



Oldmachar Academy Parent Council
Jesmond Drive
Bridge of Don
Aberdeen
AB22 8UR

13th November 2017

Dear Mr Swinney

Teacher Shortages

We are exceptionally worried about the current and likely future staffing situation in our school, and indeed across our city and Scotland. We write to urge you to take further action to resolve the teacher shortage crisis.

We understand you have put certain measures in place to encourage more people to train as teachers and fulfil the vital role of educating our children. But we do not believe you have gone far enough. There is no doubt that this is an issue that must be a priority for our government. It is essential that it is resolved for the future of our children and the future of our country.

What incentives are in place to encourage new graduates to train as teachers? What incentives are in place to encourage school leavers to choose teaching as their career? What steps are in place to encourage school pupils to even consider a career in teaching whilst on their journey through school from even the earliest of stages? How do you plan to ensure that there are sufficient teacher training places available at a local level to fulfil demand for teachers locally and in advance of projected retirements, etc.

Why are the current incentives available only for maths and science teachers? Can you imagine how this undermines the value of teachers in other faculties/subjects? While we acknowledge the shortage of maths and science teachers there continues to be national vs local anomalies. Across the country particular areas have shortages in various other subjects as well. Where are the incentives for these area specific shortages? Is there any method in providing local councils with a discretionary responsibility for their own local needs?

What is your plan to ensure you retain current teachers? We are continually hearing of teachers leaving the profession far too early in their careers due to tremendous pressures on workload and an ever changing curriculum, with a lack of time to implement it. How can you incentivise and encourage our experienced teachers to remain in the profession until retirement? A pay rise would be a start to help them feel valued. Localised salary awards linked to average local living costs would also help reduce the level of teachers leaving one local council area for another solely because they cannot afford local housing costs. How can we help the profession through any further large scale curriculum changes being announced? Can teachers be more supported by assistants within the classroom to increase their direct teaching activities? What other schemes can you put in place to reward our current hard working staff? How can we encourage career development within the profession, to backfill the current shortage of applicants for SMT roles, and stimulate high achievers?

Have all other options been considered? Is it easy for experienced teachers from other countries to come and work in Scotland? Is obtaining a visa as easy as it could be and are there enough opportunities for re-training in the Scottish education system?

In the North East we face a particular crisis, given the dominance of the oil industry, which despite the decline, still attracts large numbers of talented individuals due to high salaries and benefits packages. This has a knock on effect on the average price of local housing both for rent and purchase. How can North East schools compete with this and make it worthwhile for staff to stay in our area? Can you allow/introduce localised salary incentives based on local issues?

We urge you to do all you can to ensure our children have teachers. Should we not be aspiring to attract and retain great individuals into the teaching profession as

they play a dominant part in not only educating but aspiring future generations, which in turn will build a more prosperous Scotland?

We look forward to your reply.

Kind regards,

Sue Thomson

Chair, Oldmachar Academy Parent Council.

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