

Monday 08 June 2026

The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP  
Secretary of State for Education  
Department of Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing on behalf of the jointly recognised unions for school's support staff, GMB, UNISON and UNITE, to express our profound concern regarding the current direction and lack of meaningful progress within the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB).

As you are aware, the joint trade unions campaigned extensively over many years to re-establish the SSSNB. We did so in good faith because we knew it was our best and long-overdue opportunity to address the deep-rooted inequalities, fragmentation, and inconsistency experienced by our more than one hundred thousand members working as school support staff across England.

Our members expected this process to deliver meaningful national reform, strengthened collective bargaining, and genuine improvement in pay structures, progression, and recognition. However, the pace and substance of negotiations to date are now placing that confidence at serious risk.

At the recent SSSNB Working Group meeting on 20 May 2026, it was extremely disappointing to be informed that the remit for the SSSNB in its first year would be very limited, and that there would be no progress on Strand 2, the work on a national approach to job evaluation and role profiles, within this Parliament. This work must be an essential part of the SSSNB if it is to fulfil its goal of ensuring school support staff are fairly rewarded for the work they do. Our evidence makes clear that that job titles and broad role categories provide only a partial account of support staff work. We are also concerned that the absence of work in this area could lead to potential equal pay issues.

These concerns have only intensified following publication of the Every Child Achieving and Thriving White Paper, which actively encourages further movement towards academy trust structures at precisely the moment when a coherent national framework for school support staff remains absent.

Taken together, these developments risk undermining the very purpose for which the SSSNB was re-established. The continued expansion of academy trust structures, in the absence of a coherent national framework for school support staff, risks accelerating workforce fragmentation. Our position remains clear and consistent.

### **Transfer Arrangements and Pay Spine**

While the Government's commitment to a "no detriment" transfer into the SSSNB is welcome, this commitment must explicitly include the transfer of the full existing pay spine and pay structure – not merely individual pay points.

Transfer arrangements must also include commitment to negotiating underpinning core conditions of service, a SSSNB pay spine, and harmonisation.

Anything less would create immediate uncertainty for staff, weaken confidence in the process, and risk fragmenting existing protections before a replacement national framework has been

negotiated.

### **Immediate Progress on Job Evaluation and Role Profiles (Strand 2)**

The absence of meaningful progress on Strand 2 is now becoming untenable.

Nationally agreed role profiles and a credible, transparent job evaluation framework are not optional additions to this process; they are central to whether the SSSNB succeeds or fails.

### **Fragmentation and Academisation**

The continued expansion of academisation, combined with the absence of a robust national bargaining framework, risks accelerating fragmentation across the workforce and further weakening national standards on pay and conditions.

School support staff cannot be left exposed to increasingly inconsistent employment practices without strong national protections and a functioning collective bargaining structure.

We are therefore seeking:

- A clear commitment that staff will transfer into the SSSNB with their full existing pay spine and pay structure protected, followed by prioritised negotiations on underpinning core conditions of service, a SSSNB pay spine, and harmonisation
- Immediate commencement of work on Strand 2 (national role profiles and a transparent national job evaluation framework) and a defined timetable for its delivery
- Assurances that recognised trade unions are fully and meaningfully involved in all decision-making processes relating to the future framework

GMB, UNISON and UNITE remain committed to constructive engagement and would strongly prefer to resolve these issues through meaningful progress and genuine partnership with Government.

However, the current trajectory is rapidly exhausting the goodwill that existed when the SSSNB was re-established.

Should meaningful progress continue to be absent, we will have no option but to escalate our response publicly and industrially, including at upcoming conferences over the summer period.

We are therefore urging Government to treat this moment with the seriousness it requires and to work with us urgently to restore confidence in the process before further damage is done.

We would welcome an early meeting to discuss how these matters will now be addressed.

Best wishes,



Gary Smith  
General Secretary GMB



Andrea Egan  
General Secretary UNISON



Sharon Graham  
General Secretary UNITE