resources, etc. so that pupils partake in the most valuable experiences they can. PEF money is an admirable policy, but without addressing the underlying issues in education it is going to make a very superficial impact. And how can this be long lasting?

All this for a long pay freeze, followed by a trivial 1% a month pay rise. Is it any wonder it is so hard to fill training places when the profession is so low? Today I read an article pleading for teachers to find time for personal mindfulness, a topic we are now including in our curriculum to pupils. But time is in short supply because we continually ADD things to the workload, and despite meaningless measures from the government to address workload, which have yet to filter down to the frontlines, nothing is ever taken AWAY.

Have I thought about leaving teaching? YES, often. You may wonder why I haven't packed up my classroom and ventured to pastures new...the answer is simple...I LOVE MY JOB. It would be heart breaking to leave a profession I have loved since I was five years old.

To the government – please start listening to teachers on the front line:

- Let us be TEACHERS who TEACH! That means less meetings, paperwork and priorities.
- Look at the McCrone agreement which is the reason we are made to spend copious hours after school ticking boxes.

- Stop giving us forever changing goalposts, which demoralises those who are supposed to be inspiring others.
- Leave paperwork and managerial tasks with management/councils.
- Stop expecting us to teach a whole host of new ideas after 50 minutes training
- Understand that teachers are human - we have rights, health that can be affected by stress and we have limits.

Please look at cross-party solutions to these endemic issues which have broken our once-revered Scottish education system, our teachers, and most importantly, our pupil's chances at reaching full success. And, after all, isn't that what we are all striving for?

Another Scottish Primary Teacher

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From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: 06 October 2018 14:00  
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>  
Subject: Why I regret becoming a Teacher

Hi Nicola,

Today I read your call for teachers to come forward and share their concerns about our education system.

First of all, my name is [Redacted under S38(1)(a)] and I'm a primary school teacher in Scotland. I studied to teach as a Post Grad after being inspired by my previous role in Scotland first outdoor nursery. I've worked for the same council for 4 years and I'm now teaching my 5th class of Scottish learners. As many teachers will tell you, I love my job and I do the best for the children in my care. Due to increasingly limited funding and support, this includes using my own money to buy supplies, spending my evenings and weekends making resources, sacrificing lunch and break times to run groups, prepare learning and support learners in a multitude of ways. But there is not a term goes by where I don't have a crisis of self. The expectation to increase attainment and minimise the attainment gap with depleting resources and staffing is soul destroying. I feel your government are reaping the financial benefits of cutting funding and knowingly expecting teachers who are emotionally invested in their learners to compensate with their own time, money and mental health.

I emailed John Swinney earlier in the year about my concerns over the SNSA testing. There has been immense concern expressed by practitioners at the chalk face - the tests are unrealistic to logistically deliver and DO cause stress for children despite his poorly researched recommendation of best practice for delivery. HMIE would be appalled to see me as a practitioner expect a child in early years to be given a dictated task, let alone expect them to sit for more than 7mins. Swinney expects us as one single adult in a classroom of 25 4 year olds to continue to teach 24 children to close an attainment gap while supporting one 4 year old on a computer to conduct an hour long test? Impossible. I don't know if you've ever attempted to teach 25 4 year olds to read, write and count but it's not easy.

Yesterday I had a breakdown at work. I cried uncontrollably in my cupboard - angry and disappointed that I was having to cope with a decision made out with my control. My school serves a large rural community and over the summer just a handful of children moved out of the area- not unusual. However, this year it dropped our role below the threshold to maintain our number of mainstream classes. This has left us now in the position where we've had to fight our council to maintain the classes to avoid upset for the children (who had already had transition experiences) and practitioners who invested their own time preparing learning environments and planning for learning over the summer. The decision was made by the council this week to reduce our classes and composite pupils. As you can imagine, there has been gross upset to parents and children- many of who have cried this week. They are being separated from peers, their teachers and undergoing emotional distress in order to appease the budget saving agenda of our authority and ultimately your government. My class (who will not be returning to my immediate care as of term 2) are an amazing cross section of Scottish society - you would be so proud of what your

Scottish young people are capable of and the diversity they represent. Unfortunately for them, despite me sacrificing my time, mental health and state of my marriage, I feel I could still do more to meet their needs. No matter how hard I try, I still never feel I'm getting it right for every child... GIRFEC policy that was clearly trumped by budget saving potential in the current circumstance described in my previous paragraph. Some of my learners have additional support needs as many children do in Scotland. Despite increasing numbers of learners in my school who require additional support, our learning support teacher staffing has been grossly reduced over the last 4 years. From 2 members of staff to merely 1... 1 practitioner to meet the additional support needs of a school population of 500+. A member of staff who is often used to cover teacher absences as we cannot afford supply cover.

I can't emotionally cope with facing a classroom of learners I feel the system is failing each day. I'm physically exhausted from working at school from 7:30am to 6:30pm each day, I'm emotionally exhausted from constantly worrying and trying to compensate for individuals needs which are not deemed significant enough for additional funding or staffing. I do the upmost in my profession daily and have been praised by HMIE in my last inspection- but I am only a good teacher because I've sacrificed my own wellbeing. It's the only way to become a reasonably good teacher in our profession. In order to appease HMIE and government expectations for our learners in the current financial climate, teachers must sacrifice themselves.

I don't have my own children- I stopped ovulating regularly when I became a teacher. I'd love to start my own family however, I don't feel I could perform in school to the level I currently do without neglecting my family.

I'm heavily invested in progressing Scottish society and have tried to be proactive in bettering my field. I'm grateful that the Scottish Government funded my post grad in to teaching and also partially fund my current masters research at Edinburgh University. I've been a financial investment for your government. One that I suspect may have little return if I can no longer practice.

For the last 2 years and the coming year, I attend Edinburgh University regularly on a Saturday morning or Wednesday night to complete my Masters in Leadership and learning. Unlike the other 8 people who are currently researching along side me, I have no aspiration to become a managerial leader in education. This role is a thankless tasks in my eyes. You will not have teachers speaking out who have any kind of managerial or leadership aspirations. Times are financially turbulent for authorities and the last thing they want to do is promote staff members who want to challenge the system or question their financial spending.

The pressure of working full time and continuing to study in order to gain some kind of voice in improving Scottish Education is breaking me. I regret becoming a teacher as I've never cared about something so much that I've sacrificed my time, money, mental health, physical health and relationships. The fight to educate Scotland's children shouldn't be this hard.

I'm scared to speak up as the blame culture prevalent in society would deem me an

incapable teacher. Fellow practitioners are scared to speak out about their mental health and the state of education for fear of being deemed bad practitioners, incapable, failing to meet the needs of learners. The last thing a teacher would want or admit to is not meeting the needs of the learners in their care. We are emotionally bound to silence.

This is the tip of my iceberg and I hope it gives you some insight in to where our current education system is.

**[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]**

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From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: Saturday, October 6, 2018 10:56:13 PM  
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP  
Cc: Swinney J (John), MSP  
Subject: Teaching

Dear Nicola,

I understand that you have asked for view and I'm sure the floodgates have opened. I am also sure that the SNP have done their best amongst strict cuts from Westminster and the fall out from years of horrific leadership at that level.

I was always proud to be part of the Scottish Education system which for years was held in high regard. However, I find myself compelled to write because our current system is unsustainable.

My teaching career has spanned 14 years and in that time I have seen 2 curriculum frameworks and countless introductions of methods, approaches and pedagogy. I have always specialised in pupils with additional support needs and have worked in the independent specialist provisions, mainstream and local authority special schools and have worked at leadership levels for 9 years.

Working with a team who support pupils with Additional Support needs across five in nursery, primary and secondary I am privileged to work in many schools and what I see across them gives me grave concerns.

I see a lack of funding directly affecting schools being able to support pupils with support assistants, learning support input and a lack of training, from not having cover to access training within the authority to not being able to pay for training itself. Across the authority DHT's and HT's are all in class covering where shortages lie because there are not enough teachers, budgets for cover are spent or not available and teacher absence is at it's highest.

We saw cuts in our authority where our education officers moved from 12 to 9 and this is the support for HT's who now feel pressured and unsupported with the supposed view that this is 'helpful to devolve more autonomy'. I have yet to meet a HT that felt like this. Our educational psychology team was cut by a third, again the team able to direct and support the schools with planning and solution focussed direction. Many HT's are now taking on second schools as there are no candidates applying or suitable for a role which is thankless, underpaid and becoming less and less supported.

Meanwhile in class teachers are struggling to the brink of breakdown. The pressures on teachers to close the attainment gap with the inclusion agenda has become unrealistic. Teachers barely getting by in a day trying to support 30 kids with a percentage of ASN that was never considered appropriate to be mainstream, but there's no room in specialist provisions because they have been cut too. Yet we push and we expect more and more from our teachers who spend their own salary to bolster resources, make nice environments for pupils and even buy pencils! All the while knowing that their salary is effectively at least 10% less than what it should be.

The teachers who care about their pupils are working longer and longer days, giving up holidays and are at breaking point if not already broken. I know in every school I meet a teacher or a member of the senior leadership team who openly talks about leaving the profession and many who already have. I also have on several occasions had teachers and leaders in tears talking about how hard it is to support pupils and the risks that exist due to behaviour. The only ones I've met who seem less bothered are the ones who I'd rather weren't teaching my own children.

However, I don't just want to rant. I'd like to think of ways forward and although much of it is money based, some of it is about listening. Have your cabinet/ advisors for education filled with teachers and senior leaders who have experienced education recently if not currently. Do it on a seconded basis so it keeps fresh and current. Invest in training of teachers, ring-fence the money to allow for cover and designated courses don't just give PEF money devolved to schools who then fitter it away on nonsense (observed in several schools). Make wages realistic to retain staff and make them feel valued. Increase funding for additional support needs - this is one of the single biggest struggles for mainstream teachers but be clear on how the money is spent. Finally consider the curriculum, the introduction of CFE has left massive gaps and floundering teachers. As a depute I understood that we were only as good as our weakest teachers. As such I looked to put every support possible through guidance and systems, to ensure a base line of support. CFE is not enough in itself regardless of how many supplementary documents are added. I particularly find it appalling that starting at 'Early level' discounts a massive proportion of pupils with ASN and it is only in the last year that the Milestones were created as an addition.

I hope this is beneficial to whoever reads this and I would be happy to discuss further if required.

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]



From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: 06 October 2018 14:41  
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>  
Subject: Scotland's Schools

Good Afternoon First Minister,

I felt compelled to get in touch with you following your invite to contact you directly with concerns and the reality of working in schools in Scotland in the 21st Century. Firstly, the letter written by the anonymous teacher to the DFM was spot on. I read it with a lump in my throat and identified at least 2 members of my staff who could have written it. The response from the DFM was disappointing to say the least and borderline insulting. The points around inclusion in particular were not addressed or acknowledged, yet these were accurately outlined in the letter and really do describe the situation in many of our schools.

I wanted to let you know about my day yesterday. Firstly, I am in my first few years of Headship having completed a programme through the GTCS to gain accreditation (something which your government is very keen on) and continue to develop as a leader through the SCEL Excellence in Headship programme. I am passionate about my job and it is a privilege to serve the community and work with our young people. I am committed to improving outcomes for our learners and work tirelessly to develop really good relationships across the school community. I work with an outstanding staff, their dedication to their job and our young people amazes me every day. Our school is a great place to be but does not come without challenges, many of which relate to inclusion.

Yesterday I drove home in tears, again. Yesterday I didn't get it right for anyone; not for the child, not for his family and not for our staff. A situation which came from a simple request to return an iPad led to 4 members of staff being assaulted. The class teacher was hit. I was kicked and punched. My amazing support staff were subject to repeated kicks to the stomach and were bitten. We had furniture and resources thrown at us. An office was utterly destroyed. We made the decision to call the police for support. They arrived and did what they could but ultimately due to the age of the child could only lodge a vulnerable persons report. The family were in distress. We logged violent incident reports with our local authority for each person who was hurt. The reports come back to me and ask me to review procedures and risk assessments. I spend hours and hours looking at how we support the pupil and what else we can do. Doors are shut. Health and social work do not have the resource to support us. I'm told on a daily basis 'that's education's role?'. Whilst staff are highly trained, we are not mental health workers, cannot provide support in the family home or give family counselling sessions. This is only one pupil. I have many more who need support. As a school, we have faced falling hours in our support staff alongside increasing needs in school.

I am committed to inclusion, I totally agree that learners should be educated in their local school with their peers. To do this we need to resource it properly. The impact of children with increasingly complex ASN in schools is 3 fold: the parent of the child with ASN is looking for a package of support and complains that you are not getting it right for the child; the parents of other children in the class or school complain that

the child with ASN is disrupting their child's learning and you are failing to keep their child safe; staff spend significant time pouring support into an individual resulting in a lack of resource for 'early intervention' which would prevent some minor issues from escalating.

Nobody in the teaching profession disagrees with closing the gap, it's what we turn up to do every day. Our profession needs to be valued by our government, the media and the general public. Give teachers the pay increase they deserve, boost our morale and invest in support for our most vulnerable learners. Help schools to get it right for them and we will in turn get it right for everyone, closing that gap!

I would invite you to visit us and see the amazing work we do every day in the face of a challenging working environment, increased workload and teachers who feel undervalued.

I've attached an image of my office yesterday in the aftermath of a meltdown, it's only part of the picture. That's my lunch on the chair.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

With kindest regards,

**[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]**

Head Teacher

[cid:6a75a315-56d9-466f-8d52-5909ad848341@EURP190.PROD.OUTLOOK.COM]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: 06 October 2018 16:16  
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>  
Subject: Education comments by a saddened teacher

Good afternoon

I was very pleased to see in today's press that you welcomed responses from teachers about their thoughts on the current education system. I am writing to you with hope - that firstly you personally see this response, and secondly that you will action some of the areas I address within this email.

As a teacher of 20+ years experience, I have seen many changes. I have chosen to work in the same authority for this full time, in fact, within the same school also. The changes I have observed have been plentiful, some for the better but many have been detrimental to both teachers and students.

The recent letter highlighted in the press interested me. This anonymous teacher will most likely be being called a 'whistleblower' within his/her authority right now. To publically identify some of the many issues we face on a day to day basis has taken real courage. It is no doubt borne from sheer frustration at his/her inability to do the job they love. I know that if my own authority were to discover my own email to you, I would most likely face questioning. It doesn't please the authority to 'break ranks'! And there is the truth - most teachers I know love their job. They build strong foundations and relationships with their students and at times will look on them as they do their own children.

In my current school we are facing daily outbursts from students, sometimes verbal and sometimes physical. These children have been identified to Head Office but nothing is done. They are aware of the violent incidents - we've been tolerating them for many years now. Staff complete AIRS forms (to indicate if a violent incident has occurred) and NO-ONE follows through once these forms are sent off to the great cyberspace of Head Office. No follow up phone calls or emails, no reassuring hand on the shoulder, no supportive words and definitely no action to support staff, or the student who is not coping and lashing out. Eventually staff feel it is easier to stop reporting these incidents - after all, they are expected to complete the forms in their own time after being questioned by unsympathetic heads as to what they did to cause the situation. It is quite frankly, appalling!

More recently I was part of a census to highlight teacher numbers. Due to a real fear of being fined for insufficient numbers within schools I watched cluster schools in my authority beg, borrow and steal teachers to ensure they had their quote for the census fortnight. What a joke!!! We were to be fined - management know the ramifications if they fail to provide the correct numbers. Did our census tell you the truth???

Absolutely not. We have three members of staff absent due to long term issues (one work related stress) but we 'covered' these to ensure no fine!

Teachers are demoralized - they are overworked and under paid. They are being told that their opinions don't matter - think of the recent debate held in the Scottish

Parliament re Assessments for primary 1 children. Did you take into account the thoughts of the practitioners delivering these? I think not!

Our workload has increased a thousand fold since my first teaching year in 1998. Whilst we acknowledge the need for professionalism, the hours a teacher works is never admitted by your ministers. I am a job sharing teacher paid on a 0.5 scale. However, to keep on top of all I am required to do, I am working 5 nights per week plus one day per weekend - but not to worry, we get long holidays! In fact, many teachers will spend weeks of their holidays preparing and organising for the class! I am sending this email but must confess I believe it will make little or no impact. Having spoken with colleagues the general feeling is this is a PR exercise to eliminate any damage from press publications highlighting the open letter to John Swinney. As a government you must take action to improve the Education system as a whole, support those loyal practitioners who wish to remain in the classroom and stop experienced teachers leaving the profession in droves. We just can't take much more!

With my best wishes

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

11  
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

07.10.2018.

Nicola Sturgeon MSP  
T4.25  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP.

OR

Dear First Minister,

I am writing to you in response to your appeal for teachers to get in touch regarding the anonymous "primary school teacher" open letter. I must say that I fully agree with everything that was written in that letter.

I'm a teacher of 14 years experience in the secondary sector, I entered teaching as a mature post graduate, having served for 12 years in the Royal Navy including surviving the sinking of [Redacted under S38(1)(a)], I've worked 12 hour shifts 7 days a week in factories in the Stirling area, and also in the high pressure field service industry so I'm not one who can be accused of being scared of hard work. I'm an active member of the SSTA, currently as a school representative and former district secretary for the SSTA in my employers area. I'm also a long standing member of the SNP, I'm a member of [Redacted under S38(1)(a)] and I was for some time very active within the party. At present I feel that I'm unable to campaign on behalf of the party as I would find it very difficult justifying the Government's Education Policies to other members of the teaching profession, and in fact following on from the breakdown of pay talks last week I had seriously considered resigning from the party in protest. I'm the eldest of 3 brothers, I'm the worst paid, and work the longest hours, if it wasn't for my age, currently 61, I'd now leave the teaching profession without a moments thought and go back to my trade as a maintenance electrician.

The poor salaries teachers in Scotland currently receive, comparative to many other developed countries is no doubt a major issue, however it is only one of the factors which has led to the very low morale in the profession at present.

Work load is still a very serious issue, none of the recent reforms introduced by the Cabinet Secretary and the SQA have led to a decrease in work load or work related stress, in fact I'd go as far as to say they've actually led to an increase in workload. The removal of units in National 5 and Higher was intended to take away the burden of internal assessment from classroom teachers, however the reality is that School management and local authorities, and to some extent parents, are demanding that we track and monitor students constantly, and the only way to do this is to reintroduce "end of topic" test which for most of us simply means reintroducing unit testing. There also appears to be an ever increasing burden of reporting to parents, interim reports, full reports, parents evenings, parental requests for information, couples with a daily barrage for reports on our GIRFEC pupils leaves little room for preparation and correction, never mind the constant changes

to qualifications whether to SQA courses or those from Education Scotland, where we've seen the introduction of E's & O's then Benchmarks followed swiftly by SAL's then back to E's and O's again! To be honest since the introduction of CFE we've never had a period of stability.

We now work in PPP/PFI schools which may look nice but really aren't fit for purpose, I have little or no storage in my classroom, I have to move boxes around my room constantly, it got so bad that we had to go to IKEA and buy some storage racks, rooms are stifling hot in summer and freezing cold in winter, when staff have to bring in fan heaters from home to keep rooms warm. These schools were built to maximise profit for the consortia, not for the quality of education. Our budgets are constantly being cut, my department now has to survive on less money than it had in the 1990's. Our IT infrastructure and hardware is barely able to cope and there's no money to renew equipment when it fails. Technician support in all areas has been cut to a bare minimum.

Staffing levels are at an all time low, nearly all staff are now working on minimum time yet we are still expected to attend meetings during our lunch breaks. There is no budget for CPD/CLPL despite it being a requirement that we complete 35 hours in order to maintain our GTCS registration.

We, rightly, introduced GIRFEC, however we failed to back this up with support, in both staff and resources, which has led to an increase in disruption in classes. One example of this was an S1 class I had last week, there are, out of 16 pupils in the class there are 8 who are on Stages 2, 3 and 4 of Staged Intervention, I have one part time SLA in this class, sometimes none. I spent the whole of the 50 minute period "firefighting", trying to stop one 11 year old assaulting his classmates, while some of the others constantly wandered around the room trying to wind up the others, the rest of the class actually learnt nothing during this period. This is just one example of what we face each and every day, pupils with ASN whose needs are not being met owing to a lack of funding, resources, accommodation, suitable training and staff.

I hope that you'll note that I've not identified either my school or my employers as, as in the "primary school teacher" letter, I have no doubt that I'd be hauled over the coals for having the temerity to write to you regarding these concerns. I also have no intention of this becoming an "open" letter.

I find myself being bitterly disappointed in having to air these concerns with you, as I'm a great admirer of all that has been achieved since the foundation of our devolved government despite it's limited powers, however at present Education is one area which is failing, teachers are currently just papering over the cracks. Myself and many of my colleagues now are in favour of strike action which unfortunately will play right into the hands of the opposition parties, however we now feel that, as has been shown by the recent breakdown in wage negotiations, we matter little to the government.

I can assure you that despite my differences with the Scottish Government on Education I remain a committed SNP voter, as I see an Independent Scotland as being our only hope for the future.

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

**[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]**

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
 Sent: 07 October 2018 21:12  
 To: First Minister  
 Subject: Teaching

Dear Madam,

I previously contacted yourself on a different email but since then, have received a response suggesting emailing this address, and I've also added a couple of concerns that have been stewing over the weekend.

I was very interested to read of your encouragement for teachers to get in touch with yourself with any issues that they face. This is the very reason I am emailing.

I am very happy that the EIS are campaigning for a 10% increase in pay. However, that is not going to help very much, is it? On average, I personally have worked 59 hours each week, since the beginning of term. This is my third year of teaching and this is me trying to lessen my workload. As I'm sure you'll agree, this is quite a difference to the 35 hours a week I am contracted to. I am not alone with this statement. As I am very sure you are aware, you will struggle to find a teacher that works less than 50 hours a week.

In addition to this, I am very concerned about the attainment gap. I have been working hard along with our ASN teacher (before she left - she's not been replaced) to help support pupils in need. As I'm sure you'll realise, PSA support is also vital if the attainment gap is to be closed. I work in a P1-3 class and have a vast range of needs. However, my PSA has just had her hours cut. So now, I have to choose which children need the most support, while the others are missing out? I'm very unsure how this is a step towards closing the attainment gap. As previously said, I am not alone with this statement. Many other schools in Highland and across the country are facing ridiculous cuts. I don't understand why the cuts are happening to the vital resources that are going to have a devastating impact on future generations.

I absolutely love my job. I work in a very small school so have to do my share of lunchtime supervision, after school clubs, after school supervision, putting out of the bins, (we don't have an on-site janitor) and even sheep chasing! It is a challenging but very rewarding job. However, I really worry that all of the recent changes are going to have a detrimental impact on the future of teaching and learning. As I said I have been teaching for 3 years and in that time I have seen MANY teachers leave the profession. In fact, the best teacher I have ever seen left last year due to the paperwork and sheer unmanageable workload. There are several other members of staff in our ASG alone that have left or are off sick - which obviously increases our workload even more.

It's no secret that teachers are unhappy. I am very unsure how John Swinney can say that teacher and head teacher morale is high. He has clearly not stepped into the shoes of ANY teacher in Scotland. You only have to look at Facebook groups or speak to a teacher about their day-to-day lives to see the pressure we are all under. Teachers are stressed, busy, under-pressure individuals who each have a different situation so can only be of limited support to each other.

In my probationary year, the school I was in was inspected by HMIE. This was a great experience, although the lead up was very stressful, we worked well as a team and got through it. I must have had bad luck as after moving school, this school was also inspected. It was very interesting and VERY concerning to see the difference in the two inspection teams. It was clear that both teams were looking for completely different things. It was almost as if they had separate agendas. It was also very concerning to see how the different

Inspectors can interpret things in their own way. I don't understand how, as teachers, we have benchmarks to assess children by but the people 'above us' and assessing schools, don't have any? They can gather whatever information they want to and all have different agendas. It's no wonder some schools are getting pulled up for something other schools are being penalised for!

This brings me on to my next point, the mixed messages that teachers are given. On one hand, we have advice from HMIE telling us one thing - an example of this is the teaching of handwriting. Then, we have council policy telling us to do the opposite. This is just one example of the vast number of contradictory messages we are receiving. When planning, I feel like I am stuck between a rock and a hard place! There are too many loop holes and too much guidance. The guidance should be streamlined at a national level. There shouldn't be council policy, it should be national policy and all teachers should know exactly what is expected of them. After all, we are always told (by all sources...) how important it is to share success criteria with pupils - how can we, as educators, be successful if we do not know our own 'success criteria'?

Something must be done before there are no teachers left. We are all at our wits' end.  
Thank you for taking time to read this,  
I look forward to hearing from you,  
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

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From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: 07 October 2018 22:09  
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>  
Subject: What classrooms are like.

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

Firstly I would like to thank you for your comments and your invitation to write to you about classrooms. I appreciate them and hope that my email will make a difference. I have emailed [Redacted under S38(1)(a)] before but felt that he basically wasn't interested.

I trained as a teacher while living in London because I met so many young people who had not experienced the high quality of education that I had been given in Scotland. I moved back to Scotland in 2004 after completing my probation year south of the border. I have taught in deprived and affluent areas during my career.

Violence is a common occurrence in our classrooms mainly due to ASN children not having the support they need. I spoke directly to John Swinney during the EIS AGM in Dundee in 2016 and told him about a P3 class I had where the children were being hurt by another child in the classroom and had to witness me being physically attacked on a regular basis. I filled in the Violence and Aggression forms but nothing was done until a parent started to question what was happening.

The year after that was a P6 class with a child who suffers from ODD, ADHD and Autism. He was in my class without support and if he kicked off then I had to send a red card to the office if he got too bad. A Looked After Child then joined the class and unfortunately was so damaged by her experiences that she could not focus in class so threatened / frightened the other pupils. I built a good relationship with the first pupil but the second was virtually impossible to deal with in a class of 28 other pupils. We were not given any extra staff for her and one pupil ended up leaving the school directly because of her. She ended up in one to one out of school education which was provided by the school with no extra support.

This year I have another Looked After Child in my P7 class who cannot blend letters at all and can not access any work the class does. She is provided with work but socially is very disruptive by constantly shouting out while I teach and disturbing other pupils.

Our school works as a fantastic team but we have two teachers off since the summer due to mental health issues and this also makes life harder.

I work very hard to build a supportive and positive relationship with each and every pupil that I teach because I know that my role is key in a young person's life in reducing stress, building self esteem and keeping a eye on them to notice any changes in their behaviour. I also have to ensure that they make as much progress as they can and work hard to support them in taking responsibility for their learning and pride in their progress. My Head Teacher has praised me for the way I manage to settle classes and get them learning.

The part of my job that upsets me the most is seeing attainment falling consistently over the last eight years. I used to always teach paragraphs, the 6 to 9 times tables and complex sentences to P4 under the old curriculum but now I still have a number of P7 pupils who struggle with their times tables, capital letters and basic two clause sentences. I have P7 pupils reading far below their actual age and spent the first term actually making children take responsibility for their actions by having restorative conversations with many of them individually about their lack of effort or concentration. Lack of resources, lack of time due to daily mile and two hours of P.E. and a lack of support staff are the causes of this. Putting more and more onto teachers allows us less time to actually teach the children what they need to know and disruptive children make this worse.

Please make this better by increasing funding for more ASN staff, reducing activities such as two hours of P.E. and letting us have time to actually teach the classes what they need to learn academically.

With Police being awarded 6.5% and NHS staff a 9% deal while our negotiations have broken down, I am beginning to think that my effort is no longer worth it. Teaching is in crisis and it is the children of today that are the casualties.

I have attached the email that I sent to [Redacted under S38(1)(a)] for your interest.

Thank you for taking time to read my thoughts,

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

Dear [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

I am not the type of person who would normally get in touch, but I am doing so for two reasons.

The first is that I am teaching my class (P5) about democracy and getting a visitor from the Scottish Parliament to explain why we have a fair and democratic system that we can be proud of. I have explained that we have MSPs who represent our views and these views are then listened to and debated. Therefore, the views of the people are paid attention to and treated seriously.

The second reason is that I have taught for 15 years and am being slowly but surely demoralised by the lack of pay, investment in staff (both teacher and support staff) and falling attainment due to cuts over the last eight years. I used to teach paragraphs to P4 but now find I am still teaching sentence structure and spelling in P5 despite teaching in a well-to-do and achieving location. This has been caused by cuts to support, increased workload, daily mile, two hours of P.E. and many more initiatives being put on teachers.

I love my job and love the kids that I teach, but am finding that I have significantly less money to spend on my own children and I work far too many extra hours to keep on doing this. The only reason that I still do is that up to now I hate the thought of letting my class down. I have seen many colleagues that I have taught with leaving the profession and can honestly say that I have considered too. This is directly due to the decrease in my family income over the last 8 years.

Please do something to help us and make our education something that I can be proud to be part of.

Many thanks,  
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: 07 October 2018 13:51  
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>  
Subject: Teaching in Scotland

Dear First Minister,

I am writing as a parent, a husband of a teacher and as a Community worker who supports families. You have invited comments with regards an open letter from a teacher and I want to share my experiences.

First of all as a parent. I know that teachers seek to do their best for the children they are teaching. However I also know from conversation that they are frustrated by a lack of resources, in particular support for learning and pupil support workers, who will work with children with Additional Support Needs, whether behaviour or educational. Teachers are drained by wanting to teach, whilst feeling that they are limited by the need to focus on those who struggle in a class environment. Inclusion can lead to a whole class being evacuated from a room for their safety, disrupting their learning and leading to children feeling unsafe and anxious in school.

As a spouse, I can only say that my wife works well beyond her contracted hours. Preparing, planning and completing paperwork. She is drained and exhausted most weekends. She also has on many occasions had to provide resources for her classroom from her own pocket. There have also been times when the projector build in my wife's class has taken weeks to replace, whilst access to computers in the classroom is limited with hardware and software limited.

As someone who works in a community which includes areas of socio-economic deprivation, once again the local school and staff work hard. However many of the families I support feel that the school would benefit from more pupil support workers to help children achieve, including their own.

I also have friends who are support for learning assistants and they are all on temporary, term time only contracts. They don't know whether they will be in jobs after holidays!

I found your response to the open letter somewhat surprising and perhaps concerning. Apparently after 10+ years in power you have spent little time with schools, hearing teachers stories and the experiences of parents. Your sense of shock at hearing this really does suggest that you have lost contact with the reality of the classroom. Of course you are likely to suggest this is down to local authority decisions. Passing the buck isn't helpful.

I believe teachers are trying, however they are finding themselves working in a setting where those in government clearly don't get it, hence you asked for people to email you.

It's time for you and your colleagues to get it. Not to turn up for moments in schools, not to have PR opportunities but to sit in staffrooms, to sit in classes, to spend a term living in the reality of a school. It's time to stop talking about GIRFEC and start

delivering it.

Yours sincerely

**[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]**

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From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: 07 October 2018 10:55  
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>  
Subject: Teachers urged to raise concerns - but barred from doing so

Dear First Minister,

I am a primary school teacher in Edinburgh and my colleagues and I have been following the recent press coverage and debate surrounding the anonymous teacher's letter to John Swinney MSP with great interest. Most recently you urged teachers to speak out, however I wanted to highlight that we are explicitly barred from doing so in the terms of our Employee Code of Conduct from the City of Edinburgh Council. Like the anonymous teacher who penned the letter in the press, I am concerned by how teaching in Scotland has changed in the decade since I joined the profession. But I do not feel I can express these concerns publicly due to the following clauses in my Employee Code of Conduct. I have included a screen shot and highlighted the clauses I believe effectively bar myself and my teaching colleagues from speaking out:  
[cid:1664de0e7402e74292]

There is a real fear of being dismissed if you criticise the current situation in education. If not dismissed from doing so, there is also a concern that speaking out will adversely impact promotion chances.

I would be interested to know if you and your Cabinet Secretary for Education are aware of similar clauses in teachers' contracts in other local authorities.

However my main question is - how can we as professionals be expected to openly express our opinions if our contracts explicitly say we cannot criticise the situation locally without the possibility of being dismissed? What will the Scottish Government do to rectify this situation?

I would appreciate a response, however I would also appreciate it if you could maintain my own anonymity if you choose to refer to my email publicly or in discussions with my employer, The City of Edinburgh Council.

Yours faithfully  
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: 07 October 2018 19:44  
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>  
Subject: Teacher Crisis

Dear First Minister,

In response to your request for feedback from current teachers in the Scottish Education System, I have decided to put forward my views.

I have only been teaching for 9 years having completed a post-graduate teaching degree later in life. I always wanted to teach from an early age but, as happens, life got in the way. However, I do feel that my wide experience in various jobs and having raised 2 children of my own brings a wealth of benefit to the children I teach. Sadly I have realised that the career I always dreamed of is not what I had expected on so many levels. Don't get me wrong I am passionate about the learning taking place in my classroom and I love my daily interactions with the children in my class and school. They are the best children and this is where my problem lies as they deserve the best education.

I teach in a small rural primary school which many inner city teachers would see as idyllic. In many ways it is and that is down to the location and the children but that is where it ends.

We are part of a cluster with a much larger Primary School in the nearest town. We share a Headteacher but she is available less and less to manage our school as the workload at our cluster school is ever increasing due to cuts in support staff, social services, Primary mental health services, speech and language; the list goes on. I have worked hard and am now an Acting Principle teacher. Yes, ?Acting?. This was to allow me to be responsible for the school when the Headteacher is not on site. I also have to develop curriculum and organise whole school activities as part of my role. I am given 2.25 hours a week to do this. Last week I worked 56 hours. I feel so undervalued as I cannot even be offered a permanent contract for the job I do and have done for the past 4 years.

We have had our pupil support allocation cut this year to 10 hours a week. That is 2 full days of the week. That is 3 days we have no-one. We have been told we are ?lucky? to even get that.

PEF funding has been a fantastic resource for many schools and rightly so as there are many children with poor life chances who need the extra funding to ensure they have support to raise attainment. Sadly in our school we only get the very basic amount of money as we don't have a large uptake of free school meals. However, this does not mean we do not have children who still need support.

As part of my PT remit (also in my 2.5 hours a week) I have to track children's progress who have been identified as to benefit from PEF interventions, organise their lessons and organise staff to deliver them. My problem is that we have to use PEF money for pupil support staff to deliver the interventions. We have done this for 10

hours a week as that is what we could afford.

While they are there on PEF hours that leaves no support staff in our classrooms. We have a new boy starting after the holidays with ASD and have already been told there is no help even if he is disruptive so we will just have to get on with it.

I feel as if I am letting the children in my class down every single day. I have to spread myself so thinly to deal with the ever expanding curriculum, lack of support staff, monitoring and tracking, janitorial duties, reporting, engaging with parents, rights respecting schools, global citizenship etc etc.

Do you understand what it feels like to go home every single night feeling like a failure in the job that you always dreamed of? To go home knowing you are never up to date and that you can't have a weekend away for a family event without having to work late at least 3 night before hand so you can go? To love your job with every fibre of your body but at the same time knowing that the same body doesn't know how much longer it can sustain the levels of stress?

I could go on Ms Sturgeon but I am sure you have had many a similar picture painted over the last few days. I just want someone to help us and the political rhetoric we have heard over the past few days has saddened me even more.

This letter is not about pay and not about funding. It is about wanting a voice and a compassionate response. If we could have honesty and support I truly believe we can fix this and make our schools the positive, nurturing environments where all children can thrive.

Thank you for asking for our views, please listen and act. Your teachers need you.

**[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]**

Sent from my iPhone

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From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: 07 October 2018 13:35  
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>  
Subject: Teacher

Good afternoon,

I am writing to you as an SNP supporter and as a teacher of 18years.  
To begin, I want you to know that I love teaching and I love being with the children and watching them grow and learn. What I don't love is how the job has changed in the past few years. I feel under valued and over worked.

The main thing that has changed over the years is inclusion with very little support, resources and staff. I am all for inclusion when it's right for the child and the rest of the class aren't affected by it. I see most days pupils and staff being physically and verbally abused by these pupils, how is this getting it right for anyone? We are seeing more and more challenging children within the mainstream school setting and we are unable to cope with this effectively.

I see support staff numbers being reduced yearly and children not getting any additional help they used to get.

Teachers are constantly spending their own money on resources and supplies for their classes, money they don't have.

Teachers are not valued by parents and are constantly having to Justify their actions to them. I have seen the decline of respect pupils have for staff because of this. The amount of paperwork and bureaucracy we have to do is getting unmanageable, meaning teachers are working many additional hours in the evening and weekends, all unpaid for.

I understand that the SNP have spent money recruiting teachers but how many of these are actually staying in the profession? You are losing many experienced teachers with a huge amount of talent at a very quick rate who are changing their career choices. There isn't a lot supply staff available in my local authority and from experienced I know teachers feel guilty if they are sick as they know there won't be cover for their class.

The teaching profession is in a sorry state at the moment with demotivated teachers. I have children at school and I worry what their education will be like in 5 or so years time if things don't change quickly.

Thank you reading this letter and I hope that you taken on board the points I have made, along with many other teachers.

Regards

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
 Sent: 07 October 2018 11:02  
 To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; John.swinney.msp@parliament.scot  
 Subject: Struggling Teacher

Scottish Government,

As a primary school teach currently in my fifth year of teaching I echo everything that has been discussed by the anonymous letter.

As a teacher you are a number to the government, a body in front of children but by no means are you seen as a human. Verbal abuse and physical abuse by children is a general occurrence and is consistently accepted and seen as 'part of the job'. If you reach out for support it is rarely available. Schools have nowhere to reach to, outside agencies are at a minimum and as a teacher you are expected to 'deal with it' or 'give them some leeway'. Nobody has answers on how to deal with this challenging behaviour, however, teachers must tolerate it on a daily basis. Those in local authorities and Scottish government are not at the frontline. They don't experience this and certainly popping in for a prescheduled visit is not going to give you an insight into the reality the majority of teachers face on a daily basis.

Inclusion has many benefits, however, at times we are failing many of our children. Many children with additional needs are to attend mainstream schools until they fail and then for a limited amount of children they will be accommodated in alternative schooling. What is this saying about our treatment of children? Why must they fail first? Why can we not give these children the best possible start in an education which is suited to their needs? How many parents lie awake at night in fear of the day ahead for their child whose needs cannot be met in mainstream? The child should be a priority yet it is left to teachers to 'manage' the child rather than provide them with the education they deserve in an environment suited to their needs. Getting it Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) therefore is not adhered to as inclusion is not right for all children. The other children in the classroom are also then not having their needs met as those with challenging behaviour or additional need often require a lot of time from teachers to support their need leaving us to feel a sense of failure toward other children in the classroom.

Scottish Government are focused on closing the attainment gap in education however, the attainment gap will never be fully closed - a sad yet unfortunate reality. A wealth gap will always exist and many children from deprived areas - our SMID noted children living in quintiles 1 and 2, will still be living in poverty. The most hard-working, inspirational and devoted teachers in Scotland nurture and educate these children everyday, however nurture and increasing children's wellbeing is not measured in testing and therefore teachers working with in schools, attended by children living in areas of high deprivation, are left feeling demoralised by reports of scoring and continuous conversations of how do we raise this score?, how can we plan differently?, what's not working for you in your classroom? A child spends approximately 1300 hours a year in the classroom and 3700 at home - a child's home life has a massive impact on their attainment which reaches far beyond the teaching in the classroom. As teachers children come to us in the morning who may not have eaten since their free school meals yesterday, who may not have slept

because it was so cold because a family can't afford heating, who may have gone home to a house where parents are passed out from addiction, spent the night alone because mum can only work nightshift due to childcare costs, witnessed verbal or physical abuse - this only a sample of examples and as a teacher I will spend time comforting and loving these children. Children must be in a mental place to learn or teaching is futile. If the attainment of these children is to match those of children from Scotlands least deprived areas unfortunately for us we have failed before we even began - a demoralising reality.

Pupil Equity Fund which has been introduced to 'close the attainment gap' has added copious amounts of pressure for teaching staff. Scottish government do not know how to solve the attainment issue and therefore are throwing money at schools to solve it themselves. A rise in attainment must be evident and justified. While this money overtime will allow for the attainment gap to be narrowed, patience must be shown and time given to allow for nurture and learning to take place. Our children are not robots, they are not simply fixed by money. It takes time and dedicated staff. Tackling bureaucracy and teacher workload is continuously mentioned as a priority however over the past five years I have found it massively increasing and now teachers are spending more time managing workload rather than focusing in our main priority and the part of the job teachers hoped to do - educate children. Teaching for most is a vocation. As we know the average teacher pay in Scotland is a lot lower than average pay in other countries therefore Scottish government must realise that us teachers are showing up everyday because we want to be there for the children; to inspire them, educate them and love them. We are certainly not in the job for the high salary.

Teaching is a rewarding job yet currently there is an overwhelming feeling of despair, unhappiness and stress among your Scottish teacher workforce. Copious amounts of pressure, acceptance of abuse and a lack of support all are contributing to the demoralised feeling among teachers. Scottish government I would urge you to begin to listen to teachers, those on the frontline of education, rather than continuing to make decisions from behind a desk, answering concerns in politically round about ways and begin to address problems highlighted to you by many teachers for the sake of the young Scottish population - the future.

Yet again,

Another Anonymous Teacher

-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: 07 October 2018 17:00  
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot  
Subject: Scottish education

I was appalled to hear the reaction the Scottish Government had with regards to the anonymous letter received from a Scottish teacher.

You are both NOT listening.

I have been teaching for 21 years and I have never been so ashamed to be part of Scottish education. It truly is in a shambolic state.

The additional powers, money, resources, staff you say that are being provided are NOT being seen at the chalk face at any level whatsoever anmy job is becoming harder and harder every single year.

A huge reason for that is unsupported inclusion. This year alone is my class I have a Down syndrome child, a deaf child with cerebral palsy who requires intimate care, and three ASD children. Although I receive PSA help for two out of these 5 children, the additional time I am spending in planning, preparation, paperwork and meetings is enormous and is taking away from supporting the other children in the class who need help with literacy and numeracy - the ones who show up on our school data as having 'gaps'. These gaps exist because these children no longer have additional time from PSAs or class teachers with the basics of reading, writing and numeracy - instead adults are dealing with their unsupported children who struggle to cope with day to day school life.

Despite working longer hours than ever before, every single year I see the children come to me are getting poorer and poorer. Standards are not where they used to be and the things I was able to teach in P6 15 years ago, the majority of my class just wouldn't be able to do. New initiative upon new initiative is proving not to work as it is done half heartedly with no real thorough training or investment in staff nor any regard for staff health and well being. Teachers are exhausted and fed up. Fed up trying to do a job with limited resources yet being told to get on with it while continuing to add to workload.

Please please listen to teachers.

Whatever you think you are doing, it is NOT working and this is no longer an attractive profession. I myself am burned out and would readily leave the profession if something more suitable came along which paid a similar wage and had a better work life balance.

Many thanks  
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent from my iPad

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From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: Sunday, October 7, 2018 4:00:52 PM  
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP  
Subject: My Open Letter

Dear, Mrs Sturgeon

I am glad you are beginning to show support for teachers who are speaking out about our professions urgent need for change. I am a probationer who has received a bachelors degree at Strathclyde university for Primary Teaching. From the first placement I was issued, up until my current position as an NQT for 27 primary two children, I have found this job to be draining and quite frankly depressing. Without being mistaken, I love teaching, I love thinking of new and imaginative ideas to help them understand the world, and I love being a role model to their lives. However, I feel like it is becoming increasingly hard to focus on the teaching aspect of my teaching job. I am trying to keep up with 27 children; two diagnosed with ASD, three with suspected ASD, one with Dwayne's Syndrome, another with Ecodermaldyplasia as well as a wide split of groups in my class that if I were able to stretch myself enough, should have a total of 6 different groups per subject.

My concern is, that there are many new teachers like me, who are trying to give their all but feel like they are being knocked down at every hurdle along the way. From using my own savings to pay for class resources and extras that the children deserve and need in order to expand ways of learning, to finding no time to myself anymore due to the work load the job encompasses. It is taking it's toll on my personal confidence as a teacher by thinking I should be able to juggle all 27 students with different levels of needs perfectly. Now, I'm aware this job must be one that requires paperwork, from tracking, to assessments to lessons plans etc, however, with such a wide range of students within my classroom, most needing extra support that I can't provide, even with help of my classroom assistant (that many other teachers don't get the privilege of) it is increasingly difficult to ensure each child is receiving effective and quality support.

I believe the education system must be looked at. I want to teach children. I want to check their progress. I want to be able to try new strategies and methods to help them better their learning. I want them to succeed. They can't succeed if they are not getting the support they deserve. They can't succeed if their teacher is coming into school and can't give them resources they need because of their schools budget or because they can't dip into their own savings this week. They can't succeed if all children are being distracted by those who act out frequently due to their conditions or additional needs. They can't succeed if their teacher is becoming mentally unwell because of the stress, workload, and lack of care as well as LACK OF ACTION by the government. We deserve less hurdles and more help. A pay increase is long overdue. Downsizing classrooms are long overdue. Remembering that children are our future of this world is long overdue! You are well aware of the increasing amount of NQT's that are opting to teach abroad due to the pay gap and success of their schools. Solve this! Don't force them to leave. NQT's are the future teachers you are trying to keep to educate the children in this country. Appreciate them. Appreciate all that they do for the worlds future.

Help the people that represent you. Help our children. Help our society. We all have the right to a quality education.

Yours Sincerely,

**[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]** (a hopeful SNP supporter)

-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

Sent: 07 October 2018 12:55

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Current educational crisis

Hello,

In response to your request for teachers to write to you re the current educational crisis.

I agree completely with everything the teacher has penned in her anonymous letter. I have not yet experienced being assaulted in my high school, but with the way things are going, I don't think that it would be something, which I can honestly say couldn't happen.

The sheer mass of pupils with additional and complex needs has become unmanageable with very little or no support. Inclusion is not working, as there are no support entitlement being provided for these pupils.

The war cry is always PEF money. Billions of pounds were cut from school budgets and PEF was announced as a way of guising these cuts to make it look like the Scottish Government were doing an honourable thing for education.

My art department department used to spend 73000 for the annual budget for materials 10 years ago. We have been told that our spend for this year is 7700. I am sure you will agree that in an art department, 7700 in total to be divided between 3 staff in a school with a healthy uptake in art and design for over 1000 pupils is just not going to meet the needs of pupils. I used to supplement resources from my own pocket, but I cannot afford to do that any more. Thereby, making the creative subjects only attainable for the rich. My school has a considerable number of pupils on the low levels of the SIMD scale.

I must draw your attention to the fact that the creative industries are the single fastest growing economy worldwide, generating 8.4 million every second in the UK alone. I am a professional person, who lives wage packet to wage packet, with no means of saving money, due to the real terms, pay cuts over the past 10 years.

I love teaching my subject, but the endless paperwork and bureaucracy, lack of support and ever increasing demands on our own time and good nature, is squeezing every drop of passion out of this vocation, to the point where, if I could actually afford to go and retrain, I would. Perhaps the response from this letter might be the final shove, I need to find a new career, where I feel valued in my efforts to educate and make a difference for our young people. Currently, the future is bleak in education! How can we mould the minds of further generations, if we can't get teaching them?

I come from a family of teachers and every teacher I know feels this way. My niece is an NQT in the primary sector and spends her evenings crying because there are not enough hours in the day to do the work required. Is this your vision for

Scotland's education system?

In Scotland, we have more class contact than any other nation and we are amongst the most underpaid. The least you could do is give us 10% to allow us to feel valued. Having staunchly followed and been a supporter of SNP from a young age, believing that SNP care about Scotland, I am beginning to feel that SNP don't value the future of the Scottish people because they are not investing in the future of our young people. I am seriously considering rescinding my SNP membership.

I look forward to your response.

Your faithfully

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

Sent from my iPhone



-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

Sent: 07 October 2018 09:58

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject:

Dear Nicola,

I have just read your recent statement about contacting you to let you know about what it's like to be a teacher, so as I am about to finish up on maternity leave this week to have baby no2 (almost 37 weeks pregnant!) I thought I'd do it now before I'm back to nappies and bottles!!

In a nutshell, I love being a teacher (I'm a Primary teacher in Bishopbriggs, Glasgow) but I also find it very frustrating as the job is quite simply, never done to the standard I'd want it to be. This is down to a few factors, mainly being too many children in classes and too many children with needs disrupting learning and taking up so much of support staff and management time. Also add in to that the paperwork and meetings that take hours, time I feel would be so much better spent planning lessons. I am now in the situation where I will probably have to drop from full time to part time when returning to work, not because I'm work shy by any means, but because I can't see how I can do the job and also run a household with 2 children, unless I want to burnout by the age of 34!!!

My biggest suggestion to anyone who wants to know what it's like, do the job for a week... it will all make sense then!

Kindest regards,

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: 08 October 2018 14:40  
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>  
Subject: Standards in Education.

Dear First Minister,

I'm am writing in response to your statement in the media that teachers should enlighten you of their experiences in the profession with regards to local council bullying and the like.

After leaving school at sixteen, I became a painter and decorator. Shortly after finishing my apprenticeship I became a father. Due to a lack of consistent employment, I enrolled in college. Over the following years I gained a degree in mathematics, a post graduate certificate in Education and a Post graduate diploma in I.T. Now a father of three, I moved my family to the south of England in order to secure the permanent position that was not forth coming in Scotland. After three years in Folkestone, Kent, I decided to move home to Scotland as over the said time frame I witnessed the school where I was employed, haemorrhage good teachers due to an inept and incompetence of the head teacher.

I managed to secure a position teaching mathematics in [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]. It was evident from the get go that I'd made a serious mistake by moving to [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]. Not only had the PT of Mathematics resigned since my interview, but I found a mathematics department in utter disarray and apathetic. The morale was extremely low. I found this negativity to be fairly rife throughout the school. Imagine how you'd feel. I found myself employed at a school where most of the staff couldn't wait to get ?OUT.? I have to admit that I've found in my time in education that most teachers over 50 have a burning desire to retire early for the sake of their health and sanity. Teachers are required to work under some extremely testing circumstances and there are a myriad of reasons for this, but to have to function without any support or backing from your superiors is tragic. Being passionate about education, and having my three children in the system made life as a teacher difficult. It is not my nature to blindly accept a situation if I feel it pernicious and/ or unjust.

It seems to be the general consensus that teachers leave the profession due to the pupils? behaviour. I have found not just I'm my experience that teachers "get out? due to the over whelming strain, frustration and apathy surrounding the profession. This arises from always being made to feel incompetent, lacking, unprofessional, subversive and uncooperative by superiors. My personal experience with Perth and Kinross council left me having to leave the profession due to severe depression. I am happy to say now that I have dealt with in the most part my depression, although I have still to regain faith in people, my confidence and trust in society. The level of bullying I was unlucky enough to take the brunt of at [Redacted under S38(1)(a)] is still effecting my daily life. The bullying took place because my face did not fit. There was never and has never been any issue with my teaching, professional conduct and behaviour as a teacher. I found that disagreeing with the party line and having an option was much more insidious than being an incompetent professional. My depression led to absences from work. On returning to work, I found that my

situation had been made worse. My employers appeared to be forcing my out. I have struggled to earn a living since leaving teaching and I'm admittedly still extremely bitter towards the individuals who made my life so utterly miserable. I believe Perth and Kinross consigned me to the scrap before I was forty. I even wrote to Mr. John Fyfe, head of education at PKC, and former (competent) head teacher of mine for assistance in sorting out the situation, Mr Fyfe's solution was to pass the buck. The day I finally resigned from PKC, the EIS rep who had been assisting me through this unfortunate experience remarked that, "I was one of the most honest and genuine people," he'd ever represented.

This year I've successfully completed a 150 hour TEFL qualification. My desire after all this is still to teach. Whether I'm successful in securing employment is a different story. A lack of references from my time in education, I think will preclude me from future employment.

After all that's said and done I still feel passionate about education. If I felt I had lacked as a professional or as an individual in some way with respect to my career, I would not have bothered to write to you. It is because I know I have so much to offer and that I was a good hard working teacher that I write today.

I genuinely look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,  
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

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From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: 08 October 2018 19:40  
To: Scottish Ministers  
<Scottish\_Ministers@gov.scot<mailto:Scottish\_Ministers@gov.scot>>  
Subject: Value Education, Value Teachers

Dear First Minister,

I am writing to you to urge you to consider fully the 10% pay claim being made by the EIS on behalf of Scottish teachers - like me.

I have been a classroom teacher for 30 years, teaching in areas of significant deprivation and child poverty. This has always brought its challenges but I know I have done my best to educate and support the children in my care, often at the detriment to my own health, family life and pocket. I am now seriously considering leaving teaching.

I have never known a workload like that which I now have. I am expected to cope with Teacher and Classroom Assistant shortages, 'Inclusion' without properly trained staff to support pupils, curriculum changes without adequate resources and a neverending list of increasingly demanding responsibilities for which I am accountable. Are you aware of the Super-Hero role required of every teacher every day in Scotland? Yet, myself and my colleagues continue to strive for the children in front of us ? for Scotland's future.

I have never been so unappreciated as I now am. I am at a loss as to how much more I can give without proper and fair recompense. A 10% pay rise would elevate my salary to over ?2000 less than the average teacher around the world is paid. In that light I believe I am not asking for more than is my due. Aren't Scotland's teachers worth it?

Please, value education.

Please, value teachers.

Please, value Me.

Kind regards,

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: 09 October 2018 15:14  
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>  
Subject: A letter from a teacher

Dear Nicola Sturgeon,

I am a primary teacher in the Scottish Borders and have lived and worked in the region for the past 11 years, having trained in England.

I have put my job and my 'children' first for the past 11 years, I'm currently off on maternity leave, my 13 weeks full pay has run out and I'm now coping on statutory maternity pay. If my husband hadn't taken redundancy last year then there would be no way we'd ever be able to afford a decent maternity leave as I am the main earner in the household. A teacher's salary just isn't enough any more. I have been at the top of the scale for several years and with no interest in taking on a management role I have no way to further increase what I earn. We are paid for 35 hours a week, no teacher works only 35 hours a week. Not one. I arrive at school before 8am with school starting at 8.40am. School finishes at 3.15pm but I'm at school until at least 4.30pm and take work home on top of that. Weekends? Spent working. To teach properly, provide the children with the best learning experiences and just to keep on top of the paperwork and expectations you have to work during the weekends. I also work during the holidays, if I don't then the work just piles up and you end up swimming against the tide. The job of a teacher is never 'done', it is endless. Then there are new initiatives, new assessments that just add another layer on top of a hectic and overcrowded curriculum.

I love my job, I really do. I love engaging with children, shaping their future and getting them excited about life and learning.

There are many aspects to my job I do not love. I don't love the paperwork, it's endless and often rather pointless. Ever wondered where all the trees go? Check out a teacher's planning folder or assessment folder. Bits upon bits of paper. Behaviour management, this is part and parcel of the job but it's becoming increasingly difficult.

I spent a year being emotionally and physically abused by a child. My life was hell, I dreaded going to work and management were terribly unsupportive. My performance was blamed, every time I asked for help I was told I was a bad teacher. I was so demoralised, my confidence was shattered and I started to believe what I was being told. I ended up on medication, suffering from anxiety and depression. I got married that year and didn't even enjoy my own wedding because of the experience I had endured that year. That's only one experience, I won't bore you with the others. Budget cuts means we can't get support for children who really need it, our support hours have been decimated. We are a [Redacted under S38(1)(a)] school with around [Redacted under S38(1)(a)] children and we have only 1 member of support staff. We also have only 3 hours of learning support time a week. This is not enough. We have so many children who need 1 to 1 support and we are failing them because of budget constraints.

Do you know how many glue sticks and pencils we go through in a year? Do we have the budget to buy enough? No! Our schools are drastically underfunded, in order to give the best learning experiences possible I have to buy my own resources. I spend hundreds of pounds each year on resources for my classroom.

My school is in a small village with a high level of deprivation. We can't even afford to take the children on school trips as parents struggle with contributions and we do not have the budget to fund them from the school account. Every year we take 2 classes swimming, a highly important skill with several large rivers and lakes in the vicinity, now due to the council changing transport contacts this will cost us well over ?100 to travel 7 miles to the nearest pool. This is now becoming unaffordable.

I am due to return to work in February. I'm looking forward to it, but I'm not looking forward to paying for childcare. I have to return to work full time because I simply can't afford not to. My husband is using holidays and I'm lucky enough to have family nearby who can care for my daughter on some of the days. Even for just 1 1/2 days a week I'm looking a bill of almost ?100 a week. I don't know where that money is going to come from.

We are asking for a 10% payrise. We deserve a 10% rise after years of pay freezes and 1% rises. My actual take home pay has barely risen since I started teaching. My pension contributions, tax and student loan are over ?1000 a month. The cost of living has risen dramatically over the last few years and we just about covering our costs each month. As a teacher I shouldn't be living pay packet to pay packet. I trained for 4 years and accumulated ?18,000 of debt to do this job that I love but we should be earning more than we are. We deserve more.

I hope you can see that.

Kind regards,

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

9 October 2018

First Minister  
Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP  
Dear First Minister

I am a primary school teacher with 8 years' service. I work in a school situated in an area of high deprivation. Seventy five percent of my Primary one class are SIMD 1 & 2. Over the last 5 years, in particular, I have personally been kicked, punched, slapped, bit ten and sworn at on a regular basis.

Many of the children responsible for these attacks are themselves victims of Scottish education today. Their needs are not being met in mainstream schools due to the cuts in support staff both teaching and non-teaching. Inclusion is NOT working for these children and spaces in special schools and support units are as rare as hen's teeth. We are setting many of these children up to FAIL!

My colleagues and I are using every strategy we know to make a difference to the children in our school and to close the attainment gap but often it feels as though we have one hand tied behind our back and that local authority and national government are putting every obstacle they can find in our way.

Sadly, my levels of frustration and disenchanted are rising year on year, with endless new initiatives, increasing curriculum content and never-ending paperwork, I never feel up to date with anything. One training course and a few weeks to implement its content and I am expected to have it embedded into my practise, as the next thing looms on the horizon.

As a mature lady with a grown-up family, I find my work/life balance is not a healthy one. I have no idea how younger staff members with young families cope with the demands of this job.

I urge you PLEASE, address the issues which are being raised by teachers the length and breadth of Scotland before any further damage occurs. Your government are wholly responsible for the precarious position of Scottish education, now wake up, step up and act to save what was once the envy of the world.

The future of Scotland is in your hands in more ways than one.

Yours in desperation

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

<noreply@parliament.scot<mailto:noreply@parliament.scot>>

Sent: Wednesday, October 10, 2018 4:14:05 PM

To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP

Subject: Message from Scottish Parliament website  
name:

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

email: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

message:

Dear Nicola,

I am writing to you in response to your request for members of the teaching profession to contact you to highlight concerns, regarding what could be viewed as the current educational crisis.

I write to you with two hats - one as a current head teacher and one as a father of two primary school aged children.

As a head teacher I feel very limited in the support I can offer to children due to demands being put on staffing and budget. To create the time to write to you was a challenge in itself.

An example of my own workload could be today when I haven't (as is the norm) had time to have a break or lunch and it is now 3.30pm and I will be here until 9pm as I have a PTA meeting.

Since arriving in school today I have carried out jobs which would previously have been carried out by support staff - administering first aid, monitoring our playground, monitoring our lunch hall and mopping up spillages to name a few. I of course do not mind carrying out these roles but they have become part of a head teacher's day to day duties, which is frustrating, as we have a desire to make a difference and raise attainment, but very rarely get round to focussing on these.

Substantial time is spent covering classes and to facilitate Support for Learning (since SfL teachers were cut) I use my management time to cover NCC.

Our most vulnerable children and families are often let down as we as head teachers and teachers struggle to juggle the plates of being a social worker, psychologist, therapist, cleric etc etc etc. Every time we reach out for support for a child or family it is another RfA with current waiting times for CAMHS being 18 months - for children at risk, this to me is unacceptable.

I recognise that the quality of candidates coming through our teacher training establishments is diminishing. I fully put this down to teaching not being a desirable career option for young people and while head teachers like myself support our secondary schools, colleges and universities, we are fighting a losing battle with matters out of our control regarding work load, budget cuts and indeed pay. This leaves head teachers dealing with competency matters instead of things that should be driving our schools forward to become centres of excellence and parents losing respect for and faith in our teachers and schools



I am conscious that there is the risk of coming across as a negative member of our profession - I am anything but. I write through frustration and genuine care for the children and families whom I represent and support - myself and my staff want to do more but our time, energy, resources and our person are exhausted. Again, I know that the grammar in the last sentence is poor - I don't have time to correct it as we jump from one task to the next and never feel that we are able to make a genuine difference - back to too many jobs getting in our way of doing what really matters - raising attainment etc

As a dad, I recently had huge concerns about our youngest son's literacy and our oldest son's HWB. On both accounts, the school knew and agreed with my concerns but could do no more to help and support our boys. There was no support available to carry out Better Reading, Rainbow Reading, IDL Cloud with our youngest son which resulted in huge gaps in his learning and as expected social and emotional difficulties as he matured and realised his difficulties. With our oldest son he was subjected to three months of mental and physical abuse(bullying) that went unaddressed as there is a lack of support staff in our playgrounds and we had to take him home from school as he was unsafe and his head teacher was class committed and couldn't spare five minutes to talk to us, reassure us and plan for him.

I care about our school - I decided that I wanted to become a primary school teacher in primary 3, thanks to an inspirational teacher. I was fortunate to be accepted to complete the BEd Primary Course at the then [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]. Since then I haven't lost my love for what I do however I often go home frustrated, mentally drained and upset as I know that the current approach is failing many of our young people - including my two wee boys.

I really hope that our country recognises that schools, education and young people, although we may say are a priority - are anything but at present, and that we collectively can make things better.

I do not wish this letter to be solely about the current pay campaign however I fully believe that until teachers are paid in line with inflation and seen to be valued, standards will only continue to diminish.

This letter should not be based on or immersed in a political arena - education and our children should be fundamental priority for us all however as an SNP supporter, I fully anticipate your support and really do hope that you listen and take note of what members of our profession are saying. We want to get it right for every child and their family and we want to make our schools the very best and for our education system and establishments to be recognised as world class - and for future aspiring teachers to be like I was back in 1995(full of enthusiasm and drive and privileged to be joining the profession. Due to matters raised in this letter there are too many students and NQT choosing teaching as a fall back profession.

I do not give you my permission to share the concerns raised in this letter with any other party as I do not want to be seen as a negative member of the profession etc. I trust that you will understand and appreciate this.

Your sincerely  
**[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]**

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: 11 October 2018 09:18  
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSB@gov.scot>  
Subject: Fwd: Teaching in Scotland

Dear First Minister, Minister for Education,

Further to your call for free speech for teachers with concerns re the state of Education:

I have been a Secondary School Teacher in Scotland since 2006. YES there are problems across education, from nursery to University we face a challenging and constantly shifting drive towards an educational delivery system based on league tables and attainment that has lost its value and its educational worth, as it becomes more about point scoring than a true education. We are training children to jump through hoops, creativity should be at the heart of the classroom and learning across the curriculum but it is stifled by the need to pass an outmoded exam structure; it's factory education and we are its reluctant foremen; grinding wheels left over from a Victorian era. Instead we should be looking at an education system that prepares children for adulthood and a real life not a superficial one that sets them up for failure. University is an end product that not all should be aiming for but it appears to be what they are all being aimed at. Positive destinations seem to be rushed towards in a frantic fashion that suggests we fear the worst if they don't make it somewhere straight after school? Is it any wonder children become more anxious as we hurry them towards a world we haven't prepared them for? That isn't working. We need to change the end opportunity and we need to be rational about it. And we need time, money and resources to make it happen.

However...

I want to start off on a positive note, it's still a great job, I look forward to going to work most days because I, like so many others in the profession find the greatest reward in seeing our young people succeed and every day we get to witness that, for most of us nothing beats that moment when things start falling into place, the moment where the biggest and smallest obstacles are overcome and learning takes place. It's the greatest feeling and it fills you with pride. Teaching is a great job... but when bureaucracy and attainment become the only focus then it kills teaching and learning as it places a limit on what can be taught.

If you want to change things and you truly mean it then you need to make some drastic moves to make it happen.

My first consideration would be to change the way we assess work: Stop assessing every subject by the same external processes and measuring them by results gained in exam. Not every subject is an exact Science and not all grades achieved are a true reflection of ability and talent. On going assessment and internal marking should be enough for some subjects without external marking by people who haven't witnessed the process and development in skill, if something is subjective ie English, Art, PE then surely it can't be marked fairly outwith the school by an uninformed pair of eyes that may not always see the learning intention within the work presented. Yet learning

will have taken place and good quality assessment and judgement made.  
Create a new awarding body to provide the same awards, but one that offers an alternative to the SQA as their systems should not be the only means to measure. One size does not fit all.

A grade given by a teacher should be given its full value in subjects where the learning is subjective not objective. By all means bring in QA measures but surely we must be able to trust our fellow practitioners? Higher and Nat five should be graded in School for some subjects and QA'd by sample, not en masse.

Stop comparing schools on data and results but instead on their impact on the community they are placed and the Schools ability to find true positive destinations for their young people and their ability to identify learners true needs, not ones that tick boxes.

Stop the onus on sitting too many exams at the end of one year as being a badge of honour. Aspiration has become all about academic excellence based on bagging 5 or 6 As but those As are often gained at the cost of a full and thorough education, instead we still have factory education.

Stop cutting support staff budgets and train support staff properly and give schools more of them and give them better rights of employment. That includes all support staff. Janitors, cleaners, office and clerical staff as well as classroom assistants..  
Abolish the faculty system as it is killing middle management staff as they break their backs as the job sizing is not fair. Faculties don't work in secondary schools. Departments need leaders that have subject knowledge and it has created a glass roof for many experienced teachers as promotion is no longer a reality, and disillusionment can set in when the way up is limited and there is no stepping stones to take.  
Make the head of education for each region an elected 6 year post by teachers for teachers and by teachers I mean all teachers. The 6 year tenure will allow an opportunity for teachers to work through strategy over a full secondary education cycle and the majority of the primary experience, it keeps things fresh and up to speed with the ever changing challenges of education in a modern context.

Ensure regardless of what age it happens that the main focus is for kids to be able to read write and count. Don't tell teachers it's got to happen by the end of primary school because it forces teachers to worry about the child not fitting learning into a set time frame. Recognise the child and give the teachers time.

There is so much more to say yet I know there will be so much else out there to read. But finally know this, most teachers work beyond their hours because there will never be enough hours in the week to do all they need to do to make things work for all the kids in front of them. And they do it because they are invested in those young people. We work within the system however badly designed it is to help give these kids the opportunity to go out and change the world. Lets start doing it in a meaningful way not an over measured one.

If you paid us overtime you'd be bankrupt in weeks. So I won't advise that, but what I will suggest is that you give us the pay rise we deserve and you tell Westminster that as well because if we continue at this rate we will be flat on our face as we are already

on our knees. Sadly money motivates and makes sustainable change, but that's the world we live in. Maybe most importantly; ring-fence the jobs of all school staff not just teachers.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our opinions and our concerns. I genuinely hope this helps and we can make teaching and learning across Scotland the positive and life-changing experience that it can be.  
Kind regards

**[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]**

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

I work in one of [Redacted under S38(1)(a)] secondary schools, [Redacted Under S38(1)(a)]. For the most part

it is an enjoyable and rewarding job. However, I wholeheartedly believe that we are not 'Getting it Right For Every Child'.

I could go on, at length, why this is the case but instead, I will give you just one recent example of how we are failing our children. I have a first year class: lovely, enthusiastic youngsters who are a credit to their families and their school. There are 24 pupils in the class and 23 pupils' experiences are being blighted by the actions of just one of their peers.

Of the three times a week I see them, I have only managed to complete one full lesson; the appalling behaviour of one child has disrupted the education of 23 others. One pupil, this week, told me my class was "shit," told me to "fuck off," called me "fucker specky", said he was going to get someone to "fuck me over" and said I was a "dirty slag", before physically threatening me.

Let's leave aside the impact this has had on me and look at the impact on the pupils. They are scared. First and foremost, it's not their education they care about, they are physically scared and looking to me to protect them. They are not learning and they are not seeing any tangible consequences to these actions.

I asked for help from my CL and was left waiting in the corridor for 10 minutes like a poor relative before giving up. My class were left unattended while I dealt with this and my learning support assistant was also subjected to continued verbal abuse. She had to put herself in danger, putting herself between me and the boy, when it became apparent he was going to strike me.

I phoned the office to request help and eventually a Deputy Head appeared. He saw the boy was out of my class with the learning assistant and so left him with her. He knew what had happened, what had been said and did nothing. Since then no-one from

Management has asked me, or the learning assistant, how we are. Were we upset? Shocked? Able to continue with our duties? Rather, I had to complete an online referral and send it to my CL. I then had to forward the referral to the DT who claimed not to know how to access it. I also had to fill in an incident report on the SHE portal. All the while 23 children were not being taught.

This is not getting it right for every child. This is not an isolated incident. This happens every day of every week to at least one member of school staff. Teachers are leaving the profession in droves for this and many other reasons. Our physical health is suffering. Our mental health is suffering. We are undervalued by management. We are not respected by children. We are not supported by parents. We are underpaid. We spend more time on administration than we do teaching. We are drowning in paperwork. There are insufficient funds to support the children who want to learn and need help as resources are ploughed in 'policing' potential threats.

I am 50, a mother, a wife, a daughter, a sister, a niece, a member of the SNP and a voter. I remain committed to my chosen profession and ask the same commitment is shown to supporting pupils and staff alike in our education system.

I'm sure this will be just many responses you receive to your request that teachers write to you. I hope it will be one of many and that teachers are simply not believing it will make no difference either way.

Best wishes,

[Redacted under S38 (1) (a)]

[Redacted under S38 (1) (a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: 12 October 2018 23:12  
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot<mailto:firstminister@gov.scot>>  
Subject: A letter from a teacher

Dear First Minister –

I read recently that you were asking teachers to contact you directly about concerns and I wanted to get in touch regarding this. For some background, I came to Scotland in 2006 (as an EU citizen) because I wanted to make a difference in the lives of young people. I trained as a youth and community worker and later as a teacher, working in schools in inner Glasgow and as far afield as the north western Highlands. I love teaching RMPS and Drama, it is my passion and I've dedicated my life to this. However, I have seen the role of RMPS diminished, some colleagues in other schools have to justify their jobs over it and in a modern and diverse Scotland, understanding different beliefs, cultures and options and interacting with them is so very important. Many schools are scrapping RMPS up and down the country and there is no consequence for doing so despite it being an entitlement for all learners.

The other thing I wanted to mention is the recruitment crisis. I have tried hard to find a permanent job as a teacher of RMPS and so few have come up over the years in Glasgow. I've been a supply teacher since qualifying in 2013 which has been difficult because councils offer you a permanent job after 24 months of service and I recently was unable to get a job with the council I've been with as I had been there for 23 months and they clearly didn't want to make me a permanent member of staff. I had to go on job seekers allowance and use a foodbank which as a teacher, and someone who came from overseas to make a difference, demoralising. The uncertainty around Brexit has been difficult as well (which I know you are not responsible for in any way) and I've decided to emigrate to Australia even though my heart is here. The practice of councils denying work to get out of making staff permanent is widespread and many people are scared to mention this for fear of repercussions such as not getting further work or having contracts terminated even though the practice is legal. Being constantly replaced with probationers as it saves councils money, being denied work due to the councils not wanting to make supply teachers permanent, and the increased workload and decreasing pay in real terms has made it untenable to stay in Scotland. I was scraping by financially as a teacher due to rent increases and daily living increases which everyone has felt, and yet teachers aren't even seen as deserving a 10% increase to bring them in line with other countries and professions? All of this - and Brexit uncertainty and the scrapping of RMPS in many schools or having it taught by non-specialists when it is needed more than ever has contributed to my decision to leave for now, with a heavy heart. But like the whistleblowers have said, many are afraid to speak up or share what's actually going on. I read about the 700+ jobs that are allegedly available but councils tell me there isn't any work and the whole ordeal has been frustrating and disappointing and I know I'm not the only one in this situation.

Kind regards,

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]



From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: Friday, October 12, 2018 9:30:16 PM  
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP  
Subject: Primary School Teaching

Dear Miss Sturgeon,

I am taking-up your offer to let you know what teaching in Scottish schools in 2018 is really like.

I am a primary teacher with over 25 years experience, and I have witnessed a steady decline not only in pay, but also discipline and increasing workload over that time. Yes, I am angry that my pay has effectively decreased year-on-year and I will certainly be striking over that, but that is not the only thing that makes me want to retire as soon as I can. It is actually the daily stress that this job entails. The combination of planning, resourcing (long hours spent on the computer), actually teaching, marking, assessing and endless meetings add up to a daily workload that means I am often working from 08:00 - 6:00pm, and sometimes beyond. It is a long day. But, the most exhausting and stressful part of my job is dealing with the disruptive behaviour of children who should not be in mainstream education. Two years ago, I spent the whole year struggling with a boy who physically assaulted his classmates, my classroom assistant and on one occasion, me, while disrupting my lessons. When he assaulted people - nothing happened. This is partly because Glasgow City Council actively discourage headteachers from excluding children in order to tell the media that exclusion rates are dropping. This year, I have a boy in my class who has emotional and educational needs that are not being met due to lack of special schools and support staff. I spend much of my day struggling with his disruptive behaviour, which is euphemistically referred to as "challenging". I am constantly stressed as he disrupts my lessons with shouting, singing, dancing and, on occasions, assaulting his classmates. In the last few weeks, he has assaulted the same child twice and the school (and I) have had to apologise to her mother. He was not excluded. If I try to reprimand him, he often simply smiles at me as he is well aware that nothing of any consequence will happen to him. There are other boys in the class who then take his behaviour as a chance to start misbehaving as well, and the "challenges" become even worse. As a class teacher, I cannot do anything about this and school management are very reluctant to take firm action, but like many of my colleagues, I keep hoping that the parents of the assaulted children will demand that something is done...

You and your colleagues never see what it is actually like to teach in a modern school environment, where out of control children spend their day disrupting the education of the majority of children who are well behaved and keen to learn. If you visit a school, the headteacher will have made absolutely sure that disruption is kept to a minimum on that day and that the staff do not tell the truth if asked about the conditions under which they attempt to deliver your Curriculum for Excellence.

I have only contacted you because you have promised that I will not face disciplinary charges from Glasgow City Council or my headteacher for speaking out on this matter.

Sincerely,  
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: Friday, October 12, 2018 9:54:08 PM  
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP  
Subject: Re: crisis in our education system

Dear Nicola

I am an educational psychologist and have been since 2001. I am also an SNP voter and a constituent of John Swinney's.

I feel I have to write to you about my concerns for our education system. I am writing as an educational professional and as a parent.

Inclusion can only work if it is properly funded, and it isn't. I am regularly asked by schools to help them include children with additional support needs however they do not have the staff and resources to put in place my recommendations. More able children like my own are not being stretched and children with autism and behaviour challenges are not always receiving their entitlement to education. 'Part time timetables' and unofficial exclusions for children with ASN including those who are looked after are the norm.

Teachers and support staff are at breaking point. I regularly support head teachers and committed staff who are crying tears of frustration as they try to spread scarce resources ever more thinly, and lie awake at night worrying about their pupils. Committed and hard working staff go off ill with stress, which strains the system even more. PEF only increases variation across schools when we need consistency, and it is being used to fill gaps arising from cut, or is being spent on initiatives of dubious efficacy. Regional boards and collaboratives are a nonsense. Either go back to larger LA areas or don't, stop tinkering. It's a total distraction. It was not like this when I first started out in this profession 17 years ago.

Please do not dismiss these concerns. You must really listen. I can't vote SNP again if this continues.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Get Outlook for Android <<https://aka.ms/ghei36>>

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: Friday, October 12, 2018 7:45:12 PM  
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP  
Cc: campaigns@eis.org.uk<mailto:campaigns@eis.org.uk>  
Subject: Education policy

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

Vis a vis your response at FMQs to the question relating to the anonymous teacher's open letter to John Swinney; I 100% endorse the sentiments of the author of the anonymous letter concerning the damage done by forcing an inclusion agenda on schools under austerity.

I, and all my colleagues, at my small rural primary school are suffering daily verbal and physical abuse beyond anything you could regard as tolerable. My DHT had her finger broken by a violent pupil just two weeks ago. The vulnerable (and all) children under our care are being completely failed due to lack of resources to provide the GIRFEC commitments we all aspire to provide. The additional support they need is simply unavailable.

Underfunded inclusion is literally breaking children, educators and whole schools. It is a lose / lose scenario for all involved. We are enduring the worst of all possible worlds at the moment - expected to include children with the highest imaginable needs, but doing so with less than minimum resources to even provide adequate education for children with no additional needs. My school is as far from upholding the SHANNARI principles as I can imagine, despite everyone's best efforts.

We, as a society, will be picking up the pieces of this well intentioned, but completely misguided 'cuts in the name of inclusion' agenda for decades.

I will happily put my name on this letter because the fear of committing career suicide as a teacher and being (informally) blacklisted by local headteachers is far less than the fear of what is going to happen if I keep quiet and pretend everything is fine. It is really not fine anymore. Not fine for me, my mental and physical health, not fine for all the children I teach and the people I work with, either. I cannot keep calm and carry on.

Please can you make the inclusion agenda what it should be; a triumph, not a disaster due to massive underfunding. But this will mean proper funding to meet the needs of the children broken by their environment, family circumstances and poverty. Genuine funding increases in line with need; not cuts or 'absolute' increases. We all know how the politicians say 'increases' but what that really means is real life cuts. OR can you please abandon the inclusion agenda completely until we, as a society, can afford to pay to do it properly?

In addition; I am a teacher and so is my wife. We are really struggling to make ends meet with a relatively small mortgage and 3 children on our salaries. I am told we have had a real terms 24% reduction in our salary over the past 10 years. Apparently we are paid 10% below the OECD average for teachers around the world. It certainly feels like it. We never have a penny left at the end of the month. We haven't had a

proper holiday in years and are constantly in debt despite managing our finances very carefully. Please can you help us? We both work really hard (50+ hours per week, despite only being paid for 35) and we add so much value to our schools with our voluntary extra curricular activities for children and parents. On top of this we are verbally and physically abused at our places of work on a regular, sometimes daily basis.

I hope that you can understand that I support the government and I know you are doing your best in extremely difficult circumstances at UK level, and I hope you too can understand that the children, my teaching colleagues and I are literally past breaking point.

Teachers are the people who make the doctors, engineers, politicians, nurses, police officers, architects and, more importantly, fair minded, hardworking, decent, kind, generous and responsible adults of the future. Scotland's future society really does rest on teachers' shoulders.

Teaching is the best job in the world. Please help those of us who love it, to do it how it should be done. With kindness, compassion, tolerance, respect and decency. Not under duress, in fear, disillusioned and broken.

Thank you for your kind attention,

Yours sincerely,

**[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]**

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From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: Friday, October 12, 2018 5:24:15 PM  
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP  
Subject: Scottish Education

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

I wanted to communicate with you that education in Scotland is not anywhere near as good as it could and should be.

I diligently prepare every term and every day for my lessons and try to make them as interesting, useful and creative as possible. Every single day I teach I feel I am not only NOT getting it right for every child- but there is no possibility that I could. There are children in my mainstream school who would benefit completely from specialist provision- but they are included in mainstream to their, the other children and also my detriment.

I love education and Scotland and am convinced we need to go back to the drawing board to think about provision.

I think you have been an excellent First Minister and am confident if you fully understand the difficulties in Eduoation we can look forward to genuine change and the possibility for GIRFEC.

Kind Regards,  
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: Friday, October 12, 2018 9:49:20 PM  
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP  
Subject: Fwd: Scottish Teachers

Dear Nicola Sturgeon

I am writing this email to you after the recent information regarding the teacher discussions on a pay rise as well as the current conditions that teachers find themselves working in. I must say I am very sad at the pay increase proposal. It is very disheartening that we are in the lowest 5 of OECD average pay. We were given our last pay increase almost a year after we should have and here we are again having to wait on it being agreed. My background was Acute Adult Nursing and I worked in a busy Glasgow hospital for 8 years prior to coming in to teaching. I very much enjoyed my job but I left that profession for much of the same reasons that I am now emailing you about. I started off in teaching with a 'decent' wage but I now find myself making similar monthly pay to my husband who is an unskilled Worker within a factory. Over the years in teaching I have watched both colleagues and myself become over burdened with many unnecessary tasks leading us to now be very much over worked and now underpaid. Our salaries have taken a great hit by pay restraints which now need rectified. I often have to spend money on resources because our school budgets have continued to be slashed yet we still NEED to provide an enriched learning curriculum for our pupils. Schools have now seen staffing shortages which are affecting our pupils. We are now very much inclusive of all pupils and whilst this is great, it was funded well at the start. Now funding has been reduced but inclusion persists and I fear we are no longer able to fully support our pupils in need of inclusion as well as the rest of our class. The morale of your Scottish teachers is of the lowest I have seen it in my ten years of teaching. The feeling is of being undervalued and very much overworked. I studied hard to be where I am and I work hard. Each inset day all we hear about are the NEW changes to the curriculum before the previous NEW way has yet to be fully embedded. It is honestly soul destroying never feeling like your best effort is good enough. I am writing this to you before we start our fight for a decent pay rise and please believe me when I say your teachers have all had enough. We are all ready to stand up and have our say now. Unfortunately, enough really is enough. We are tired, we are demoralised and we are most certainly now very much underpaid and undervalued for the skilled and exhausting job we do. Teaching should still be the same rewarding, enjoyable, empowering job that it used to be. It's still such a privilege to be part of shaping our future generation. I just hope that the government really listens to us now and helps us with both our workload and our pay! Help make it the rewarding career it really should be.

#valueeducation #valueteachers

Regards,

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

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Sent from Gmail Mobile

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: Friday, October 12, 2018 8:04:20 PM  
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP  
Subject: Scottish Teaching

Dear First Minister,

I have always considered myself lucky and privileged to go to work every day, to the only job I have ever wanted. Since childhood I loved to learn, I loved the power school has to form amazing little people. This became the urge to pass that enthusiasm along to others and I believed I had the skills to do that, and do it well.

I am saddened to say that in recent years those feelings are leaving me. I feel powerless, guilty and under pressure on a daily basis. I know in my gut that however hard I try, work or plan that there are too many barriers to cross, needs to be met and skills required of me that I just don't have the time, resources or support to deliver effectively.

This comes from the lack of curricular resources, lack of support for the needs (often extreme) of the children who are placed in mainstream education and the increasing workload and bureaucracy we face daily. We are no longer teachers, we are required to be multi faceted and yet we are neither trained nor paid accordingly.

I continue to work every, single night at home regardless of the fact that I have worked my contracted, paid hours and am exhausted. The alternative is that if I fail to work at night then I am ill prepared for the following day. As a single mother this places strain and yet more guilt upon me.

Those of us 'at the chalk face' have so much to give the children of Scotland and yet we are rarely consulted over what would actually improve education. We are under valued, under supported and seriously under paid for the qualifications, skills and commitment we continue to offer.

I believe my colleagues and I are more than worth the 10% pay rise we are seeking. We very much value the children in our care, as is shown in our commitment to them and feel we deserve the same.

Kind regards,  
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]



From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: Friday, October 12, 2018 7:23:42 PM  
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP  
Cc: campaigns@eis.org.uk <mailto:campaigns@eis.org.uk>  
Subject: Teachers Pay

Dear Nicola;

I am a YES voter.

I am also a school teacher.

For the past several years, I have watched my colleagues fall to their knees with workload pressures.

I teach Mindfulness, and frankly practising Mindfulness has saved me from going under with the stress and pressure of the job.

The team I work with are some of the best professionals I've ever met. They work tirelessly for the benefit of the pupils and families we serve. Enough is enough though.

Staffroom conversations are all about how to get out of teaching....people have really had enough.

My closest friends in teaching need a break.

We need to be valued..its gone on far too long, and without any complaint. Just decent people showing up and creating the Curriculum for Excellence for the pupils benefit.

We need a pay increase that will help to keep people in the profession...I think 10% is reasonable....or you will lose them in droves....

I also teach my pupils Mindfulness and that is helping to keep the classroom safe and productive in an atmosphere of stress within the school system.

With my kindest and warmest regards, [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: Friday, October 12, 2018 8:41:55 PM  
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP  
Subject: Teacher workload

Hello,

I whole heartedly agree with sentiments expressed in the anonymous teacher's letter. She summed up how we are all feeling. We have had a particularly stressful week in our school and so glad of the weeks holiday but the same issues will be there when we return. Increasingly distressed children and troubled families with less and less support, are putting a strain on schools with experienced teachers and energetic newly qualified teachers alike. The derisory pay offer has not helped a staff who are working in excess of 45 hours a week. This along with low morale is affecting Scotland's teachers' mental health.

It needs sorted soon.

We should be treated as valued professionals like the police force. Our jobs are equally stressful.

The latest snp broadcast highlighted all the policies that have been put through. Teachers and education hardly got a mention.

Please rethink the pay offer.

Thank you.

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: Friday, October 12, 2018 7:34:20 PM  
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP  
Subject: The reality of teaching in 2018

Ms Sturgeon

I have never written to a politician before, but as another term ends and I reflect back, I would like to share some of my thoughts with you.

I work in a mainstream secondary school in Aberdeenshire. I am an Additional support for Learning teacher, previously being a Maths teacher.

I am saddened by what I see in schools at the moment. Teachers are exhausted. We have implemented CFB, we have implemented new courses and exams, and we have tried our very best to do this whilst also coping with the misunderstanding of inclusion.

We are not only expected to be teachers, but also counsellors, parents and police to increasing numbers of pupils. The number of pupils in schools with severe behaviour, emotional or mental health issues are expanding at a huge rate, without the outside agencies to help.

Colleagues, often the most experienced and hard working, are leaving the job because of their own mental and physical health. Some are off long term sick. In my department, in the last 3 years, we have rarely had a point where we fully staffed due to long and short term mental health issues of staff. I should point out that we are a really close, supportive department.

Let me tell you about what our department has dealt with in last few weeks. We have had ASD pupils violently trashing a room almost every day. We have to physically restrain pupils on 2/3 occasions. We have had a window broken due to a violent outburst. We have had a pan of cooking oil thrown at a wall. We have held a child sobbing because they can't cope with the stress they are under. We have fed kids who have no dinner money. We have given up break times and lunchtimes to help pupils with school work and emotional support. We have worked with pupils with reading ages under 6yrs (remember we are a mainstream secondary school) We have counselled pupils dealing with loss. Oh, and we have also all done a full timetable of teaching!

We are a school that has a reputation as being one of the best in the region for ASD pupils, but we are struggling. Our ASL teachers are rarely in mainstream classes now, as we are working with high need pupils who will never cope with a full mainstream timetable. This means that the kids who need a little extra, expert help, are getting none. Maybe this is another reason standards are dropping.

I would like you to consider

Is inclusion really working? GIRFEC should not be the mainstream schools for all, unless you are going to increase funding for specialist teachers. We need alternative

provisions. The specialist schools have all but disappeared.

Consider not just our salary claim, but also a thought to the structure. I reached the top of my pay scale 15yrs ago. I have no desire to be in a promoted post. I want to teach pupils. I am continually told what an excellent teacher I am. What is my incentive to continue giving my heart and soul to the job ? Joe Bloggs could come in and do the bare minimum but get paid the same as me. Do you really think this is fair. We need to change the mindset about education in Scotland. It needs to be respected and valued. How can we do this ?

Does your government respect and value education ? Do you respect and value your teachers ?

Now, time for a well earned glass of wine and 2 weeks holidays.

Best wishes

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

P.s I would be grateful if my personal details were kept confidential in regard to this email. Thank you

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: 13 October 2018 18:44  
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot<mailto:firstminister@gov.scot>>  
Subject: Concerns regarding Scottish Education from a teacher and SNP member

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

Like many Scottish teachers, I watched last week's First Minister's Questions with great interest. Your response to Ruth Davidson's question on the state of Scottish Education fell entirely short of the mark. However, as you made it very clear that teachers should feel comfortable to raise concerns I am writing to do so. ?

Firstly, I would like to say that I am a lifelong SNP voter and supporter of Scottish Independence. I am also a party member who is heavily involved at a branch level, is currently a branch office bearer and has campaigned wholeheartedly for SNP candidates in elections in recent years. I say this to make it clear that this letter is not being written to take advantage of an opportunity to criticise your government and jump on an 'SNP bad' story. I wish to raise my concerns as a Scottish teacher, concerns so grave that they have made me consider (on several occasions) whether I continue to support the party with which I have always identified so strongly. ?

My biggest concern is with the workload that teachers are expected to undertake on a daily and weekly basis. As you know, teachers are paid to work 35 hours a week however many, if not most, work an absolute minimum of 50 hours weekly. This is not through choice. The workload that is expected of teachers through planning, assessment, reporting in various formats and creating resources to support the vast range of abilities and support needs that are encountered within a mainstream classroom continues to grow at an extraordinary pace.?

It is impossible to complete all the paperwork that is required of teachers these days within the 35 hours that we are paid. Therefore, we are expected to work overtime every single week with no remuneration for doing so. This is completely unacceptable. This is not only unacceptable financially, but the burden of consistently working far too many hours placed on teachers emotionally and mentally is getting ridiculous. ?

As you are aware, data from the OECD recently showed that teachers in Scotland are amongst the most over-worked teachers world-wide. This is not sustainable. As people become more aware of the workload of Scottish teachers, it becomes increasingly difficult to recruit teachers into teaching posts as well as fill Initial Teacher Education places. This is leading to a crisis where schools are understaffed. How can we close the attainment gap when our schools do not have enough teachers? No amount of PEF funding to fund resources shall make up for not having enough teachers to work with our learners. Something must be done to improve the workload so that we stop losing people from our profession. ?

Quoting the Tackling Bureaucracy document is nowhere near enough. You would be hard pressed to find many teachers that feel any difference has been made since the advent of Tackling Bureaucracy. The government should be following this up and checking that the guidance laid out in the document is being heeded. Sending out the

tackling bureaucracy document is not enough. ?

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As well as the hardest working, Scottish teachers are amongst the lowest paid. You will also be aware of this information from recent OECD figures. As you know, the teachers' side of the SNCT are currently negotiating on a pay rise for Scottish teachers. Unfortunately, despite what you have said yourself on many occasions, it is becoming clear that education is not a priority for this government. The current offer of 3% falls short of the 10% which the teachers' side has proposed. This offer shows how little the Scottish Government and COSLA think of Scottish teachers and of the negotiation process itself. I was particularly appalled by the statement issued by COSLA's spokesperson regarding teachers receiving the same as other school staff. The statement was intended solely to attempt to divide staff within schools. There is no denying that schools would not be able to function without the invaluable support staff. However, if we are to be treated the same financially, I wish to know when we should expect to receive overtime payments for the hours that we work beyond our contracted 35 hours. I realise that these comments came from COSLA and not the Scottish Government however I am yet to hear any disagreement on these sentiments from your government or their representatives on the SNCT. ?

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I would like to add that I love teaching itself. If it were not for the appalling workload and disappointing salary, I would recommend teaching to anyone and everyone. Seeing children develop and grow in their learning, both socially and academically is a wonderful thing to be part of. However, the way things are in the profession, it is currently very difficult to recommend to anybody. ?

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As both a teacher and member of your party, I felt that it was important to share my concerns with you. Not only is Scotland losing teachers, but the SNP are losing voters in the form of disgruntled and disenfranchised teachers. It is essential both for the teaching profession and for the party that something is done. ?

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I look forward to your response. ?

Kind regards?

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[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: Saturday, October 13, 2018 9:29:32 AM  
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP  
Subject: letter from a teacher

Dear First Minister,

I write to you following the recent 'open letter from a teacher' which you discussed in parliament. You invited other teachers to contact you with their concerns. My name is [Redacted under S38(1)(a)] and full qualified primary school teacher from Edinburgh. I have worked with children for a lot of years. I studied and undergraduate in Sociology and Criminology, before providing support work to children with an anti-bullying charity. I have been involved in community education, supporting disabled children at the [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]. I moved to Barcelona and worked as an English support teacher in an internationally respected school.

I then brought my unique and varied skills back to Scotland to study at masters level for the PGDE. I completed my probation year with great success and am now working in a City of Edinburgh Council school. Every day I work with children a class of 26 7-year-olds. Many with complex needs such as autism, ADHD, genetic disorders and fetal alcohol syndrome. Some children are care experienced, anxious, and experiencing neglect or abuse. Yet every day I find a way deliver the curriculum for excellence and stand by its principles to include all.

Ms Sturgeon you set an ambitious target to make Scotland's education system the best in the world. Now, I believe we have many principles and policies which could get us there but there are two clear barriers. Funding schools and valuing teachers. How am I expected to provide a world class education when we can't afford glue sticks for my classroom? In only two years of teaching I have spent hundreds of pounds of my own money on classroom supplies. Things which the school does not have the budget for. But basic classroom resources like pens and rubbers.

The needs of the children in are schools are increasingly complex, as special schools are downsized and closed. Yet no more funding is being given to schools to provide support. I am regularly left alone in my classroom for full days without support, attempting to meet the needs of a child who requires 1:1 support to keep him safe, as well as teach a room full of other children.

In the Finnish model which we regularly look to for guidance. Teachers are extremely well qualified and are paid accordingly. My skills, my wealth of experience and postgraduate qualifications make me a valuable asset to the Scottish teaching profession and I should be paid as such.

I am contracted 35.7 hours a week and I can honestly say I have never worked less than 40 hours. I arrive at school at 8 am and regularly stay until 6, sometimes working through lunch or taking work home to do in front of the TV or at the weekend. I am working tirelessly to deliver the curriculum for excellence to the highest possible standard and to give the best to Scotland's children.

Teacher recruitment and teacher retention in crisis, and I hope you can see why. Who

would want to join a profession where you are undervalued and underpaid? Where you're expected to work 40-60 hours a week but only get paid 30,000. A profession where after 6 years you reach your earning potential and plateau. A profession where you risk being insulted, or spat at or have a chair thrown at you. A profession where the expectations are world class and the funding is drastically subpar. I deserve more. I am highly intelligent, well educated and I deserve more. The teachers of Scotland and children of Scotland deserve more.

Yours Sincerely,

**[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]**

Class Teacher

City of Edinburgh Council



From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: Saturday, October 13, 2018 1:56:58 PM  
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP  
Cc: campaigns@eis.org.uk<mailto:campaigns@eis.org.uk>  
Subject: Recent Teachers Pay Offer

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

I am a promoted teacher. I absolutely love my job, my profession and value the job that I do. I feel privileged to serve our wonderful young people each and every day and to make a contribution to our country's future. I also consider my job to be a vocation.

I have 20 years experience, a first class honours degree and a recent post graduate qualification in leadership. I am a professional not a public sector employee. I am registered with a professional body.

However, despite my experience and qualifications I find myself totally exhausted , stressed , constantly working in excess of 50 hours a week and unable to give my own family my time and attention. My health is definitely suffering.

Why? It is simple and also very complicated. Simply, the workload is totally unmanageable. There is so much paperwork and pressure that I find myself unable to manage it all in my average working week of 55 hours. You have decided that education is the wheel that will close the attainment gap and ultimately benefit the country's economic development in the next 20 years and have thrown lots of money at this. It is wonderful that you have this dedication to our young people and our country. However, the money is being thrown at teachers in the way of a myriad and collection of new initiatives all at once. We are bombarded with change , change which needs time to learn , changes which need time and resourcing, changes which need time to embed. Teachers and promoted staff are completely overwhelmed with the mountain of changes, trying to implement them , evaluate them and collect data on them. It is simply too much all at once. We are also expected to do all training for these changes outwith the school day. These hours simply don't exist , we have reached saturation point. Politicians look at a need in any area of society and expect education to solve it. It can't do it on its own , it just can't!

Another fact is that I truly and utterly believe in inclusion. As do the majority of my colleagues. We don't want separate schools and units to be the answer for our children who are demonstrating behavioural and learning difficulties. As an experienced teachers I know inclusion can really work. However cannot be to the exclusion of others. Class teachers cannot include all children in our large classes without support. These children need our support , we need many more ASNAs and classroom assistant to help us to provide the GIRFEC approach. To prevent escalation of behaviours. If you read Nadine Burke Harris' book teachers need to buffer and love our children with ACEs . We want to and we are willing to, but we need the conditions for us to be right to allow us to do that. We need to feel valued, safe, comfortable and stress free at work to allow us to build these wonderful relationships which will allow each and every one of our children to learn. We need support. Relationships are at the heart of education.

The 3.5% pay rise offer is an insult. Scottish teachers are amongst the best qualified in the world and yet our wages are amongst the worst. Our conditions are also much poorer. Teachers cannot earn overtime like police officers and nurses , if you could categorically guarantee that I could do my job in 35 hours a week and all of the associated training that I require for the masses of new initiatives I will take the 3.5% offer. Or if you want me to be a public sector worker allow me to submit overtime forms and I will happily take the 3.5% pay rise. Please value teachers , please reverse us for working hard , being well qualified, giving our all to our children , spending our own money and time on our children because that is what we do. Appreciate your teaching profession. Teachers are not leaving the profession because they are bored millennials or women with other options , as the GTCS leader thinks , teachers are leaving because , quite simply they are undervalued both in monetary and professional terms and they are overworked and overwhelmed.

Please feel free to shadow me or any other teacher for a whole average working week it may well open your eyes to what we are facing.

You do have the budget to give us the pay rise we are asking for , you can find it . Otherwise the profession will be on it's knees and ultimately the future of our country will suffer

If you listen to us and answer us as a human being , a fellow professional that would also be appreciated.

Appreciate us and value us.

With kind regards

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

Principal Teacher

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]  
Sent: Saturday, October 13, 2018 9:01:18 AM  
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP;  
campaigns@eis.org.uk<mailto:campaigns@eis.org.uk>  
Subject: Second year as a Primary Teacher

Dear Nicola,

My name is [Redacted under S38(1)(a)] and I'm in my second year of Primary Teaching. I initially studied International Relations and Social Anthropology at St Andrews University, and then went on to work in a nursery and as a Pupil Support Assistant at [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]. After a year of working I went to Dundee University to complete my Post Graduate Degree in Education.

I started my probationary year in 2017, at [Redacted under S38(1)(a)], and am now permanently employed at [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]. I am incredibly dedicated to my job and strive every day to make my pupils feel safe, included and successful in their learning. This is definitely not an easy task but I try my absolute best in the circumstances.

There is nothing I can tell you that I'm sure you haven't already heard from the many other teachers contacting you. There is most definitely a lack of funding in education, which impacts on staff and pupils everywhere. What affects my school most is the ridiculously unfair system for allocating individual children funded hours of adult support in Edinburgh, leaving many children in our school (who have extreme additional support needs) in difficult and dangerous situations. All the other pupils are also put in difficult and dangerous situations as a result, and their inclusion and learning are in turn hampered.

However instead of telling you a selection of the horrific incidents which have occurred - due to the lack of funded adult support for individual children - as they have been logged on the SHE portal (with no apparent action being taken as a result) I would really like to invite you to come and visit us one afternoon. In fact, I would urge you to come and see for yourself what I'm sure many schools are facing across the country. We are not far from Holyrood, about a 15 minute drive. Please take me up on this offer and see with your own eyes what is happening in your country.

Yours sincerely,  
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]