



The Educational  
Institute of Scotland

Mr John Swinney  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Education and Skills  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

Ref: LF/KN/Swinney 060720  
06 July 2020

Dear John

I write with regard to the issue of recently qualified teachers (RQTs) and the plight they find themselves in with regard to employment prospects for next session.

In recent years employment prospects for newly qualified teachers have been relatively favourable, with the GTCS survey indicating a rising number who had found work within the first year of qualifying. This now appears to be faltering, particularly in relation to Primary. The reasons for this are varied, and some may be temporary, but of course the situation for next session is further complicated by the impact of Covid 19.

Not only has Covid 19 introduced an unplanned for variable in how education will be delivered next session, it has impacted directly on local authority recruitment practices and budget planning to such an extent that we now have thousands of teachers currently on supply lists or temporary contracts, most desperate for a permanent or at least a secure post next session.

I met with a representative group of these colleagues last week and heard their personal testimonies of lives disrupted – those unable to secure mortgages because of a lack of permanency in employment; those who had career switched on the back of Scottish Government adverts but now are unable to find work; young teachers thinking of giving up on their “dream job” because despite several years of study and having achieved full registration, they struggle to even be interviewed for posts.

Their fear has been exacerbated further by your announcement that all newly qualified teachers would be offered at least a one-year contract for next session, to create some “additionality” in schools in order to support education recovery for Scotland’s pupils. Whilst this is welcome in itself, it has created additional concerns for RQTs as they feel excluded from the offer and indeed some have been told by local authorities that previous indications of employment were now not going to materialise because NQTs were to be prioritised. I am sure that your announcement was not designed to create this type of discriminatory scenario but that is what it seems to be doing.

Please see the Appendix to this letter as just one example of Local Authority practice – this particular email being sent out immediately after the authority had broken up for the summer break!

One solution is simply to extend the scope of the planned “additionality” scheme to also cover teachers on supply lists and looking for posts.

From an EIS perspective, the need for more staff will certainly be there. The detriment suffered by pupils as a result of lockdown, will need more staff than ever before if we are to support, nurture and care for our children. Dealing with trauma in pupils is a labour-intensive process, it needs time for the counselling discussions to take place, for relationships to be reinstated and trust regained. That means we need more staff.

Additional staff would allow for smaller class groupings. Leaving aside the general merits of smaller class, in terms of pupil support and recovery there is an immediate pragmatic need to facilitate greater pupil – teacher interaction time.

It is particularly galling for RQTs to read of efforts to recruit “retired teachers” back into the fold, when they, themselves, are sitting waiting by the phone.

Apart from the need to support pupils next session, it is a reasonable planning assumption that wherever we are in relation to suppression of Covid 19, a number of teachers will still require to shield or will be unable to teach classes directly because of underlying health conditions. Again – securing extra teachers now would seem to be the prudent thing to do.

I realise that some of the issues around staffing are complicated by the relationship between the Scottish Government, often the primary source of funding, and Local Authorities, who are the employers, but in this complex period I believe the onus lies with the Scottish Government to cut through any bureaucratic barriers and ensure that we have the staff we need in our schools next session.

Beyond the immediate situation I do think there is a need to look afresh at how teacher employment is handled and the recruitment practices of local authorities. Supply lists effectively operate as zero hours contracts with qualified teachers obliged to register availability but with no guarantee of employment and no rights in terms of being able to apply freely for posts, which are often restricted to internal candidates. This is not an acceptable situation.

The EIS would be keen to discuss such matters further but the primary purpose of this letter is to urge you to intervene on behalf of those teachers currently on supply lists to ensure that they are treated fairly in terms of employment and appointed to posts as part of our education recovery efforts so that their talents are deployed in the classroom where they are needed.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Larry Flanagan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Larry Flanagan  
General Secretary

## Appendice

