



Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP
Secretary of State

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Kevin Courtney
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2 July 2016

Dear Kevin,

I am writing in response to your letter of 28 June about the planned strike on 5 July. I completely agree that it is regrettable that we are now less than a week away from an unnecessary teachers' strike. It is particularly disappointing given that – at your request – we have already engaged in talks with you about the issues you have raised.

As I said when I attended the first meeting in May, I am committed to these talks, and firmly hope that they will be meaningful and productive. Rather than playing politics with children's futures over the issue of pay and conditions, I would urge you to reconsider this damaging industrial action. Instead we should all be focused on giving children the best start in life and spreading educational excellence everywhere.

Removing unnecessary workload for teachers is a priority for this government, and we have made this clear in our discussions. Our extensive work with you along with the wider profession, is helping to ensure that teachers can concentrate on what they do best.

To suggest we aren't prioritising school funding is disingenuous. The significance we place on education is demonstrated by the fact that we are investing more than any previous government in our schools. This year the schools budget will total around £40bn, an increase of around £4 billion since 2011-12, so it is now the highest it has ever been. Additionally, the schools budget has been protected in real terms going forward, at a time when other areas of spending are having to be reduced in order to control the public finances, education has rightly been protected, reflecting precisely where our priorities lie.

It is also disappointing that the underpinning basis for this strike seems to be teacher pay. The national average teacher pay is £37,800. This week's school workforce figures showed that teaching continues to be an attractive career with more teachers in our schools than ever before – 15,000 more since 2010 – demonstrating how many people relish the prospect of a career where they can transform lives every day.

Under the academy system, schools have more flexibility to reward teachers for their hard work, allowing them to keep their best staff and recruit the brightest talent. Teachers are integral to our vision and thanks to their hard work over 1.4 million more children are in good or outstanding schools than August 2010. We will always listen and discuss legitimate concerns within the sector and try and resolve them as quickly and fairly as possible. I am sorry that you have chosen the path of disruption over negotiation and discussion. I believe this action is counterproductive – it will harm children's education, inconvenience parents and damage the profession's reputation in the eyes of the public.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicky Morgan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

RT HON NICKY MORGAN MP