Dear Minister Weir

As a teacher, I have watched with increasing concern and frustration the manner in which you have made and communicated decisions regarding the further opening of schools following the summer break.

Your decision to inform schools of decisions through unofficial principal forums and webinars, rather than following the normal, recognised protocols, has increased confusion amongst the teaching workforce, and placed school leaders in an impossible position with regard to planning for the return of pupils in the academic year 2020/21.

The lack of a transparent rationale concerning your reasons for making apparently arbitrary decisions around the date you have put forward for a wider re-opening of schools, including: your choice to name years 7, 12 and 14 pupils for return on 17th August without reference to the scientific and medical advice; the continuing uncertainty around the resourcing of schools to meet the additional demands that your decisions will require of them; and the disregard for the mental health and well-being of teachers, our non-teaching colleagues and the children is staggering.

Since 23rd March 2020, I, all teachers and school leaders, have been working throughout the period of lockdown; both through distance learning from our homes and in school, providing support to the children of key workers, ensuring that an effective provision for the education of our young people as possible could be maintained. To now reduce the break from work that teachers are in greater need of than any previous year is both callous and damaging to teachers’ morale and potentially their health, it also makes a mockery of your continued expression of gratitude to my colleagues and I for our hard work to date.

As a member of the teaching workforce, I call on you as Minister of Education to fulfil your obligation to work in consultation with the recognised trade unions, to put in place evidence-based, practical and proportionate protocols in a timely manner to allow preparations to be made for pupils and teachers to return to a safe and secure working environment in September 2020.

Yours sincerely

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