

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: Saturday, October 13, 2018 8:42:55 AM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Subject: Teacher Pay Claim

Dear Nicola,

Having read the open letter and also your reply in government willing teachers not to feel they should remain anonymous, I too would like to voice my concerns. I am a teacher who is currently working in North Lanarkshire and have been a qualified teacher for 5 years now,

I spent 4 years at Edinburgh university studying a BEd in primary teaching. During that time I spent a great deal of money travelling back and forward to university as I could not afford to live in the student accommodation. I also took out the student loan to help pay for books and travel which 5-9 years ago cost me £12.90 per day for a return. I felt at the time this was very expensive for public transport and I then tried to car share into the university too. However, I attended the university each day as I knew I wanted to be a teacher and always had. I wanted to make a difference and feel that I had helped provide an education in many ways by being in a classroom and teaching young people. To support them the way my family and teachers had supported me in getting to the position I was in. To not feel like this was a privilege in our society but a future many children could hope for.

Since graduating, I have had many experiences. Some have been very challenging. Some have also been very enjoyable.

I have worked in "new build schools" in which throughout the year class sizes grew bigger and bigger resulting in the school losing their library, ICT suite and open spaces. To the point where classrooms are now out in cabins again. This is not a good working environment but also not a good learning environment when the pupils had no space to learn, no areas for desktop ICT teaching, no books to access in a library area and less playground space to socialise in.

I have also worked in a school in which the staff are working tirelessly year in year out to locate and adapt resources to support children in a holistic curriculum which is not clear enough and ever changing. Usually developed by people who have not even worked in teaching! This school had the advantage (or disadvantage) of being open until 7pm throughout the week. 80% of the staff members worked from 8am-7pm every night. They worked very well as a staff developing their resources and planning and assessing their pupils and themselves, together. They worked over and above their hours every day, every week even though they planned together to try and alleviate the workload and stress. I became part of this school and although the hours were long and had a huge impact on not only my stress levels and personal life, I too wanted to make a difference and hoped that the partnerships we were building and our dedication would pay off. Our head teacher was understanding about the pressures on teaching and tried her best to filter through to her staff the major priorities which education had heaped not only on her as a manager but the impact on her staff too. This is a very common occurrence in teaching and I know many teachers who work the same and longer hours each day, each week as we cannot "switch off" we cannot

work to rule as we know we would not be able to plan, teach and assess effectively in the time we should. We cannot do this in the time we should already and are working over and above without being paid a fair salary for the hours we "should" only work. I have also worked in a school with a language and communication centre. I did not ask nor expect to be placed in that area as I felt it would be to the detriment of the pupils that I had not had enough training in supporting pupils with such severe and individual support needs. However I was not consulted and just had to "get on with it". I did everything I could to better myself and my understanding and teaching, applying for more and more courses, working with other professionals and reading various materials. I do already do all this as part of my CPD but this was another area I knew I desperately needed to develop at the same time. While working in this centre I was hit, spat at and verbally abused quite regularly. The protocol for staff in the centre was to log this with severe incidents being sent to the LA education department to be counted. It saddens me to say this is not only common but a daily occurrence in support centres now but also in mainstream classrooms. Teachers following "inclusion" to the detriment of the teaching of their other pupils must include children who are now growing in an educational environment to believe this is acceptable. Resulting in less quality teaching for others. Teachers do not have the support staff now as this has also been depleted. Resources are limited. Teachers use their own limited funds to resource their classrooms. Stress is high. Workload is unmanageable. In which other profession do people work over and above daily and it is acceptable to be abused? But all of my concerns, which are shared throughout my profession, are not valued enough to merit a salary which is reflective of inflation. So with less resources being provided in education and less salary than 10 years ago, we are still expected to teach to the same standards.

Regards,

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: 13 October 2018 10:38
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot<mailto:firstminister@gov.scot>>
Subject: Troubled Teacher

Dear First Minister,

I am writing to you after your invitation for Scottish teachers to contact you directly to voice their concerns. As you know, Scotland is a democratic country and therefore no one should fear repercussions for voicing their opinion or having their professionalism questioned for disagreeing with pay, conditions and policies. I feel that for too long I have been keeping quiet for fear of the consequences of speaking out. Even though the GTC Scotland document Code of Professional Conduct instructs teachers to 'be professional, honest and act with integrity in your dealings and correspondence with GTC Scotland, other regulatory (or similar) bodies' and The Standards for Career Long Learning tells us that 'Professionalism also implies the need to ask critical questions of educational policies and practices and to examine our attitudes and beliefs.'

I read the first letter to the Deputy First Minister with a lump in my throat and tears in my eyes as I identified with all of the anonymous teacher's points. I was extremely disappointed with the government's response as it does not address the key points made by the original author. Like them, I am a SNP voter. I wholeheartedly believe in Independence but I am becoming more and more disillusioned with the direction that Education has taken under your party's leadership.

Firstly, I want to make it clear that I love teaching. I love working with children. I love developing strong relationships with them and their families. Every child I have taught holds a special place in my heart. I love to foster strong community links and teach my children to be respectful and responsible citizens. I love the 'eureka' moments when a child suddenly gets it. I love seeing the joy on their faces when they find learning fun and exciting. I love watching them grow up, mature and progress in their learning during their year with me and beyond. I love being in the classroom and learning alongside the children. I love planning and preparing fun, engaging and exciting lessons. I love that every day is different. To be a good teacher you do not just teach, you must also be a nurse, a role model, an actor, a shoulder to cry on, a counsellor, an investigator, a judge and a peacemaker, to name but a few. I hope that I have made my passion for teaching abundantly clear.

However, if things do not improve, I cannot see myself doing this job when I am 45 let alone when I am 65 without burning out. The pressures facing teachers are becoming unbearable and morale is low. Polls taken by Bath Spa University and published by the EIS show that 40% of Scottish teachers are thinking about leaving the profession, this does not reflect the number who have already left, and 58% are unlikely to endorse the career to others. Many of my cohort of teachers have either left the profession entirely or moved abroad, where pay and work conditions are better. Have I thought about leaving? Yes, but I reiterate the above point. I love teaching. John Swinney may claim that measures have been taken to reduce workload, streamline the curriculum and tackle bureaucracy. I can assure you that the workload is constantly rising, bureaucracy is increasing and changes to the curriculum

do not happen overnight. These are facts. What started as a campaign for fair equitable pay has become so much more. I hope that my letter, and the letters of many others, open your eyes to the issues teachers are facing on the 'chalk face'. After having my son, I returned to work part time. I should work 21 hours a week. In reality, I am working approximately 38 hours a week, often more. I do not get paid overtime for working extra. I do it because to do my job to the standard expected, I have to. Before having my son, it was not uncommon for me to arrive at school before 8am and leave after 8pm, and not be the last to leave, then continue to work at home. I know many of my friends and colleagues across the country still do. Is this an acceptable work-life balance? The team of dedicated teachers I work with provide the best education possible to the children in our care. This was commented on by our HMI inspection team and is evident in our school inspection report. We work hard to meet the needs of every child and push them to fulfil their potential. The standard of education expected of us is frankly unachievable if we were to work to rule, I challenge you to find a teacher who works to their contractual hours. Austerity is crippling teachers. Budgets are constantly being cut and many of us are now spending our own money on resources. Personally, I have spent hundreds of pounds buying things such as; books for the class library, topic books, furniture for my classroom, rugs, soft furnishings, toys, learning games, pens, pencils, paint, paintbrushes, glue sticks, other art supplies, backing paper and borders for displays, whiteboards, whiteboard pens, ingredients for cooking, etc. This list is endless - so that the children I teach get the most meaningful and valuable learning experiences they can, in an environment conducive to learning. All of this on a pay freeze, then a paltry 1% pay rise. Fundamentally, as the cost of living increases, I need my pay to increase too.

The recent OECD report Education at a Glance highlighted that Scotland is one of the few countries where teachers' pay has been cut, in real terms, over the past decade. Changes to pensions and National Insurance, combined with sub-inflation pay settlements, have led to cuts of around 24% in teachers' take-home pay since 2009. The report also highlighted that the average pay for a teacher across OECD countries is equivalent to over £42,000 per year while, in Scotland, pay for a class teacher maxes out at £36,480. With a 10% pay rise this would take the maximum salary to £40,128. Still well below the average pay for teachers across OECD countries, yet pay negotiations have broken down. COSLA claims that 3% is the best offer and that it matches, or better offers made to other public sector workers. Yet this year, police have secured a 6.5% pay rise and nurses a minimum 9% pay rise. Why are teachers deemed as less important? It is time for the Scottish Government to truly Value Education and Value Teachers.

As I mentioned earlier I work as part of an extremely dedicated team who try our best to meet the needs of every learner and Get it Right for Every Child but right now I can honestly say that the system is not getting it right for some. My Head Teacher, [Redacted under S38(1)(a)], has also written to you detailing an incident that happened last week where a child assaulted four members of staff and the police had to be called. Alongside my colleagues, I spent my lunchtime last Friday cleaning up the soup that had been thrown across her office. Scraping it off the walls, carpet, furniture and painstakingly trying to remove it from a precious memento from her previous school. Not because I had to but so that she didn't have to. She had had a stressful morning partly due to us being short staffed and she also had to then help supervise the

children outside during lunchtime. I admire her courage and cleaning up soup was one small way we could help her.

Currently Inclusion requires pupils with additional support needs to learn in a mainstream school unless specific exceptions apply. A fundamental idea I support and can see why as a government you would promote this idea. I believe that a fully inclusive society is something Scotland should strive to achieve. However, for Inclusion to work properly it requires all parties involved; the child, the family, the school and the other agencies, to be provided with resources, funding and support. This is the crux of the problem. These things are lacking and over the last few years as cuts have been made what little funding, resources and support that were there have been chipped away at until we are left with a system that is not working for anyone. In our school the number of ASN children has gone up and PSA hours have gone down. The children with the most complex needs, quite rightly, need to be prioritised which unfortunately means that other children lose out. Inclusion should not be detrimental to the education of the other children in the class. John Swinney insists that measures have been taken to reduce teacher workload, but who may I ask has to shoulder the burden that cuts are causing? Us, the class teachers. We are working tirelessly to meet the individual needs of each child now with less support. I have taught children with a whole host of additional needs. I have spent hours, of my own time, researching how best to support them and attending courses. I have worked in partnership with other teaching professionals, families, agencies and support staff to try to best meet the needs of these children. But sometimes the strategies, guidance, behavioural policies and experience do not work. A child is in meltdown and lashes out, often with behaviours they are unable to control. To keep the other children safe, I have had to evacuate classrooms. This means that I have had to teach lessons in the corridor, dining room or any other available space in the school without resources and equipment. The classroom is trashed, the other children are scared and there is a child in distress.

Violence is not acceptable in any other workplace so why should it happen in mine. Sadly, I know that violent incidents are occurring in schools across the country as I have seen many posts on social media from teachers asking for advice and guidance. I can totally understand why some people are witnessing this and making the decision to leave the profession. I count myself lucky to have not been hit, kicked, punched, spat at or bitten ? a statement that many of my colleagues cannot make. However, I have been the target of verbal abuse, had things thrown at me, tables pushed into me and had to place myself in danger to protect the other children in the class. I fell pregnant the year I had a class like this. A total blessing, but, I cannot put into words how stressful that situation was. I put on a brave face and with the support of my colleagues, we managed the risk. Teachers should not have to plan their families around when they might have 'challenging' pupils or classes.

Tackling bureaucracy has been a big focus in recent year. Our school has reduced the amount of curricular planning expected of class teacher's drastically, yet my workload and the amount of pointless paperwork which must be done has not decreased. With the withdrawal of specialist teachers, I spend more time teaching myself subjects to enable me to plan and then teach the children. For example, to be able to teach children how to read, speak and write in French I must have a deep understanding of the language myself. This is only one area of an over packed

curriculum that we now are expected to deliver. We have more trackers to submit, boxes that need to be ticked for someone making spreadsheets in the council offices. These are not true reflections of my pupils. They do not add anything to my assessment and planning process. They just add to my already overflowing workload. Yes, the curriculum has finally been streamlined. I like the new benchmarks as they are a step in the right direction for a clearer more concise Curriculum for Excellence. However, just because new guidelines are published these changes do not happen overnight. All I ask is that we are given time to absorb the changes, embed them in our practice and measure impact before the next initiative comes along. Scottish education does not need to jump on the next educational bandwagon. Teachers are never given time to figure out if the changes that have been made make a difference because we are too busy trying to implement something else.

The Scottish Education system was once revered, with Scottish teacher's being sought out to teach throughout the world and they were respected members of society in our own country. Sadly, I feel that society, as a whole, does not respect the important role that teachers play any more. When even Ken Muir, CEO of the GTCS, a body that is meant to promote and support the teaching profession, is making inflammatory and derisory remarks in the press, what hope do we have? Respect needs to come directly from the top. It is time for you, First Minister, and the Scottish Government to truly Value Education and Value Teachers.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

Another Scottish Primary Teacher

Home Address

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: Saturday, October 13, 2018 10:09:47 AM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Subject: Teacher concern

Nicola

As an SNP supporter, I have become increasingly concerned about the role teachers are now being expected to play in schools. As a DHT, I spend more than half my week dealing with parents who are under the belief that it is my job to parent their children. Most relationship difficulties and indiscipline stems directly from social media comments made in the home out of school hours yet teachers are expected to take full responsibility for the bullying, with disgruntled parents free to use the same social media sites to slate individual teachers & schools because we are sometimes unable to stop the bullying. We are not allowed to respond online ourselves and, in fact, would not necessarily wish to do so. However, spending much of my day dealing with unrealistic demands of parents who are 'at work' so unable to deal with the issue themselves or even attend meetings to discuss the problem, while simultaneously being judged on many other criteria - not least being exam results - is extremely demoralising. Most teachers also have children and parent them, despite also being 'at work'.

I have never been a political animal but I feel teachers are now being asked to sort social problems without associated resources or recognition so felt impelled to express my concerns.

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

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: Saturday, October 13, 2018 12:58:02 PM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Subject: Your offer of a listening ear

Dear Nicola,

Thank you for your offer of a listening ear.

This is made more welcome after the refusal of your Government, and COSLA, to even listen to the teachers' side of the SNCT on pay negotiations.

I have met with the Deputy First Minister on a few occasions, the latest at the end of Maths Week Scotland when he talked at Edinburgh University.

There was much talk by him, and practitioners, about the work we put in to engage students and to raise attainment, close the gap, be inclusive and so on. It was, therefore, the more disheartening and disappointing when his team walked away from negotiations.

It is even more worrying when he tried to spread the suggestion that the pay offer would make Scottish teachers the best paid in the UK. I am sure you are now aware of the facts of the matter?

Not only are Scottish teachers well behind others in the UK we are significantly behind others according to OECD figures.

You state that education is your number 1 priority, particularly "closing the gap" This, surely, can only be attained by attracting, retaining, and nurturing a well motivated, well respected and well remunerated teacher workforce.

So I am taking you up on your offer - and challenging you to listen to the teachers, to find funding at least equivalent to that found for police, but realistically to match the 10% asked for; which, after all, is less than half the real-terms cut we have taken over the past 10 years.

Meeting this 10%, continuing to reduce bureaucratic workload, listening to teachers regarding assessment, building a respect for teachers and ensuring suitable career pathways will go a long way to encouraging high quality people into the profession and retaining the high quality people already in the profession.

Can you meet this challenge?

I look forward to your reply.

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: Saturday, October 13, 2018 8:52:15 AM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Subject: Teaching

I believe I will not have any negative consequence come from what I am about to say...I have been a primary school teacher for approximately the last 25 years. I have loved working with children and watching them grow and learn. I have enjoyed creating a safe environment and being dependable adult on which they can rely. I have also watched the job of teaching slump to an all time low and I have become cynical. The harder I work the worse it becomes...

Inclusion: The inclusion policy does not work without adequate support. If we are going to teach children with specific needs and challenging behaviours we can't do that without adequate support. Inclusion was 'sold' to us on the understanding that we would be supported with Pupil Support Assistance in class. Gradually that support has been taken away. **Behaviour:** Behaviour is at an all time low with guidelines (written by these elusive people that clearly never go near a school) and recommendations that have stripped teachers of adequate ways to control 'challenging' (bad) behaviour in school to the extent that we have children roaming our corridors swearing, racially abusing, physically attacking staff and intimidating pupils and there is apparently nothing we can do about this except provide them with the few resources we have and give them privileges so that the children who can behave wonder why they don't get the same. As far as I can see the extra money that was thrown at individual schools recently given has been wasted on 'nurture' and new furniture!

Learning & Teaching: Our methods of teaching have been tampered with so that we are told exactly how a lesson should be taught in prescriptive ways that sometimes just don't fit the lesson and then Quality Insurance Officers who come and scrutinise our teaching to make sure we are doing as told: 'giving the children the learning intentions and building the success criteria.. oh, and don't forget these learning intentions should be on display throughout the lesson and revisited... etc'.... so that learning becomes boring and predictable. We are forced to adopt these methods while results continue to plummet. We have to throw out valuable maths books because they are out of date? Why? When we used these maths books our results were much better? None of these initiatives make any sense and people are building their careers on the back of them.

Conditions: we are not valued as a work force. You can see this when we go for training. I would say that only one out of the last ten training sessions I've had was of any value. Training events are generally held somewhere on the other side of the city and start at 4pm. We have to get there in by own car or by public transport after a hard day at school. We are never reimbursed for this, usually we miss the first part of the training because it's not physically possible to get there on time. Generally you are lucky to even get a cup of tea... this is after a day with often no adequate breaks. When I compare this with the conditions of training for my young engineer son it makes me laugh.

The numbers of male management in overall workforce is very wrong. Please can someone take a look at this?

Our career structure is unfair and difficult.

I believe our teachers pay has devalued by approximately 24% in real terms over the last decade. I'm sorry, I haven't had time to actually check this... probably because my working day doesn't stop when I go home. I am correcting, planning and writing up copious amounts of paperwork for various reasons - Boxall forms and reports on pupils that are dubious, go round in circles and never achieve anything. I spend much of the 'holidays' catching up on report writing, preparation and of course all my personal appointments: doctors, dentist, optician etc. because there's never any cover for these in school time because of the huge amounts of meetings after pupils have gone home and the fact that the supply route has been obliterated due to pay and conditions of supply teachers. Our breaks are used up running clubs, supervising pupils, preparing and gathering resources and we often don't get our agreed NCT although we do have all the extra duties (and some) that came with that same agreement.

I could go on but frankly I doubt anyone will read this to this point. Maybe this is what was planned for education and I should maybe just retire because I'm not the type of compliant that's required but I can't because I've seen my retirement date pushed from 60 to 66 and I can't afford to!

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: Saturday, October 13, 2018 10:20:53 AM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Subject: Teaching

Dear Nicola

I am an Instrumental Instructor who has had groups perform to John Swinney for new school openings in Ayrshire.

I started work in schools in 1991 and I have never felt so insecure about my job or so overwhelmed with workload.

I am astounded by the number of times now that pupils have told me to fuck off- not my own pupils but pupils within the building. This is now happening in every school. Pupils have a stronger voice than teachers and it is not preparing them for the world.

I am an SNP voter but the state of education is awful. Please invest.

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: Saturday, October 13, 2018 1:47:43 PM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Subject: Value education, value teachers

Dear First Minister,

Imagine an education system where staff can access required resources, both commercial and consumable, that help lead to a wealth of quality learning opportunities without underpaid staff funding them personally.

Imagine that this system supports and provides appropriately trained bodies to ensure that all children receive an inclusive education.

Imagine a system that continually reflects and acts upon findings to ensure that bureaucracy is always being challenged and kept manageable and practical.
Imagine staff being paid a fair wage for the hours and effort they put in.
Imagine being valued as a profession.

Imagine feeling excited, enthusiastic and passionate about your job again.
Imagine the long term effects of all the above on the present education system when they are just figments of imagination?

You don't need to. Please listen to what teachers are saying. The present climate in education is not worth imagining. It needs to be addressed and quickly.
I trust you will do your best to remedy this situation.

Yours sincerely
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
(teacher of 28+ years)

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: Saturday, October 13, 2018 10:59:40 AM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Cc: campaigns@eis.org.uk<mailto:campaigns@eis.org.uk>
Subject: Value education, value teachers.

Dear Nicola

I am an SNP member, a supporter of independence, and a teacher. For the first time ever I fear that these aspects of my life are so much in conflict that it has reached crisis point. I fought long and hard to get into the job I love and nothing will make me turn my back on it. Not even my strongly held political beliefs. I have been a vocal supporter of CfE and argued in support of the new curriculum. However as I gain more experience in my profession I see that education is being used as a bargaining chip for political point scoring. I hear the rhetoric that education is at the forefront of the Scottish Government's priorities but see little evidence of this. Teachers are not greedy but many are having to take second jobs simply to survive. Many excellent teachers are leaving the profession because the demands placed on teachers are simply too great. In real terms we are 24 per cent worse off since McCrone. This means less people are entering the profession as it is simply not as well paid as other graduate professions. Herein lies the greatest problem for the existing workforce. There are fewer of us in schools to do the job ergo we are required to do more and more with less resources. It is simply not possible to achieve all that is expected of us in the current situation. This means that our pupils are being let down and this is simply unacceptable. It's time for the Scottish Government to stand up and be counted. If you really value education let's not try to do it on a shoestring budget. Pay teachers what they are worth, this will keep current teachers and encourage others to join the profession. This is the first step in bridging the gap and raising attainment. A goal we all aspire to

Respectfully,

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: Saturday, October 13, 2018 6:37:05 PM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Subject: Teachers salary situation

Dear Ms Sturgeon

I started on the Chartered Teacher route in 2008. There was a freeze on progress placed on this scale which discriminates my graduated approach from my colleagues who submitted an APL claim at the time. Thus I am in the situation where I will finish a qualification in December but not be merited the salary of a stage 6 chartered teacher-where my qualification merits. I also suffer from the austerity pay rise of 1% in the last three years which was coupled with a compulsory pension contribution . These measures plus the introduction of the new tax bracket mean I am worse off than ten years ago before the cost of living is considered too. The same cost of living got MPs a 15% pay rise for this year alone.

Professionally my workload has doubled and both my physical and mental well being is suffering from teaching a very vulnerable and violent sector. My expertise and strategies that I have learned on the chartered teacher route have reduced violent incidents from this small group by over 80% since starting my appointment. Yet my salary has decreased in real terms. This is despite daily risk to my life. Please valuing education respond to advise me how this is valuing education.

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

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: Sunday, October 14, 2018 11:38:27 AM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Subject: Inclusion without resources

Dear Nicola,

I am a primary teacher working for North Lanarkshire Council. I have been teaching for 15 years and love my job, however, the beginning of this new school year has been the most stressful yet. Over the years I have grown used to the usual stresses that teachers face such as changes to the curriculum, planning, moderation and accountability. I spend most evenings when I return from work, marking, researching and planning for school. These are things that gradually creep into your working week and I know are unfortunately 'part of the job'

I have a class of primary 1 children. Within the class there is a child with Autism and a child with behavioural issues as well as two children who need constant adult support for educational needs. I have had no support for these children. We have one classroom assistant for the whole school who comes in for the odd half hour when she can, to help calm these children down when they get very disruptive but she has other commitments around the school. Our headteacher has been asking the authority for a full time ASN for the child with Autism since the beginning of the school year and still nothing. In the meantime I am expected to struggle on unaided. This came to a head two weeks ago when I had to leave the classroom after another disruptive outburst from both children. This involved attacking other children, throwing things around the class, screaming, etc. This, of course upset the other pupils' learning again... (this happens regularly) I can only describe what happened to me, as an emotional breakdown. I couldn't cope any longer. I spoke to my headteacher who was very supportive and is trying to come in to help me when she can, but again, she has other commitments too.

Why are the authority not supplying ASN support for these children? The child with Autism cannot be in mainstream school without one-to-one adult support, yet he is not getting any. This is the first time in my career that I have started to question my own health and well being. I am a very easy going person and I don't complain, as maybe other teachers might do. I just try and get on with the job as best as I can. I now realise, for my own health and well being, that I can't go on like this. Also, just as importantly, its not fair on the other children. This is their first experience of primary school in primary 1 and they witness these outbursts most days.

North Lanarkshire's decision to reduce the allocation of classroom assistants in each school to 'one' has had such an adverse effect to our school, as a whole. Having 'another' body around the school to help out with the ever changing behavioural and educational demands within each individual classroom would definitely make a huge difference.

I actually don't know why I am writing all this. I am a very private person, I don't want a fuss made. I just think its ridiculous that the first term is finished and still North Lanarkshire Council are unable/willing to provide the support required for

these pupils with additional needs. I am sure there are many other schools across the authority with similar difficulties.

I know you will get many similar letters from struggling teachers that you will need to wade through,... just wanted my own personal experiences to be heard too.

Many thanks,

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: 14 October 2018 20:18
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot<mailto:firstminister@gov.scot>>
Subject: Education

Dear Nicola,

At the outset I would like to highlight that this is a private e-mail and not for public consumption.

At First Ministers Questions you said that teachers can come and raise anything they want with the Government. I would like to take you up on this offer. Concerningly our employers (Local Councils) often do not feel the same way and many teachers fear being disciplined by our employers for speaking out about the chaos in our schools. That is an environment which your Government in over 11 years has in my opinion shamefully done nothing about.

I have been a teacher for nearly twenty years and have worked in a number of Local Authorities. In 2000 I would rate schools as "good" now it is "poor". I went to school under the Thatcher Governments of the 1980's and it is sad to say but true that I was taught in classes with more resources, classes of smaller pupil teacher ratios and without doubt an environment with better behaviour.

Teacher morale has never been so low and recruitment and retention is a major issue. Can I remind you that in the early days of the SNP Government your then Education Minister Mike Russell "suggested!" that teachers get a cut in their sick pay or that supply teachers take a 47% pay cut. The 47% pay cut came in and guess what not enough supply teachers! Yes it was reversed last year, I think you would agree a reverse ferret?

Teachers pay has declined by at least 25% in real terms over the last ten years. This makes teachers feel devalued, especially as your Government has surplus money which could easily give them a 10% rise. I suppose when we are talking about pay a question must be asked about your Government proposing a divisive pay offer which would give different bands different percentage rises. I suppose this a policy well tested by Governments as we see the two tier pension arrangements now in place in for Scottish teachers. My pay has fallen by 25% in real terms and I now have to work an extra 7 years to get my pension and you wonder why morale is so low and teachers are leaving.

Lack of resources is a big problem in our schools. From pupils sharing textbooks (sometimes between 3) to lack of pens and paper. Giving Head Teachers more control over budgets I think will exacerbate this problem as I believe you should be ring fencing budgets. Management in my experience tend to look after each other. By this I mean you do not see many Deputy Head teacher roles going in schools but you do see teachers, especially ASN teachers getting cut. Some schools have expanding numbers of DHT's sometimes called Associate DHT's funded through the attainment gap money. I don't think more managers will solve the crisis in Scottish schools. This links into the subject of Inclusion. A great idea, but it needs to be properly financed. It is not being properly financed and ASN teachers are facing the

most severe cuts. This makes the educational experience of all pupils worse and adds stress to all teachers. Inclusion would work well if it is resourced, however it is not being resourced and this is actually having a negative effect on our schools.

The workload and stress that our teachers are under is enormous. There are too many initiatives that create work but do not add value, too many people on secondments justifying their jobs by creating paperwork and rooms full of officials in Councils wanting to create paperwork to check the "professional" teachers are doing their jobs. Planning in Primary schools is one such example of bureaucracy gone mad. Have you actually seen the amount of "planning" Primary teachers do and does it add much value? No. In the secondary a pupil told me that his Higher English teachers couldn't teach the class for two weeks because she had tracking to do on the computer for the class and learner conversations with every pupil! The paperwork must get done at all costs and well the teaching can take a back seat!!!

The exams have clearly been dumbed down. The standards are shocking. I do not know one Secondary teacher who privately would say anything different. It is an embarrassment to me as a teacher how for many pupils they do not sit exams and for those who sit exams the exams are ridiculously easy.

Behaviour! I could write a book and people would not believe it! It is nearly impossible to put into words how much worse it has got over my years as a teacher. When I recently heard a very senior educationalist/Manager basically say that a pupil who brought a knife into school should not be excluded I was dumbfounded. It is a depressing situation.

I have not always been a teacher and would say that the last 5 years of my working life have been the least enjoyable and least rewarding. I now only work for two days a week in education and I have a spring in my step for the three days where I work outwith education. This is because I am treated as a professional, treated as an adult and valued by my employer.

Hopefully the EIS has a massive turnout in their ballot for industrial action and the Scottish Government realise they have to make a realistic pay offer to teachers. I would say that your Government is seeing whether they can get over the magic 50% turnout. Sadly if they don't, your Government will not have won but have put a death nail into Scottish Education as you will have teachers at an even faster rate leaving their jobs.

At a recent meeting of teachers I heard many staunch SNP supporters saying how bad the situation was in schools and how bad our pay was. The thing that made me chuckle was when a number of them said "if only John and Nicola knew!" As a student of Soviet Politics it made me think about the Soviet Union under Stalin's purges. There are hundreds of thousands of letters from ordinary Soviet citizens writing to Stalin to tell him about what was happening as they believed Stalin would sort it and they famously said "If only Stalin knew!" Not for one minute am I saying that yourself or John Swinney are anything like Stalin, however I think I make the analogy that even they wised up after a while.

If Education is your priority, I really do wonder what it would be like if it wasn't! Pay the teachers then sort the bigger issues.

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

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: 14 October 2018 08:41
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot<mailto:firstminister@gov.scot>>
Subject: Education Feedback

Dear Ms Sturgeon

I recently read that you are keen for feedback on what is currently happening in education.

I recently left a post as a Deputy Head teacher in a Scottish Attainment Challenge school in Aberdeen and am now working in four schools across the city as a supply teacher while teaching Mindfulness and Resilience. The levels of stress and anxiety I am encountering among Primary aged pupils is highly concerning. In my opinion much of it is triggered by an addiction to online gaming (? Fortnite?the game of the moment but any killing game will do) as well as a lack of quality time with parents many of whom are also busy online in some form or other.

In addition, sitting in staffrooms across the city and listening in to staff talk is fascinating but worrying. So much time is being spent worrying about stuff that frankly just is not relevant to pupil learning or getting the most out of school life. It is rare to hear a mindful teacher who is just focusing on the day or the lesson ahead., there is so much else to worry about or think (see article from TES below) about for them that their brains are too cluttered to do a really good job in the classroom. Collegiate discussions about pupils which should be taking place have been replaced by worrying and complaining about stress and how much time the latest curriculum initiative is taking to put in place. It's easy to see that school leaders get frustrated with this ?negativity? but all too often we/they have forgotten what being in a classroom with many disengaged (see comment on gaming above) pupils is really like and indeed many have never experienced this before.

I have copied a link to an article in TES that also provides interesting reading. Although it is written from an English perspective it is nonetheless very accurate in every other way and could equally be applied to our Education system.
<https://www.tes.com/news/im-calling-bullshit-our-education-system>

I hope that you/your team have time to read and absorb this email. I have to say that I AM a fan of John Swinney and I think the Scottish Education system has many positives BUT we are also being crippled by many of the same things highlighted in the article above.

I don't have the answers but I would love to help!

Yours very sincerely
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)] (Aberdeen)

From: noreply@parliament.scot<mailto:noreply@parliament.scot>
<noreply@parliament.scot<mailto:noreply@parliament.scot>>
Sent: Sunday, October 14, 2018 2:20:56 PM

To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Subject: Message from Scottish Parliament website
name:

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

message:

I am a teacher, You asked me to contact you. I am a former SNP voter but now totally disillusioned by Swinney's handling of Scottish Education. The current budget cuts in Fife are brutal. The workload is unsustainable. The morale rock bottom. Class sizes are growing, course choice reducing, promotion opportunities shrinking. Scottish Education used to be something I boasted about to my teacher friends in England but no longer. We seem to be moving in the direction they have taken post Gove. I am contemplating leaving the profession after 20 happy years. Please listen. I am not alone.

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: Sunday, October 14, 2018 8:15:38 AM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Subject: TEACHERS PAY AND CONDITIONS

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

I am aware that you have recently said teachers and other public sector workers can contact you with their views on their job and working conditions. As a teacher currently working in 2 state schools, I wanted to let you know why I feel so strongly about the current 10% pay claim.

I am passionate about teaching and believe it is vital to the wellbeing of society that all children are offered a high quality education. I am an Additional Support for Learning Teacher in 2 school in South Ayrshire and find my work challenging but also very rewarding. I am also the parent of 3 children all attending local schools in Ayrshire. There are a number of key concerns which must be raised if the high quality of Scottish Education is not to tumble:

* Lack of classroom teachers - I am often moved from my role as an additional support teacher (providing extra teaching for those who are included in mainstream education and have multiple learning barriers or behaviour issues) in order to cover classes for absent colleagues. The lack of classroom teachers is directly impacting on my role in inclusion and raising attainment.

* Inclusion without resourcing - teachers have multiple needs in their classes and often lack the resources to meet the needs of all learners - we need much more funding in order to meet the needs of children who are at risk of exclusion, those with learning barriers such as dyslexia and those with complex emotional and physical needs. The impact of challenging children on teaching cannot be underestimated - in the past year I have experienced both verbal and physical abuse from primary aged children and this adds to the stress of an already exacting job.

* Lack of teachers entering the profession - I am constantly concerned by the lack of new teachers entering the profession, and the resulting impact this has on the education of my children and other children. My daughter is due to sit Nat 5 Chemistry this year and has had multiple supply teachers for this subject since there are no permanent chemistry teachers. Her future is being impacted by the teacher shortages.

* Workload - the workload for teachers is immense. We are constantly asked to complete returns, track pupil progress, fill in forms requesting extra help for pupils, attend staff meetings and departmental meetings, provide information evenings for parents and even teach! The constant demand to raise standards in a climate of budget cuts and high levels of paperwork is unsustainable.

I realise there are multiple calls on the resources of the government, but I feel teaching is at a crisis point and the 10% pay claim should be awarded quickly if we are to avoid strikes and more discontent among teachers.

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

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: 14 October 2018 10:12
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: Fwd: Teaching Concerns
Dear Ms Sturgeon

>

> I made a change of career from science to primary teaching at the tender age of 44. Before I had completed my probationary year in 2006/7 the 5-14 curriculum had been discarded in favour of CfE. Obviously I had little to compare with but I certainly found the lack of structure and summative assessment with CfE woolly to say the least, not that I'm suggesting that 5-14 was perfect.

>

> During my PGDE course I had a single two hour lecture on additional support needs and yet there has been such a massive push for inclusion. I don't see how class teachers can be expected to cope with the multifaceted and multi-agency needs of some children while still ensuring depth, progression, challenge and personalisation for the rest of the class (many of whom also have learning difficulties of one type or another), The level of support in the classroom has been reduced dramatically at the same time as inclusion has been increasing. I agree that parents should have the right to opt for mainstream education but inclusion HAS to be appropriately funded, as it was initially sold to all. Giving a P4 child 30 minutes support daily when he is educationally more suited to a P1 class laughable.

>

> Policies and priorities at local level seem to change on an almost annual basis. Money is thrown at one area of the curriculum, for example 1+2 languages, for a year or so then funding is pulled and directed elsewhere, for example STEM. This process ensures that nothing is fully embedded and teachers are left confused about where their own priorities should be.

>

> PEF money, although a good idea, is simply papering over the cracks and not necessarily targeting those children it is supposed to support. The original SNP manifesto promised to reduce class sizes from P1 to P3, this would have been much more beneficial than PEF money, which is too little, too late. Also using the SIM D status of families does not take into account the many families living in private rented accommodation but also in poverty. The figures in some more rural areas in particular are very much skewed by these circumstances. It never fails to surprise me which children in my class are categorised as SIM D 1&2 and which children are not.

>

> I am contracted to work a 35 hour week but work easily 9 hours every day in school and bring work home almost daily plus weekend work. By my calculations I am easily working a 50 hour week simply to stand still. If I want to be involved in driving initiatives forward I will need to find the time from somewhere. As for the resources that I buy for my pupils, I wouldn't dare attempt to total the figure. I read somewhere once that teaching is the only job where staff steal from home and take to work...so true. Ink, printer paper, games, rewards, storage containers, you name it, I'm sure I and many other teachers have bought it.

>

> As well as teaching I am expected to ensure that my pupils brush their teeth, eat their lunch and take daily exercise. I become mother, nurse, confidante, disciplinarian, referee and role model between the hours of 9am and 3pm. I have a responsibility to

raise concerns on all manners of health and wellbeing issues, recording these according to child protection guidelines. I don't think there are any other professions where so much is expected of one person.

>

> It's so sad that after just 12 years of teaching I now look forward to retiring, very definitely a change in my attitude. I love working with the kids, they bring me immense joy on a daily basis but the ever burgeoning paperwork that seems to have little or no impact on the actual learning and teaching within the classroom has basically broken me. I will be leaving the profession as soon as I financially can before I collapse under the strain of the job. I will not receive my state pension until I am 66.5 but there is absolutely no way I will still be teaching by then. I really do pity those teachers younger than myself or without the backing of additional pensions. I have no idea how they will live long enough to make it to retirement.

>

> Is a 10% pay rise the answer? It should hopefully encourage much needed new blood into the profession but will do nothing to aid retention in the long term. Unless something is done about workload we will still face a staffing crisis.

>

> Kind regards

>

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

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

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: 15 October 2018 10:44
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: Letter from a primary school teacher

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

I am a primary school teacher, with over 10 years experience. I could relate to everything that was written in the open letter sent to John Swinney recently. I love my job. In fact, it is far more than a job. I enjoy the fact that you can make such a difference in the lives of young people. I work very hard to provide the best education for my class as I possibly can.

However, over the years, this is becoming increasingly more challenging. I have had to deal with behaviour in the classroom that I shouldn't have to deal with. I've had to evacuate my classroom while a pupil with ASN has turned tables and chairs upside down in my classroom. I've been physically and verbally abused. This also happens to my colleagues on a regular basis. My colleagues are amazing teachers. My head teacher is passionate about what she does and is very supportive of her staff. However, you can only work within the constraints of what resources you have. In our school, we have one PSW per stage (we are a double stream school). We have several children that have ASN and really require more individual support, ideally 1:1. There are also ASN children that don't have behavioural issues yet they require a lot of support academically and emotionally, but within a class of 25-33 their needs are simply not being met. This is not down to lack of teacher training. Before I was a teacher, I worked with children in residential care and my first degree was in community and youth work, so I am very experienced with dealing with children with ASN. The issue is not staff training. **WE ARE SIMPLY NOT MEETING THE NEEDS OF THESE CHILDREN!** Inclusion is not working. We are trying to follow GIRFEC. However, we are trying so hard to get it right for the ASN children in the class, who take up most of our time and energy, we are failing to get it right for the rest of the children, and the children with ASN. As a result, you lose that sense of achievement and satisfaction from the job. Coupled with the **INCREASING** bureaucracy, poor pay and lack of resources, the job is becoming impossible to do effectively. What you will be left with is children who have received a second rate education, who will not have the skills and qualifications to succeed. As an SNP supporter I was SO disappointed when I heard both John Swinney's and your own response. It came across as very dismissive, derogatory and out of touch. I know a lot of my work colleagues around central Scotland are feeling the same. You **NEED** to take this letter and other people's responses seriously as I think this may make or break the SNP in the near future. Most voters in Scotland have close relatives in the education system, and many parents as well as teachers have been commenting on this issue.

I am more than happy to discuss these issues further with yourself as there is so much more to say. I trust that by emailing you, there will be no repercussions as you stated at First Minister's question time. I understand why the teacher had to be anonymous as many councils have media clauses where they would lose their job if they spoke out. I look forward to hearing your response to the points raised in my letter.

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

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

Sent: 16 October 2018 11:52

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Please read - re teachers' pay and the state of education in general

This was not written by me but is a great summing up of the current state of Scottish education and everything that's wrong with it.

<https://thedearamadampresident.wordpress.com/2018/10/16/education-has-beenhijacked-the-politicians-own-it/>

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

A Primary teacher

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

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

Sent: 16 October 2018 22:43

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Message from a teacher

Hi Nicola,

I appreciate that you said you would welcome thoughts from teachers. I think that's brave of you and open minded so thank you for that.

I am in my 14th year of teaching and would say it's the best job in the world. I absolutely love my job and working with my kids each day. I am so privileged to do so. With every job comes paper work and bits that people don't like. However, I would say I am getting overwhelmed with the amount of extras that I have to do to do my job well. I work about 60-70 hours a week. Most nights I run an after school club (totally my choice but otherwise kids wouldn't have the opportunities we give them). Then I take lots of work home. I am also studying for my masters in autism. This is also my own choice and completely self funded by me. I'm doing this because I'm interested to know more and to be able to better help the children who are put in a mainstream classroom with little support. I think there are a lot of problems at the moment with scottish education, starting with the overloaded curriculum. There is no time for anything. There is very low morale amongst staff and that coupled with the low pay and lack of recognition of the job we do vs the job we are paid to do. On top of the extra hours I work I spend hundreds of pounds a year on my class to make sure that my children don't miss out.

I am sure you have had loads of complaints from unhappy teachers. Mine isn't a complaint it's a plea for recognition and for help to make our job a little easier and to make our children's lives a little better. We all want the same thing and need to work together to make it happen.

Thanks for reading.

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: Tuesday, October 16, 2018 9:48:52 PM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Subject: Teaching Today

Dear First Minister,

I am taking the opportunity to share how I feel about my job in light of recent media coverage after the 'open letter' that was shared by an anonymous teacher. I have read that you are welcoming teachers to share these thoughts with you.

I have been a primary teacher for 13 years and have seen many changes in that time, not all for the better.

I have seen the very slow transition from using the 5-14 National Curriculum to the Curriculum for Excellence. The experiences and outcomes within these levels were very broad and at times vague, which has resulted in many years where schools spent hours upon hours attempting to make sense of these, fill in the blanks, create progression lines and planning documents with more detail than what was originally given, only to now have benchmarks to replace some of our work. This also meant that all schools across Scotland were all doing these same tasks, mainly in isolation which is such a waste of time and makes 'moderation' across Scotland impossible. Hours were given to meetings to address moderation but what could be done alongside a couple of schools within a learning community in a few hours is minimal. The Curriculum for Excellence should have been much clearer before implementation.

I have seen a bigger focus on tracking and monitoring, recording and gathering evidence to the point of individual assessment files for pupils. We have tracking meetings, profiles to complete, evaluations to write, etc where it feels like we are no longer trusted enough to do our job and that our judgement and word is enough because we are knowledgeable professionals! Everything has to have a paper trail, to the point where we had to have every child with an individual jotter to record out of school achievements. If they take part in an event they've to record it, if they get a certificate it has to be photocopied and stuck in. It's no longer enough to say well done but it has to be tracked, photographed, shared, where it begins to feel forced and contrived. The movement of 'Tackling Bureaucracy' has done very little to help alleviate teacher workload. I understand that one piece of guidance is that we did not need individual assessment folders. We now have 'best work' folders where children choose and keep some of their best work after 'learning conversations' with ourselves. This is yet another demand upon our time.

I feel in many cases, the purpose behind a lot of this type of work and many exercises we undertake is for the constant fear of HMIe inspections. I very often in meetings wondered about the purpose of a lot of paperwork and timely exercises to be met with the same "If anyone comes in they need to see... If anyone comes in we need to..." This constant fear of inspection and needing to evidence absolutely everything to inspectors has created schools where there are many pointless tasks and 'tick box' type of activities that are worthless and demotivating. This extreme accountability is absolutely turning attention away from teaching and learning.

In a hugely cluttered curriculum, the idea of having to show within a lesson to inspectors that my lesson has good pace, is motivating all students, has Aifl strategies embedded, has clear learning intentions and success criteria, uses technology, makes reference to class rules (which are no longer rules but statements loosely linked to The Rights of the Child, which I'm pretty sure is over the heads of the majority of younger pupils), has positive discipline strategies, involves all learners, making sure they are challenged, but not too much, you know it's got to be achievable targets, but for all remember, so that means I'll differentiate the tasks for groups and for individual children. Oh yeah, in that lesson I'll also make time for peer and self assessment, give praise and valuable feedback. I'll make it active, make use of excellent, attractive resources I've sat up the night before making, cutting out and laminating, using my own ink I've bought with my own money and in my own time that I could have been spending with my own children. I'll make links across the curriculum, deal with challenging behaviour, give particular thought and support to those with ASD and learning difficulties within my class and if I'm still standing by the end of it I better try to squeeze in a plenary as it would be frowned upon if I didn't.

All teachers I know spend their own money on class resources. There is a lack of basic supplies and a huge lack of teaching resources. It seems to now be frowned upon to make use of commercially produced products/schemes. Why use a Nelson spelling book to help support your lesson when you can make something very similar yourself and spend half hour to create your own resource for that half hour lesson, then repeat for all the other subjects that day, perhaps creating 4 worksheets for various abilities? And so it goes on, amongst numerous other tasks every day.

I have only just begun to describe some of my job. Teacher workload is phenomenal. Stress is rising amongst teachers and many days are lost due to stress and mental health related issues. I think it's a job very few people would do for the salary we're given and I don't think it is at all surprising that many are leaving the profession. The number of children now in mainstream with special educational needs is much more than it was 13 years ago. I have 3 children diagnosed with autism within my busy class of 30 (and possibly others where assessment is ongoing). It seems to be the norm to expect children with ASD, ADHD, children with English as an Additional Language and a range of other learning difficulties and support needs within a class. These children have been put in mainstream under the term of 'Inclusion' which is not always beneficial to them. There is a lack of support staff for the number of children and sometimes limited knowledge and training. I personally have a young child with possible ASD, who will be assessed in the near future and I actually fear his future education. Not because of the teaching staff. Scotland is full of hard-working, dedicated teachers who do their best every day but it is never enough because expectations are not just too high but are unrealistic and actually impossible! Some of these children I worry are sadly lost within large classes. Teachers can be violently assaulted and lessons disrupted, again adding to teacher stress. Teachers do not have the manpower and support necessary to make this 'inclusion' work. The title 'Getting It Right For Every Child' seems laughable and rather patronising.

I have given you just some idea of teaching today. It takes a special kind of person to be a teacher. To turn up every day in such a stressful environment with excessive workload for the pay we are given takes resilience and dedication. And yes, there must also be a love of teaching, an enjoyment of seeing children learn and wanting the best for our pupils to make us come back daily. But to do all this without pay increase, where we have actually 'lost' money in real terms for years might just be the last straw for many.

For the sake of the teaching profession and Scotland's children I urge you to consider the recent EIS pay claim. Teachers in Scotland are being paid well below other countries in comparison according to a recent study by the OECD. I think it is time the Scottish Government showed teachers we are valued and deserve more. I thank you for your recent invitation to share an email in this way and I thank you for reading and very much look forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely,
A Scottish Teacher

64

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: Tuesday, October 16, 2018 7:58:13 PM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Subject: Education

Dear Nicola

I am a primary school teacher and I am sure I do not need to tell you the crisis education is facing!

I cannot speak for other educators but i can tell you of my own experiences since being in this role! I am constantly having to buy resources basics such as pens pencils crayons white board pens ect just so I can allow all children to participate in lessons! The reason for this is budget cuts and the fact the school just dont have enough money for these basic things!

I am currently teaching a very diverse class! In the one class I have several children with additional support needs! Some children sadly cannot even communicate with me and have needs beyond my training! However we are told this is "inclusion" if you could see the distress and exasperation in their eyes I can tell you this is as far from inclusion as you can get! I also have children who are extremely extremely violent! Again this is something far beyond my training! How to cope with being kicked punched and hit everyday was not included in my university training! Teachers are unaware of where to turn, what to do and how to help in these horrific conditions! Most of establishments that would help us support these children and help settle them into school life have sadly one by one been closed! This seems to be the norm throughout the city!

We are being asked to deal with situations we are simply not equipped to deal with! Our role seems to be expanding without any choice or discussion! At the end of the day it is these poor souls who suffer.

We can simply not get it right for every child if we are not given the support to do so! It is simply impossible.

I understand that money does not grow on trees but the cuts to education are having disastrous affects on our young people and our educators!

If there are to be changed and things put in place to being to improve these worrying times I would ask that anyone who is in charge please consult with the staff in the classrooms who this is truly having an affect on and who can give you a true reflection on what is actually happening to our suffering education system! Things need to change and I am hoping this begins to happen soon as I fear for the future of our young people and the amazing souls who chose to become teachers to make a difference to young lives who sadly don't feel they can do this anymore!

Regards
Sent from my Samsung Galaxy smartphone.

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: Tuesday, October 16, 2018 5:40:59 PM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Subject: Value Education, Value Teachers - PLEASE DO NOT IGNORE!

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

VALUE EDUCATION, VALUE TEACHERS - PLEASE DO NOT IGNORE!

I would like to thank you for the message you gave teachers recently during First Minister's Questions, that you would welcome feedback on how we feel about our job. It is reassuring to know that your government is ready and willing to listen. I am a 39 year old secondary school English teacher with 16 years' experience. My husband is also a teacher and we have four primary-aged children. I, therefore, have a very thorough and personal knowledge of the challenges currently facing Scotland's teachers. I also have an unshakable belief in the power and promise of education, and know first hand what a privilege and pleasure teaching can be.

Ms Sturgeon, I know that your government values children, and I applaud some of the initiatives you have implemented which demonstrate this. The baby boxes and increased nursery provision are certainly markers of your commitment to equity in early childhood. The PEF provision in schools has also been a welcome, though temporary, investment. What is still needed, however, is permanent and convincing commitment to our tweens and teens by protecting top quality education delivered by highly skilled, experienced and valued teachers. My main aim in writing to you today is to convince you of the crucial link between valuing young people, and valuing teachers by responding respectfully to our reasonable, measured and moderate request for a 10% pay-rise.

The media and members of the public often misquote the figures or focus unduly on teachers' holidays, which is a distraction from the key issues: teachers are, in real terms, being paid less than we used to be, yet we are expected to do more and more in less and less time, with fewer and fewer resources. The result is that teaching is becoming increasingly and dangerously unattractive as an option in the post-graduate job market. As well as struggling to attract new graduates to the profession, we are also suffering from a worrying increase in the number of experienced teachers who are leaving education well before retirement age. And those of us remaining in the classroom do not judge them - we completely understand why these colleagues have decided to vote with their feet. Unless your government takes decisive and immediate action to show your support for teachers and demonstrate an understanding of the job that we do, even more of us will eventually make the same move, driven out by exhaustion and low morale, caused by decades of unsatisfactory working conditions and the realisation that continuing like this until 68 is simply not an option, no matter how passionate we are about serving our country's young people.

Again, I would like to emphasise that it is the children we are trying to protect with this campaign. The purpose of a pay-rise for teachers is not so that we can all book exotic holidays during our languorous six weeks off - it is so that when the babies you are currently bestowing with baby boxes reach high school there are still qualified, experienced, committed and valued teachers there to welcome them and guide them through their adolescence with care, compassion and the expertise required to help

them achieve the qualifications needed for them to embrace their own future careers. This campaign is about protecting and improving our children's future. It is about investing in the young people whose best interests are our common interest. And investing in Scotland's children in an investment for the whole country. They are our future, after all.

I am not going to wheel out statistics here - the extent to which Scotland's teachers are paid less than our colleagues in England, or in most other OECD countries; the drop in pay we have endured in the past decade; the number of hours more we spend in front of our classes compared to teachers in the countries whose education systems we admire, whose pupils are significantly outperforming ours in basic skills such as literacy and numeracy; the number of hours of unpaid overtime my colleagues and I put in and how much it would cost the government if staffing levels reflected the actual number of hours worked by teachers annually; the difference between our salaries and those in other comparable professions; the amount of money the government has spent on pay-rises rightly awarded to other public sector workers, including our teaching colleagues in colleges. As I said, I'm an English teacher - numbers aren't really my forte! But I know that the unions have explained these things clearly to your government in the recent attempts at salary negotiations. I simply ask you to listen. To really listen. And to ask yourself, what if? What if you ignore us and continue to perpetuate a culture in which teaching is undervalued by the government and, in turn, by society? Who will pay the price in the long run? Not teachers - we can always choose to follow our colleagues out of the classroom door and into other professions - but our pupils. In the immediate future, too, disruption to our children's education looms with the increasingly real threat of industrial action. I personally am extremely uncomfortable with the prospect of going on strike, as I feel that it would punish children for the inability of adults to engage in meaningful and respectful discussion. Hence this letter - I want to be able to assure my children and my pupils that every possible attempt has been made to get your government to listen to what the teachers of Scotland are saying, without our pupils being caught in the cross-fire.

For me, teaching is a vocation, as I suspect politics is for you. I have always found it a great joy to work with young people, nurturing them as they access their right to an education which develops their personalities, talents and abilities to the fullest (UNCRC Art. 29). The pupils themselves make my job enjoyable. I know we are valued by them, and by their parents; they know how hard we work for them and they appreciate our commitment. However, the government must not rely indefinitely on the goodwill of teachers, and the hope that heart-felt thank you cards from pupils will be enough to keep experienced, skilled practitioners in the classroom until we are 68. It won't be. No matter how deeply we care about our pupils, eventually we will not be able to carry on without serious recognition from the government of the strain we are under as a profession resulting in positive, radical change.

For the sake of my pupils and my own children, I hope I can convince you to use your considerable influence as First Minister to ensure that the Scottish government gives the nation's teachers and our Value Education, Value Teachers campaign the respect and recognition we deserve.

I look forward to hearing from you.

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

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: 16 October 2018 23:02
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: Teaching in Scotland

To whoever this may concern,

I am not making my letter public with my name attached. However would like you to know my views. More money may not be possible and I understand that so i have a different suggestion.

I am a hard-working 'young' teacher who has just moved up from England. I'm supposedly employable as I am young enough to need to take on extra responsibility for free because I want to move forward in my job, I'm not too expensive but I have enough experience that nobody needs to hold my hand. I'm also not a perfectionist. You can't be in life not just this job and I call this a quality of mine!

I can't get a job.

Not for lack of trying. I am currently a supply teacher and my foray into this realm of temporary work has opened up my eyes to some of the negatives of working as a teacher in Scotland compared to England.

I will begin with the curriculum, I was trained with a much more prescriptive curriculum and am now allowed to be more creative with how I teach. My English training is the ONLY reason I don't find the Curriculum for Excellence a challenge. New teachers coming into Scottish teaching are at a loss because everything is so vague and they have little framework or experience to work from.

In more important news, why can't I find work? Because jobs are not being advertised. I don't know why. Schools I know have classes without teachers yet are only hiring supply staff. As a supply teacher I am never out of work and there are many 'long term' supply positions but these are not conducive to my own mental health and preparation for future. I am struggling to get a decent mortgage and I do worry about what would happen if there wasn't work. I want permanent work and teachers are needed but for somereason (my experience suggests money) schools won't take on permanent staff.

Recent research suggests it's more cost effective to have supply staff, as there are many around, than pay permanent contracts that include holidays and sick days that then need to be covered. This may be at the heart of the issue of staff discontent: there is not enough money in the system so schools are having to force staff into uncertain positions and force remaining staff to be flexible to fill the void instead of focusing on their own classes. Who loses here other than teachers used to being upheld as professionals? Children of course. No continuity and no structure. This doesn't happen nearly as much in England. Classes always have a teacher in my experience and most roles are permanent.

Behavior is a constant battle. Some children and their parents just do not care about the education. So why are we forcing them to follow the curriculum. Why do we not

give children the choice. Parents can put their children in school to learn or childcare where they might learn different things. You can't have both. It clearly doesn't work. Especially when my class ends up a riot because of two children yet this is somehow my fault.

Which brings me to inclusion. An impossible task. Some children just cannot learn in the environment we are offering. I'm not the only person who understands this. Many teachers do. But for some reason you are forcing these children into a situation that is not right for them and effects other's learning whilst you're trying to 'include' those who simply can't or won't be included.

I don't expect you to stop school being compulsory, I'm not naive. So my solution is this: for the pay and conditions, reduce the expectation. Stop calling us teachers and call us glorified childcare and social workers with teaching thrown in as an addition. Stop making it our fault if children don't learn enough. Stop asking why. Stop questioning us. I'll take the medium pay and the uncertainty if I get left alone to do my job, be allowed to buy a house at the same time and not feel like I'm trying to make my job more than you, the government, want it to be.

Maybe teaching is no longer a profitable profession and I understand that. I appreciate the world is always changing and children are more educated than ever but maybe sometimes in the wrong way. And, maybe the way teaching is going, a change is needed that I cannot provide.

I will happily learn a new trade. Finish my masters, get a PHD and go into a research role to help others and support my country that way. Maybe by then teachers won't be required to have a degree because the job simply doesn't require it and there isn't enough money to entice highly trained teachers. Maybe I'm one of those people who just thinks we need to stop pretending we can provide the best by offering nothing of note to pay for it. The pretense is killing people.

My job is lovely. I love it. It's a challenge every day but the reward keeps me happy. But I can find other work. So let me do it properly for the few years you have me left to do it. I've no intention of 'cutting out early' but I am worth more than what you are offering me and I am happy with that. I will move onwards and upwards. Please be happy with that too and reduce the expectation if you're not going to increase the pay.

Kind regards
A teacher.

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

Date: 17 October 2018 at 09:17:07 BST

To:

nicola.sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot<mailto:nicola.sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Teaching

I am a primary teacher with 34 years service. Firstly I would like to say I love my job and I am passionate about teaching. It is all I have ever wanted to do. However in recent years it has become more and more challenging. I work about 50 hours a week and still don't feel I'm doing a good job. I don't put in these hours for any gold stars I just want to do my very best for the children in my care. I am writing this during my October holiday as I would quite honestly never have time when I'm at school. I am sure you are now very aware of the challenges we face..... very high stress levels, overloaded curriculum, inclusion of some very challenging children without the correct support, SNSA testing of 5 year olds, lack of supply staff available, difficulty recruiting new teachers and retaining experienced ones. I have named just a few and not been specific. I feel we get asked to jump through hoops continuously depending on what is "popular" at the time. We no sooner jump through one hoop until we're given a higher one then oh! Try one on fire! Just before the Summer this year I found myself thinking about retirement for the first time ever. I don't want to leave the job I love but wonder realistically how long I will be able to continue doing it. I fear for the future of education.

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: 17 October 2018 11:09
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot<mailto:firstminister@gov.scot>>
Subject: The Challenges of Teaching

Being an experienced teacher of 27 years, I have witnessed the many changes and challenges that teachers have had to face and endure! All changes have been made without speaking to the 'ants' of the workforce, who are the ones that are then left to try to implement them in the curriculum. This often happens without the proper support from management or local authority. Curriculum for Excellence was to be revolutionary in education and only 11 years later people are starting to get their heads around it.

I have witnessed first hand, changes to a curriculum which has become so overloaded that it has become impossible to teach everything needing covered. We have to teach literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing(mental, social , physical) , science, technology, art, music, drama, French, IT , social subjects, STEM, RME. We are constantly under pressure to squeeze more and more in, whilst making lessons fun, active, relevant! I don't know any teacher who works a 35 hour week and we have an additional 190 hours timetables for after school meetings etc, etc. We have seen class sizes increase as there is a lack of teachers on supply list. Each class has challenges as there are pupils who do not have the proper support to help them with their barriers to learning. This then further adds to daily stress that teachers face, as we are expected to support these pupils whilst we stretch and support the more able. We are constantly being pulled in all directions. I have to say that I have always enjoyed teaching children but no longer enjoy the role due to excessive pressure, stress, workload, paperwork, constant assessment, record keeping, all to show accountability. I have witnessed students that have worked with me, complete a years probation and then quit the profession. I wouldn't be able to recommend teaching to anyone. Pension changes have also meant that at the age of 60 years(despite starting teaching at 21), I will be 15 years short of full superannuation payments, as I will not receive this until I'm 67(If I make it)!

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

----- Forwarded message -----

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

Date: Wed, 17 Oct 2018 at 09:02

Subject: Teaching

To:

nicola.sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot<mailto:nicola.sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>
<nicola.sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot<mailto:nicola.sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>
>>

Dear First Minister,

I am currently a Primary Teacher with a Primary 1/2 class and I am writing to tell you how difficult my job has become. I have been teaching for 15 years and I have to say the last few years have definitely been the hardest. I worked in a different authority for 10 of those years, in a school in a deprived area which had its own struggles. I left there because I was dealing with challenging behaviour on a daily basis, chairs thrown at me, swearing and refusing to do anything I said (to name a few) on top of everything else we are expected to do within our profession. The hope was to find a school where these challenges didn't exist and I had a better work/life balance. Sadly I don't think this is ever going to happen.

In my current class I have lovely children who are well behaved and desperate to learn and please. I love my job when I am in the class with them doing what I enjoy (teaching). However this is often a challenge because I also have a child who struggles desperately with mainstream education, he is currently in the process of being 'assessed' by speech and Language and Educational Psychologists. He lashes out at the other children and myself on a daily basis because the environment is too much for him. I have had to keep a record of all the violent incidents some of which include a burst lip and nose. I have unhappy parents approaching me daily because their child has been injured. I have had to have an extra handle put on my door as the child runs away. I miss out on my non-class contact time often as this child cannot attend PE lessons or assembly as he cannot cope in those situations. I am all for inclusion and think it has huge benefits but we do not have the provisions to deal with the issues that come along with it.

There are also the many issues that teachers have with workload that I am also facing. In my school we have a calendar that shows us when our staff meetings are so that we can plan in advance. So far this year (we are only in the first term) I have had to attend six meetings/course that were not on the calendar after school. I am very fortunate that I have a very supportive family that help me with childcare but I know there are many people that do not have the same support network. These additional meetings and courses mean that the work I would have completed in school then has to come home with me. I often find myself sitting until 10pm if not later working on resources or planning. So in fact this better work/life balance that I have tried to achieve is now worse.

As I said I love my job but I am finding it more and more difficult and it is having a negative effect on my mental and emotional wellbeing and my family life. I am not sure if things continue the way they are just now that I will be a teacher for much longer. This makes me really upset and defeated as teaching is all I have ever wanted to do but I can see no other solution.

Thank you for your time and for listening,
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

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

Date: 17 October 2018 at 14:30:07 BST

To:

nicola.sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot<mailto:nicola.sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Scottish education

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

I read the recently published, anonymous letter from a teacher and agree with its contents wholeheartedly. I have also read your response and your invitation for other teachers to contact you directly. As it is the school holidays, I have the time and energy to write this letter, although I am not convinced that anything will improve in our education system. I want you to know that I have lost faith in my local authority, the SNP government (for which I have voted for several years), Mr Swinney and yourself as the leader of our government.

When I qualified as a teacher and started work in August 1986, I felt honoured to be part of Scottish education. I did not consider it to be a job or a career, but a vocation. I LOVED my job with all its positives and negatives. In January 1997, I gained promotion to my current post as Principal Teacher of Guidance. Despite being incredibly busy, I felt that I could (and did) make a positive difference in the lives of the young people in my school.

Now, after 32 years of service I need you to know that I HATE my job. My heart and spirit have been broken in the last five years or so, by being unable to fulfil the impossible demands placed upon me. On a daily basis I feel like King Canute trying to hold back the waves of problems, tasks, bureaucracy and lack of resources we face. Every night I lie awake trying to decide who I can let down the next day and cause the least damage or distress. I am in a constant state of crisis and, although I feel listened to by my management team, their answer is to look after myself by prioritising and working less hours. This option is untenable, as all it does is increase my stress levels, as to choose this option means more young people will not receive the service they need and deserve.

Staffing and resources in education and other agencies have been cut to the bone and have brought about further increase to my workload. ASN support and CAMHS, in particular, are in crisis yet I am expected to provide what is needed for individual young people. My local authority have implemented a Named Person Service which they say brings all agencies together in terms of GIRFEC. In reality, it has increased my workload, stress levels and feelings of being unable to effect improvement for those in my care.

I never became a teacher to make a lot of money, but I am increasingly aware that I am less well off than I may have expected. Lifetime salary conservation does not actually mean that and the job-sizing tool is not fit for purpose. I am due to lose money from January 2019 despite having my largest caseload for some time and all the new duties expected of me as a result of Named Person. Pension alterations will affect so many younger teachers that I am not surprised some leave the profession.

My concerns are on two levels - personal and for the profession as a whole. Personally, I no longer want to be a teacher and it breaks my heart to feel this way. Professionally, we are in crisis and our young people are not being served properly. The "sound-bites" I hear on the news from you and Mr Swinney fill me with disbelief, as I do not see the resources you tell us are being pumped into education and other services for young people.

I do not know what to expect as a result of writing this letter - I certainly do not have high hopes for swift or positive change.

Yours sincerely,

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

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: Thursday, October 18, 2018 1:47:48 PM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Subject: Teachers' conditions

Good afternoon Mrs Sturgeon,

I am a Secondary Teacher in West Lothian and welcomed your recent statement encouraging teachers to share their thoughts with you. I have taught for the last 17 years after working in the electronic industry since leaving school. I am now 46 and have recently returned to work after suffering from stress which had been caused by my working environment.

Now that I have recovered - although now on medication - I can see the effect the constant changes in the curriculum, poor management, ever-increasing impacts of cutbacks and other factors have had on my health. This has largely resulted over the last 6 years. Having worked in industry I can make a qualified comparison between the two working environments and the stress involved in teaching is vastly greater. I am still very committed to teaching, but concerned how I am going to make it through the next 10-12 years as my working conditions continue to deteriorate through staffing shortages, increased attainment demand with ever-increasing discipline issues - largely due to inclusion with little support. In addition to this, my salary has been eroded over the last 10 years. Please also note that I am a very successful teacher, qualified to Masters level with no further financial enhancement - I self-funded my own studies for this at a cost of £8000. It is a damning indictment of the current situation that I would never encourage anyone to enter the profession.

I appreciate your time in reading this email,

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: Friday, October 19, 2018 8:21:58 AM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Subject: Teaching from a probationer

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

After hearing you speak at First Ministers Questions I felt compelled to write to you. I have been an SNP supporter and voter for many years. I have also been aided by yourself and your MSPs and MPs to have surgery in London in the past. It's a long story that I will not bore you with now but needless to say it played a vital role in the successful outcome of my 16 year wait for getting back to university and completing my degree to teach. I am the daughter and granddaughter of teachers. I can count no less than 8 teachers in my direct family not including myself.

I am now in my second year of primary teaching at a nurture school in [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]. 85% - 90% of our children are SIMD 1 and 2. I adore my job. The children are wonderful. The parents are supportive of the work we do. The staff are one big team. I cannot speak highly enough of my colleagues and my managers. Everyone works their hardest to ensure the best for the children and in that way it is a joy to go to work every day. We started the year as one of the very few schools in the city with a full complement of staff. Staff for Support For Learning to take children out of class, staff for the nurture rooms, staff to assist in the classes where children need extra help. However we are well aware that will not last. Our staff do not stay at home when they are sick. And that is indicative of staff across the city. There is no supply. As soon as a staff member is off, either vital support for these children gets pulled or our only depute has to go into class. Either way - the system falls down. Last year during the final two terms we were on our knees. We ended up with no support teachers which meant vital roles were being missed. Yes the roles are there on paper but because of the major staffing issues across the city they aren't happening.

More importantly however, as I have recently graduated I wanted to give you an insight into some of the reactions from graduates going into the workplace. Into the real life situation. It is well established that teaching is a hard job. Not 9-3.30. Not even 8-5. People that I trained with had many conversations of not only "having their eyes opened" but "being thrown in at the deep end", "floundering", "sinking" and sadly "drowning". This is due to a number of things but I think mainly the disparity between the wonderful support many feel given at university level and the lack of structure and support when out on the job. Again it comes back to cuts in finances, our councils are not able to give probationers the backing and support when they really need it. That's why people are leaving. I graduated with an excellent year at [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]. Many, many hard working, superb individuals. People born and bred in [Redacted under S38(1)(a)] who came through our schools and know of the troubles our youngsters face. I would look around the room and pick out at least 50 that I would be more than happy to see in my children's school teaching. Some have already left. Not just the city hoping a different authority will yield a better outcome (it won't) but have left teaching. Not through a lack of ability but through choice.

I am a single mother of two children. I would be better off financially not working. I struggle on the probationers salary to make ends meet. In fact - they don't. Even with

working tax credit my outgoings are more than my income. My parents help me make up the shortfall every month. This is what you are asking people to do. I love the job and I know I am an excellent teacher. I don't want to give up. But I will be honest - sometimes going back to what I did before is very appealing. Where I don't have financial worries, where I don't have to worry about piles and piles of paperwork that will never see the light of day, where I know my health won't be affected, where I know I can take a day off if I am not well without repercussions. It doesn't surprise me that so many of my colleagues have already made the choice that I struggle with. I love my job. I knew it would be hard. I don't know if I can stay forever like I dreamed. I, like so many, didn't think it would be like this.

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: 19 October 2018 15:10
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: My current teaching experience

Hello Nicola Sturgeon and John Swinney

Following on from the letter that another teacher has written about the workload and balance of inclusion, I felt inspired and motivated to write to you. I feel like teachers, as a whole, are continuing to struggle on with what now is becoming an increasingly unmanageable and stressful job.

I love my job, I have worked as a teacher for pupils with additional support needs for 10 years. Most of my career I have worked in a Special School environment , until the last 2 years where I moved into a mainstream school. I am in post as an Additional Support Needs teacher.

Whilst working within a specialist school environment, I had responsibly for 5 or 6 pupils (one class), all with a similar level of need. My role was to plan and teach these pupils. I was not responsible for their Child Plan documents or email correspondence(due to medical, social work, or other input needs which can be daily and very time consuming).

I have worked hard for over a year to set up a Unit for pupils who cannot cope within their mainstream class. When this unit was set up, my remit was to teach and plan for 5 pupils who all had a huge range of additional support needs. I was also responsible for all email correspondence, Child Plan documents, Coordinated Support Plans, setting up and chairing meetings.

A year and a bit later, I now have responsibility for 11 pupils (this would be the equivalent of 2 classes in a Special school). Only 2 pupils which can cope for any period of time in their mainstream classes. All have complex additional support needs. As mentioned before, I also have all of the extra paperwork etc to go along with this. I have to work every night when my children go bed, sometimes for up to 3 hours a night, having worked from 8am until at least 4.30pm (with very little break or lunch). For over a year now I have barely had a full lunch break and my McCrone time has often been compromised due to the needs of my pupils. We simply do not have the teaching staff to adequately cover. I am completely exhausted both emotionally and physically by the end of my week.

In a mainstream school there is NO current guidelines about the ratio of teacher to pupil when the pupils have complex needs. There is, however, in Special Schools. So I find myself questioning daily, why do we have less guidelines or ratios in mainstream schools, when you have far less, if any, specialist resources, areas, very little access to specialist training and no one from above our Head Teacher to give input and support. I am very lucky to work in a school where our Head Teacher really values what I strive to do and supports me in whatever way she can. She however, is constantly faced with poor management in Additional Support Needs from above. I get the impression that this isn't because people are not capable, but that they are

stretched to their limits too. The only way that i have been able to access specialist resources is from fundraising that has been done on our behalf by kind members from our community who see the worth in what we are trying to do.

The Pupil Support Assistants and myself can be subjected to challenging behaviour such as swearing and can be hit, kicked or punched daily. This is not to do with not being adequately trained. This is due to not have the physical or human resources to adequately do our jobs.

The pupils I work with and their parents, are the only reason that I am currently not looking I to changing my job. I have a morale responsibility to ensuring I do everything I can for these pupils. However, I can not sustain this level of work without their being an inpact to both my own health and my own family life. Neither of which I should have to compromise.

I am not isolated in my thoughts. This feeling seems to becoming the norm. How can we continue to teach our pupils to become what the Curriculum for Excellence underpins when we are all undervalued. Many a teacher I speak to feels the same. I would be very appreciative to a response to hear your thoughts about my email. We need to be valued. Give me job to do, but give me the tools to be able to do it.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: 19 October 2018 17:35
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: Some comments from a primary school teacher

Dear Ms Sturgeon

I do not usually write to politicians - however on this occasion I feel very strongly that I want to say what life is like on the front line in teaching.

I love my job - I love the classroom time.

The time spent on differentiated planning, marking, feedback, assessments, observations etc.... is not sustainable.

We have lost much of the support we had in class - ANAs have been having their hours cut for several years now.

There are 'new initiatives' being introduced regularly - so plans and resources have to be changed - constantly.

Lots of mixed messages over learning through play - which led to many schools 'throwing the baby out with the bath water'

How are we to meet all the benchmarks if children are 'playing' in their first years at school?

That's not to mention the SNSAs - that was a fiasco. Were any teachers involved in devising these 'tests'?

Why is no-one listening to the people (who are leaving in droves) on the chalk face? Give us some freedom and trust back - and free us to teach.

Our creativity and enthusiasm is being sucked out of us.

Surely the statistics speak for themselves - many great teachers are leaving the profession - you must ask why?

Things need to change before it completely breaks down.

I would appreciate your response to this situation.

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: noreply@parliament.scot<mailto:noreply@parliament.scot>
 <noreply@parliament.scot<mailto:noreply@parliament.scot>>
 Sent: Friday, October 19, 2018 8:59:42 PM
 To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
 Subject: Message from Scottish Parliament website
 name:
 Anonymous
 address:
 Anonymous
 postcode:
 [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
 email:
 [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
 telephone:
 message:

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

I ask that my personal details remain anonymous but I wish to reach out to you with some of my thoughts about education in Scotland.

I am a Scottish teacher, who came into the profession late in life. I chose to teach because I have experienced first-hand the impact that dedicated teachers can have to the hopes and ambitions of children. There are many children that are privileged to come from families that nurture their talents and their dreams. For those who have not, a teacher can become that source of inspiration. Contrary to popular belief; a teacher's role transcends that of a babysitter or a font of information. We become rolemodels and confidantes; often struggling to fill needs that are not met elsewhere in a child's life. We are expected to put our obligations to our career ahead of family and our own emotional and physical wellbeing; yet we are always encouraged to do more, give more because our best is never enough. If we are assaulted or have children that require additional support, then we are encouraged to believe that it is our failure if their needs are not met and to invest more time, more effort and more resources. I have been privileged in my current role to work in a school where there is a supportive ethos among the staff and a desire to work together to improve the life chances of Scotland's children.

I am a mother to a toddler, as well as a teacher, and I have concerns about how my son will fare in the education system, whether he has additional support needs or not. Both children with and without additional support needs are being failed by a lack of funding, resources and unrealistic expectations of a class teacher's role.

The 10% pay increase will go some way to showing teachers that their role is valued. However, only a complete overhaul of the system (in consultation with the people who work within it) will give young people the start that they have the right to expect.

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: 20 October 2018 10:27
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot<mailto:firstminister@gov.scot>>
Subject: As your request - Experiences of teaching in Scotland

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

I welcome the opportunity to write to you as a teacher and hope that the following helps you to understand the current crisis in Scottish Schools.

I have come to teaching as a second career and have become fully registered as a Primary Teacher this year after completing my PGDE and Probation Year at the age of 51.

Firstly, I would like to say that I have had a good experience both within the PGDE Initial Teacher Education Programme at UWS, and as a Probationer in the school I was allocated within South Ayrshire.

I am a supporter of CfE and what it intends to achieve. I think the flexibility it allows and the approach of Interdisciplinary Learning (IDL) is what is required for pupils in today's world. However I feel that:

- 1) the curriculum is cluttered and therefore does not allow for quality teaching;
- 2) many of our actual school premises in Scotland do not allow for quality teaching;
- 3) increasing class sizes with diverse needs does not allow for quality teaching;
- 4) Best practice for quality teaching does not seem to be adopted.

Cluttered Curriculum

As a Primary Teacher I feel that I am expected to deliver not only the essential priorities of numeracy, literacy and health and wellbeing but also a quality lessons in PE 2 hours a week, music, STEM learning, ICT, 2+1 languages, art, drama, religious and moral education and social sciences, add to that school assemblies, daily miles, concerts and show rehearsals and there are just not enough hours in the week to teach it, let alone deliver a quality lesson every time! Bear in mind, you need to deliver 6 hours of numeracy and 6 hours of literacy - and in one school I have worked in it was 7 and 1/2 hours of each before anything else went into the timetable.

The approaches to achieving this curriculum vary from school to school:

- 1) Teachers who will cover RME , French, PE or Music for you as part of McCrone time (McCrone time is two and a half hours a week so there is already a problem in what takes priority. In addition, often one of these hours is a SMT assembly for all pupils) This is inconsistent in school as some have drama teachers, some have PE teachers, some have music teachers and some have no-one to cover this and it is the management team who cover McCrone time. It is great to have a teacher to specialise in an area like PE or French as I am not an expert in either and have to do a huge amount of preparation for these blocks of classes.
- 2) You embed the modern language into daily classroom routines - this works well in the lower primaries. However by upper primary you are expected to deliver jotter

work on one of the languages and be introducing a second language!

- 3) You can invite guests in to help deliver lessons, but this is not as easy as it sounds.
- 4) You use IDL to cover some of these areas - e.g I've used PE to deliver maths in an outdoor learning context!, this is tricky, requires careful planning and may not always match the prescribed PE programme. I use IDL to cover music, drama and art where I can.
- 5) You have one of two lessons in your weekly timetable that are flexible over the term so you can slot in a few lessons of music, drama or RME over each term. But what do you drop? what is non essential? Every Secondary Teacher thinks their subject needs covered at primary stages and this leads to pathways being dictated from your cluster secondary school.

Consider Modern Languages. I have just finished work in a cluster where in addition to the authority pathway for French, a document also arrived just before the end of term from the cluster secondary teacher adding areas that must be covered in French from P5 - 7. These pupils are still struggling with the grammar, spelling and idiosyncrasies of their own language at this point. Add in the Mandarin on top of that as the other required language and no wonder many pupils struggle with their own language.

I understand the principles around having a second language to assist with learning skills but leave it as conversational in primary school. By upper primary this is an hour and a half a week of lesson time that would be better spent on quality literacy lessons. That will help close the attainment gap.

School Premises

ICT - this is a huge problem in every school I have been in - I spend time working on a really good lesson, I've been creative, it's active, and the whiteboard does not work - it may only be the sound (only a problem if you want to show a video), it may be the interactivity has stopped working (More of a problem if you are using the board interactively for teaching points) or it just may not work at all.

I spent the first 8 weeks of my probation year working without an IWB at all - the projector worked, so the creative solution my mentor and I came up with was to put a huge old fashioned whiteboard in front of the IWB and project onto it and I could then use a whiteboard marker to write on it for teaching.

The school I have just been in - I had no sound from the IWB because the PC attached to it was not powerful enough to be able to do it - Solution - 2 small speakers plugged in, who knows where they came from or if they were PAT tested, but it meant I could teach using the materials I had planned. It was noted that the PC was needing replaced, but there was no date planned.

Sometimes the internet just doesn't work - it might be the weather, it might be that they school is in a dead spot. At my probation school no-one wanted ICT on a Friday afternoon because you just couldn't get it to work.

The time it takes to get any fault sorted is unbelievable - every school I have worked

in has had calls logged for many ICT problems at the one time and it takes weeks to see an engineer. There is normally one teacher put under pressure to keep the tech going through out the year where possible. Ipads are the same, you are reliant on another teacher in the school to find the time to download an app you would like to use on them with your pupils. Why not have an ICT tech expert for each cluster that is not a teacher - I'm sure this would be a full time job in itself!

Give teachers the tools to teach and the support to keep them working.

School Premises

I remember when my own son entered Primary 1 there was a commitment to keep class sizes lower in Primary 1 - 3. He was in a class of 18. I don't think this happens anymore and most classes are filled to the maximum allowed legally for each stage. This last term I have taught Primary 7 (only 21 of them, and I know I am lucky as some teachers can have up to 33) but in a classroom that did not have enough desks of P7 size for them and was too small for that number of 11 year olds - crowded classrooms lead to disruption and children off task.

Open plan classrooms - These are terrible to teach in if you have a big class, or if you have too many things going on in the central open area which create noise and distraction. I recall covering a Primary 3/2 class last term next to an open area where the play based P1s were hammering and banging on bits of wood - I have to question whether the P3/2 actually heard any of the lesson on dairy farms! Ear defenders were not an appropriate solution for a whole class lesson.

There are often learners in the classroom who are easily put off by the noise and commotion round about - you can provide ear defenders and privacy screens, but if the classroom isn't big enough you or the open area is too noisy you are denying these children a quality learning experience.

Diverse Needs

Provision for children with different learning needs is part of the education system and inclusion is the right thing to do. My father was a Principle Educational Psychologist who pioneered inclusion for deaf and blind children, as well as for those with other learning needs, in Ayrshire in the 1970s and 1980s. I honestly don't know what he would make of the workings of today's inclusion system if he were still alive. I know he would be impressed with the screening processes and the identification of learning needs, however I think he would take a fairly dim view on way we are providing teaching for children with diverse learning needs.

In my own experience - during my probation year I had 12 out of 20 pupils in the class on various stages of intervention paperwork. The class I taught last term had 9 out of 21 pupils on intervention paperwork. The numeracy ages for that class varied from 6.1 years through to 12.10 years. That is a huge range of children to differentiate lessons for. Differentiation takes skill and time to prepare for, adding yet another pressure to preparing quality lessons. You do have the support of Pupil Support Teachers (PST) and in my probation year I was fortunate enough to have a classroom support assistant (CSA) for numeracy and literacy lessons, however I was not so

fortunate this year. As a teacher you can be teaching as many as 4 different groups in the class, and then also need to re-enforce and pick up teaching points pupils haven't grasped.

Last year a CSA allowed me to do differentiated teaching input for all pupil groups, whilst teaching each group, the CSA supported those needing help with their particular task. I felt my pupils in all groups showed progression through out the year. This last term, with no CSA I have relied upon the more able children in the class to help those still grasping concepts whilst I did the necessary teaching inputs - this takes a great deal of trust and is not an ideal way to teach, but it is common practice. I also feel due to class size and support and challenge needs in the classroom, the middle group(s) are largely the ones who suffer in the classroom. They are left to get on with it, you need to be supporting those who need it, but also challenging those who are finding it too easy - by the time you've done that the middle group are not being stretched, they are just achieving what is expected - and tough luck if they don't get it first time - There are ways to overcome this and I try to the best of my ability to make sure they are on track - this involves a lot of teacher assessment in numeracy and writing, and time, but I would rather do that than have them left behind. I do question though, whether some of the children who are on numeracy and literacy intervention support have fallen from that middle group in previous years due to them not being given quality teaching time. These children then fall behind and need that extra assistance.

These children adding into the support groups can actually make your classroom feel like it has a revolving door on it as they are in and out like yoyos for additional support. And that causes disruption to the classroom for the others.

All the PSTs I have worked with are excellent and I try to set up my timetable so that what I am teaching to the class coincides with what the pupils are being taught at pupil support - an example of this would be during a writing lesson, the pupils with the support teacher are also having a writing lesson at the level they require, but this takes co-ordination and communication. I also like being able to team teach with the PST so that we can see whether the learning is transferring into the classroom, however this is not always possible and bear in mind physical class size becomes a problem for this style of teaching, but it is the most effective. As a teacher of 20+ pupils, I cannot sit and give a pupil the one to one support they require and make sure the rest of the class is understanding and working upon the lesson points, therefore to have the PST in class sometimes is the logical solution - but staff resources just do not allow for this. It is good to have a classroom assistant to support you if school finances allow for this, however a CSA is not a qualified teacher and for pupils with real support needs you need to have a qualified teacher or you are doing the child a disservice and denying them quality teaching. I don't know how you solve this. ICT is a great way to help children with needs, and I have seen a complete turnaround in children where they have not produced any work to assess, and then by introducing ICT supports, produce work of a volume that you can actually create next steps from, however please see my earlier comments on ICT.

Best Practice

It is interesting, coming from the private sector where best practice is developed and

rolled out quickly in order to maintain a competitive edge, that best practice is not developed with the bigger picture in mind within education. During my probation year I worked in a cluster that was focused on developing holistic assessments for moderation within numeracy and did a good job of drawing upon the collective expertise within the cluster. They were satisfied with their work and beginning to use them. This last term, I moved to a neighbouring cluster and spent the first twilight session going over holistic assessments for moderation within numeracy and how to move forward with developing them! I showed my school colleagues what had already been done in the other cluster, but instead of building upon them, they are going to restart the process to develop their own. Where is the leadership for these kind of things? - talk about giving yourself extra work. It actually made me wonder if because the working time agreement said you need to have so many cluster twilight meetings in the year, you need to justify them! (And I am sure this is why so many teachers turn to Twinkl for lesson plans, that time would have been better spent on planning - Twinkl - a private company teachers pay for out their own pockets - should not be writing the Scottish curriculum lesson plans and having teachers buying them) The things listed above are just some of what I have encountered over the last couple of years. CfE is good, but the other problems in the education system need time and money invested in them or it will just continue to get worse.

The last thing I would like to mention is the recruitment process I have encountered over the last 6 months or so. I have to say that this has been the most stressful part of my teaching career so far and I even ended up becoming ill with the stress of it. You spend weeks working on your application (which usually consists of 4 or 5 questions of around 3800 words each) to then attend interviews (if you are lucky) where you miss out to someone who answered 4 questions on the day slightly better than you and therefore got more points on the form and was offered the job - Most of my interview feedback was that I interviewed really well but just to tweak a few points. I went for 9 interviews and was at the point of giving up and thinking is teaching really for me when I got the temporary post that I am now about to start after the holiday. I'm dreading having to go through all of that again at the end of the year. No wonder teachers leave before they have even got started.

I hope that you will take the time to listen to teachers and their frustrations with the current teaching climate. As a year 1 on the scale for pay, £16.68 per hour just isn't reflecting the amount of work I do and skills I bring to teaching. That said - increased pay wont solve the problems in the system alone. Heavy investment in Education in terms of time, facilities and manpower are required.

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

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: 22 October 2018 18:36
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot<mailto:firstminister@gov.scot>>
Subject: Schools are failing.

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

I have been teaching for over a decade now, and have seen many changes. From the introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence, to restorative discipline meetings, the nature of the job I came into has changed for the worst.

The CfE is basically a huge data mining operation for schools to collate and compete against each other. The joy of teaching has all but gone. Children are now suffering 'rote' learning. This is pointless and has no educational value. The children now learn exams to prove the data. This is crazy. We are raising a generation of clones, devoid of any independent thought and analysis. Schools are being run as businesses, with data as the end product. The children's actual education is secondary.

Behaviour wise, standards have all but gone. Children have been conditioned into a cycle of bad behaviour. If a child is completely out of order, all that happens is a meeting to discuss why they were so rude/violent, etc. No action is taken if a teacher is sworn at. This seems to be the norm now. Our form for this asks the tone of the child's voice whilst they swore at you. It does not matter. The child swore at an authority figure and should face some form of action. A child can cause violence in the school, and they may be excluded for a day or two, but then they are back in the same classroom.

Restorative discipline is a joke. Children need to be told what is right and wrong. Adults are in charge and this seems to have been forgotten. Children now think it is fair game to say they will not leave a class unless a member of the management is present. This is ridiculous. Yes, children have rights, but the majority of them also have the right to an education, which is being ruined by the minority.

Inclusion does not work. It is destroying the learning experience for the majority of children. So called 'line managers' spout this nonsense like a mantra, yet the evidence shows it does not work. The minority of children who cannot cope in the classroom ruin it for the rest. Then the 'trouble makers' are rewarded for their bad behaviour with trips to the cinema, etc. This is all back to front.

There is also now a drive to get technology in the classroom as fast as possible. The Show My Homework app is a case in question. It seems like a good idea on paper, but it is merely another data gathering tool to check on how much homework teachers give out. It even keeps a league table of all the teachers in the school. Ridiculous, yet allowed.

With the rise in technology, why do we still have parents nights? They are understandable for the seniors, but for BGE pupils they are a waste of time. Teachers, who have already put in a full day's work, are then expected to stay in the school well into the evening, and then be ready to teach the next morning. I was in school until eight pm. I caught the bus back, arrived home at nine thirty. I was then up again at six

thirty in the morning to go to my work. Again, ridiculous.

The education system in Scotland is in chaos. Failed business people now inhabit the management jobs in schools. They know about pie charts, flow diagrams, exam targets, etc, but know very little about actual teaching. They came into teaching with the ambition to get out of the classroom as quickly as possible. They interview well and climb the 'greasy pole' in order to avoid children completely. That is not why anyone should get into teaching. My inservice today consisted of four hours of pointless pie charts and diagrams. It is meaningless. I did not get into teaching to become a number cruncher .

Morale in schools is at an all-time low. Teachers are leaving the profession in droves, and I will soon be amongst this number. We are treated like children, giving pointless tasks to do, and don't even mention CPD. Inservice days are now a joke. It is usually a talk from some business drone, or a motivational speaker, earning five times more than a teacher does, in order to spout first year university psychology. We do this everyday and are given no credit. A certain speaker around the Glasgow area charges ?400/hr to talk this nonsense. This is allowed. He is in all the schools. It is appalling. All these things 'tick boxes' and make the Council look great, but do nothing for educational standards. It is patronising and a complete waste of money. The education system needs a complete overhaul. We have to lose the business ethos and get back to teaching the next generation. Unfortunately I cannot see this happening soon. Schools have been hijacked by people whose only aim in life is to make as much money as possible in the shortest time.

They are business people who are ruining the next generations chances, and it is all in the pursuit of money.

I do not want promotion, yet I am viewed as some kind of freak because of this. I love the classroom, when it works, but it is not working. Management don't care. The children are basically out of control, and I am at the end of my tether. My last job was funded by the PEF fund. I worked so hard. I got kids qualifications that they really were not capable of. I thought my job was secure. I was shown the door when the money was transferred to management. I am sickened. We are given no thanks for what we do.

I am an ardent SNP supporter. I have been for many years. I will not stop voting for our cause, yet trying to defend your government's education record is becoming increasingly difficult. There is a massive anti-SNP thread running through the teaching community.

This is not about money. This is about sanity. I arrive at school each day wondering what new hell will await me. This is no way to live a life. Please do something or anything to end the destruction of a once noble profession,

Thank you for your time.
[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]
Sent: Monday, October 22, 2018 4:11:29 PM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Subject: Teaching in 2018

Dear Nicola Sturgeon

I am a teacher employed by the Scottish Government to provide high class teaching to our youngsters. I have attached two documents that I wish you to read that reflect concerns I have.

I have included a letter to you and an extract from my diary.

best regards

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

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16th April 2018 (return from Easter break) the opinion of a returning teacher.

Given the circumstances of being unsure of my future with Dundee City Council education department, I feel it necessary to express my feelings at this time. It is now one year on from my decision to take an absence from my work for health reasons; this involved making an appointment with my doctor after coming back from the Easter break in 2017. I was advised to not engage in work until I felt mentally able.

I have been back at work in [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]. My recovery has taken longer than anticipated and I am only now feeling close to fitness; although I have been told that there may be further improvement.

It has been an uphill struggle to cope with the pressures involved with working in a challenging environment such as [Redacted under S38(1)(a)]; nothing has particularly changed as regards to behaviour management or instilment of a good ethos within the school. There is still no universal behaviour management system and no continuity between class teachers, departments, guidance and management. It has become convenient for staff through no fault of their own to ignore the minor issues. It is like working in a micro universe where the basic rules of acceptable ways of

Interacting have been removed and replaced by an anarchic attitude to morals and values. Staff have begun to turn a blind eye.

I have been very lucky with the classes that I have been assigned to teach. They are, in general good pupils with some minor behavioural difficulties, but I have for the most part contained them well. I have had a very good impact of the 3rd year group who, as a group are progressing well, they enjoy my lessons and the feedback from them has been positive. I have also asked three teachers to observe my lessons from time to time and give me honest feedback, this has also been positive. However since I have taken cover classes from January this year I have witnessed a terrible onslaught of excessive unacceptable behaviour in classes, especially from the compulsory subjects. The worst group has been 1st years who, as a group can demonstrate a "feral" tendency during a 50-minute lesson. I have found this behaviour difficult to cope with and overwhelmingly the worst behaviour I have ever witnessed from a collective group of youngsters since I started my teaching career in 1998.

Since returning to work, I have had support from my workmates especially the teachers from the "Social Subjects", and the acting PT of Computing. They have supported me in my recovery to a working wellbeing. I cannot say that I have had adequate support from the senior management, since returning I have had two short meetings with my line manager as well as a meeting in connection with an internal investigation with an HR representative and a union rep.

A temp. deputy however has been a supportive SMT person, since his appointment he has always asked about my wellbeing and I appreciate his understated empathy.

In the Computing department, the acting PT and I have built, in a very short time a very successful department. We are both forward looking and realise that to cope in a failing school environment you have to have happy staff and that promotes happy pupils. All our year groups are engaged and are happy to demonstrate the better side of their nature. We have an acceptable behavioural standard and pupils respect this. We also have a very low referral rate that is reflective of the positive behaviour we promote as a collaborate pair of very experienced teachers. I have been working hard with a selection of youngsters that have particular difficulties in school, I know that their needs are not being addressed by any agency and I recognise that I can contribute to giving them a sense of worth. I am working hard to update and distribute a new BGE syllabus that is fit for an improving department and will reflect the involvement I have immersed myself since returning to work. In the process of recovery, I have learned to recognise stressful situations and I have implemented my own coping approaches to this. However recently I have not coped well with some situations when taking cover classes so I have now applied to OHIO for a resuming of my counselling sessions.

It is my belief that **[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]** can turn itself around within a relatively short time if a clear, robust and consistent approach to behaviour management is applied. It is not a difficult task to organise with the collaboration of all staff. During the last 5 months, I have felt enlightened by staff who want to improve the wellbeing of young people who attend **[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]**. Many staff see that the moral guidance they can give to pupils is undermined by a laissez-faire approach to dealing with unacceptable behaviour; beyond the discipline procedures applied in the classroom and Principle teacher levels.

Although I have returned with good health, I am still angry that avoidable situations that were the cause of my illness and not recognised by school management and hence not addressed. I resent having to give up a position I enjoyed for so long as the only option to keep my mental

wellbeing healthy. At present, I still have an investigation hanging over me, the situation is complicated and I feel pressured.

23rd April 2018

It was announced last Tuesday 17th of April that the Head teacher has decided to retire; I am not proud of feeling good, but I do. There has been since the announcement a noticeable upbeat atmosphere and a feeling of hope in the future.

I still feel a little pressure knowing that issues surrounding the investigation are still active; however, the positive feeling around me is infectious and good.

My attitude is reasonably clear for the first time since 2016; I cannot at present plan ahead because of staffing uncertainty and department longevity. It is very clear that the Computing department is very much healthy and functioning well due to hard work on the part of the Acting PT and myself. It would seem a closure to my present situation is not apparent until the end of the spring term in June.

Dear Nicola Sturgeon

I am a schoolteacher who works for a local authority and wish to take up your official offer of informing you of my difficulties. I feel protected from persecution from my local authority due to your nature and candour invitation. I believe in free expression and certainly have felt the opposite in many years. Many in my school express these feelings.

My background as a Principal teacher spanning 13 years and class teacher of 4 years has generally been good. However, in the last 3 years it has degenerated into a terrible way of earning money. I was a successful teacher always having good results and a good rapport with young people. The pressures of work due to a rapid slump in people behaviour coinciding with the introduction of restorative practice become intolerable; I was making professional mistakes and led to me having a breakdown in April 2017. I had to take time off and returned to work on the 20th of November 2017. Coming back to work that early in hindsight was a mistake and I did not make a full recovery until July 2018.

After returning to work, I was not given any support from the senior management team and my recovery was only due to the support of my workmates. I even endured a physical assault. I have stepped down from the post of Principal teacher wholly due to the problems of indiscipline in school.

Nothing has changed, kids are still feral and verbally abuse teachers as well as physically assault repeatedly. These kids are hero worshipped by kids who are normally behaved and they then behave badly. Now an uncontrollable runaway train will take years to reverse.

I did write to John Swinnie explaining the situation and I received a letter telling me that it was appropriate to raise the issue with the local authority; however, the fear of persecution prevented this and still will. This attitude of devolving the issue down a level is not sustainable since a lot of effort is put into the movement of paper and time.

I look around my workplace and spot ten people who are just like me before I was ill. I have included an extract of my diary that may or may not be interesting to you.

Yours Sincerely

[Redacted under S38(1)(a)]

From: [Redacted uner S38(1)(a)]
Sent: Tuesday, October 23, 2018 2:57:16 PM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Cc: campaigns@eis.org.uk<mailto:campaigns@eis.org.uk>
Subject: Teaching

Dear Ms Sturgeon

My name is [Redacted uner S38(1)(a)] and I am a primary teacher. I would just like to say that I agree with everything that the teacher wrote in the open letter. As I was reading it I was thinking that I couldn't have written it better myself. All of my teaching friends are feeling the same way. I think if everyone who wanted to leave the profession did then you would be left with very few teachers. I have thought about a career change but ultimately I love my job and I feel that this is being taken advantage of by you and your government.

I have recently returned to work after maternity leave and I was often faced with aggressive pupils while I was pregnant. I was in a situation where I had to decide what was more important, the safety of my unborn child or a pupil and I chose my unborn child. I had to watch a pupil being physically attacked until another member of staff could come and separate them. I was really upset that I could not protect the child but this happens sometimes on a daily basis. I have to physically pull pupils apart when they are fighting or I have to physically put myself in the middle to prevent a fight. I have had two colleagues who, while pregnant, have separated children from fighting. We should not be put in this position - pregnant or not. I am tired of feeling like I am failing the pupils in my class. I am constantly being interrupted by children talking over me, children talking to each other, children with additional support needs who are not supported by enough PSA's and are interrupting learning, the list goes on. My stage partner and I have over 20 years experience between us and we are sometimes at a loss of what we can do.

I have felt this year especially, that my own mental health and wellbeing is being affected by my profession and the daily struggles that I face. I have two young children who I will not sacrifice for my career and if things do not change I can't see me being a teacher in the near future. Teachers are increasingly being asked to do more. I am not a health care professional, social worker, psychologist, nurture teacher, police officer, a bouncer in a nightclub even. I am a teacher and I want to do my job!

The job that I love and used to look forward to!

Kind regards

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The job that I love and used to look forward to!

Kind regards
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