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East Lothian Council

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Copy to: The Leaders of all Scottish local authorities

5 February 2015

TEACHER NUMBERS 2015-16

Further to my letter of 9 October 2014 setting out the terms of the local government finance settlement for 2015-16, I write now to confirm the terms of a revised offer and commitment with regard to teacher numbers.

The Scottish Government has been consistent in our commitment to maintain teacher numbers in line with pupil numbers as a central part of our priority to raise attainment and we have provided significant additional funding through the settlement specifically to support that commitment.

As part of this year's budget process we agreed to enter discussions with COSLA on moving towards an outcomes based approach to educational including teacher numbers. However, as a result of the disappointing results of the Pupil and Teacher census published in December, which saw the number of teachers decline last year and the ratio of pupils to teachers rise, the Scottish Government advised COSLA that we had cause to review our approach.

As I was at pains to stress in my statement to Parliament yesterday in the debate on the Budget Bill, we have worked successfully in partnership with local authorities through COSLA and the Government remains fully committed to that partnership.

In recent discussion with COSLA, and in line with our objective to maintain teacher numbers, I have offered to suspend the penalty for 2014-15 that the Government would otherwise have been entitled to apply as a result of the rise in Pupil – Teacher Ratio (PTR) shown in the Pupil Teacher Census published in December 2014. I also offered to provide a further £10 million, the amount requested by COSLA, in 2015-16 on top of the £41 million already included in the settlement allocation to support the employment of teachers.

However, so far, COSLA Leaders have collectively been unable to agree what I consider to be a fair and generous offer of funding support from the Government to maintain teacher numbers.

Given that I was addressing the final stage of the Budget Bill in Parliament yesterday, I therefore had no alternative, in order to protect teacher numbers and deliver the educational standards we want to see, but to make that funding available on a council by council basis to those who are prepared to sign up to a clear commitment to protect teacher numbers.

Specifically, individual local authorities are invited to agree formally for 2015-16 to protect the number of teachers within their authority in order to secure:

- The maintenance as a minimum of the total number of teachers employed by individual local authorities at 2014-15 levels and also the maintenance, as a maximum, of Pupil Teacher Ratio for schools within their authority at the 2014-15 levels, for each individual local authority both as reported in the Pupil and Teacher Census published in December 2014; and
- Places for all probationers who require one under the teacher induction scheme.

In return, provided local authorities sign up to the terms of the offer the £41 million already included in the settlement will continue to be available from the start of the new financial year as planned. Provided the commitment is met, as confirmed in the publication of the annual Pupil Teacher Census statistics in December 2015, the Scottish Government will make available a share of an additional £10 million for 2015-16 to those authorities in recognition of the general budget pressures authorities are facing to help ensure the delivery of the teacher numbers commitment. A failure to deliver will also result in a further clawback in relation to the £41 million funding currently included in the settlement.

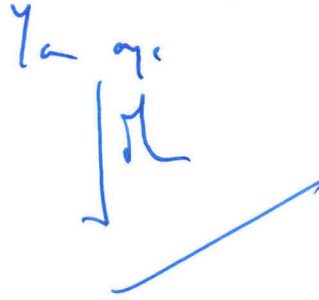
Delivery of this commitment will be monitored and the Scottish Government will gather updated information on teacher numbers at an individual local authority level in March, June and August 2015. This may be subject to review if this information identifies a potential failure to deliver.

However, any council which does not formally make that commitment and demonstrate that it can be achieved will have their share of the £41 million removed from their settlement allocation before the start of the new financial year.

I will require all Council Leaders to write to me confirming that they intend to take up the terms of this revised offer and agree to deliver the revised teachers commitment set out above by no later than 20 February in order to enable appropriate funding to be available.

Looking ahead, work on an educational outcome based approach which we have embarked on jointly to consider a broader range of indicators of improvement, and which would also include teacher numbers as an important contributory factor, will continue over the course of 2015-16 and continue to engage other parties, in particular trade unions, parent bodies and others with an interest in educational outcomes.

All other terms of the local government finance settlement offer for 2015-16, including the commitment to deliver a council tax freeze, as set out in my letter of 9 October 2014 remain unchanged.



JOHN SWINNEY

13 February 2015

John Swinney MSP
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Dear Mr Swinney

Teacher Number Commitments 2015-16


I write to you with reference to the on-going discussions between COSLA and the Scottish Government regarding the future commitment with regards to teacher numbers.

As you will be aware this has been the subject of significant discussions between COSLA Leaders, who have re-affirmed the need for a strong message from Local Government that the accepted practice of COSLA and Scottish Government conducting business through collective national negotiations has served us well and continues to be our preferred way of operating. We need to return to that approach on the specific issue of teacher numbers and that must also be the way we conduct all future negotiations on the wide range of other issues upon which future agreement will need to be reached.

Please be assured, we remain firmly committed to raising educational outcomes, lessening inequalities, and through a combination of innovative and forward thinking investment, we aim to drive up the attainment of our most disadvantaged students. We strongly believe, the continued focus on input measures rather than outcomes is not the most effective way to deliver this.

I would therefore urge the Scottish Government to re-engage with COSLA through these national discussions in order to secure a successful outcome for both parties.

Yours sincerely,



Willie Innes
East Lothian Council Leader

c.c. David O'Neill, COSLA President
c.c. Angela Leitch, Chief Executive, East Lothian Council

WI/WG

20 February 2015

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Dear Mr Swinney

Local Government Finance Settlement 2015-16

I write further to my letter of 13 February and specifically with regard to the revised terms of your offer of grant set out in your letter of 5 February.

The revised terms relate to future commitments in respect of teacher numbers, specifically that for 2015-16;

1. as a minimum, the total number of teachers employed will be maintained at 2014-15 levels,
2. as a maximum, pupil teacher ratios will be maintained at 2014-15 levels,
3. places will be made available for all probationers who require one under the teacher induction scheme.

As previously made clear, our strong preference would have been to work in accordance with the long established practice of collective national agreement through COSLA and Scottish Government and we regret that on this specific issue of teacher numbers, the Scottish Government have decided not to continue with the negotiations.

I can confirm that East Lothian Council will accept the offer of grant for 2015-16 in accordance with the amended conditions as set out above.

In closing, I would strongly request that you reconsider your intention to penalise those Council's who fail the test through no fault of their own and we conduct all future settlement discussions and negotiations through COSLA with a view to securing national agreement.

Yours sincerely



**Willie Innes
Leader
East Lothian Council**

c.c **David O'Neill, COSLA President
Angela Leitch, Chief Executive, Alex McCrorie, Jim Lamond, Darrin
Nightingale East Lothian Council**