TEACHERS' SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE COMMITTEE (SCHOOLS)

10 March 2026

Dear Colleagues

This letter is intended to provide an update to teachers and school leaders on recent discussions within TNC following:

- The Minister's letter of 3 February regarding the Independent Review of Teacher Workload which confirmed that a detailed action plan is currently being developed.

- The Minister's letter of 6 March, regarding the newly published TransformED RoadMap, acknowledging concerns raised about the pace of change and confirming a measured, phased approach to curriculum, assessment and qualifications reform. The first year of phased curriculum implementation will now begin in September 2028, rather than 2027 as originally envisaged. This approach will allow sufficient time for the preparation, planning and development of high-quality resources to ensure schools are fully equipped and confident to implement changes effectively.

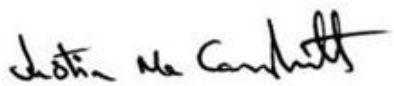
The Minister's intervention in commissioning the Independent Review is rightly the central mechanism for progressing the recommendations and addressing workload issues for teachers and school leaders. The next phase must therefore be guided by the Minister's formal response and the Department's implementation framework, which is scheduled for publication in April. TNC's role is necessarily dependent upon the direction set by the Minister and the Department.

TNC remains committed to working constructively with all parties so that the findings of the Independent Workload Review can lead to meaningful and sustainable improvements for teachers and school leaders. It is expected that this continued collaboration will support positive industrial relations across the sector and enable teachers and school leaders to have the clarity and stability to continue delivering high-quality teaching and learning for children and young people.

TNC offers clarification on a number of recommendations within the Independent Review of Teacher Workload where there is overlap with work already underway through the 2025 Heads of Agreement, or where there may be scope to explore practical options to address workload issues within existing arrangements and resources.

The commentary within **Annexe 1** illustrates where progress can be made in the interim and until the Minister's detailed action plan is published. **It is important to emphasise that this update does not constitute the formal implementation plan for the Independent Review of Teacher Workload**.

Yours sincerely,



Robbie McGreevy
Chair, Management Side

Justin McCamphill
Chair, NITC

ANNEXE 1

Recommendation 3

To create a degree of flexibility in respect of Planning, Preparation, and Assessment (PPA) time, the Panel recommends that where a teacher's duties do not require physical presence in their school, they should be free to carry out such work, for example, preparation and marking, at a 'time and place' of their own choosing. The exercising of this option should be carried out in consultation with the school principal and in the context of the whole school needs.

TNC Comment: The Heads of Agreement Action 16 Joint Statement issued on 3rd November 2025 already provides that where appropriate, directed time may be undertaken in a manner which allows for flexibility in when and where it is completed. The exercising of this option must be carried out in consultation and agreement with the school principal and in the context of the whole school needs.

Recommendation 4

Current guidance deploys the term reasonable in respect of the range of professional duties which a school-teacher may be required to perform. By way of exemplifying what might be viewed as "reasonableness", in terms of an average working week for teachers and school leaders, the Panel suggests a range whereby an average of 35 hours per week, including DTB, over the school year should be viewed as reasonable, whereas a habitual average of 40 hours or more per week should be viewed as unreasonable. The Panel commends this approach to employers and Boards of Governors in exercising their legal duty of care to advise staff on the need to avoid an excessive workload culture in schools.

TNC Comment: Teachers and school leaders should be reminded of the importance of avoiding excessive workload, existing workload management mechanisms in TNC 2024/2 should be used to ensure that teachers' workload - including any lesson preparation and marking outside of the 1265 hours - is "reasonable".

Recommendation 7

The Panel endorses the steps being taken to streamline the system-wide administration requirements on schools; to support school leaders in rationalising administrative tasks; and to enhance the efficacy of communications to schools by the Department, the Education Authority (EA) and other relevant bodies. TNC should maintain an oversight in this area, with each body evaluating progress made and identifying further actions required.

TNC Comment: TNC will establish a subgroup to monitor oversight in this area, evaluating progress made and identifying further actions required to reduce administration.

Recommendation 8

Based on our engagement with stakeholders and the results from the teacher and school leader questionnaire, the Panel is convinced that school principals require high-quality Human Resources (HR) advice and support in order to lead the work of the school in the context of whole school needs. The Panel recommends that employing authorities and relevant bodies are adequately resourced to expand their provision in this area.

TNC Comment: The recently established EA clinics on HR and Communications skills have commenced engagement with school leaders to hear concerns and offer support within current resource. Workload concerns raised at the meetings will be documented for further consideration. Possible solutions will be explored and developed. The concerns raised and the actions being explored will be shared for further discussion with the Sub-Group referenced in recommendation 7.

Recommendation 9

In special school settings the current funding and management arrangements make it very difficult for a school leader to appoint appropriate HR administrative support, which would allow them to concentrate on the substantive work associated with leadership in their school. In this context, the Panel recommends that school leaders should have increased flexibility to manage and deploy human resources in a way that best meet the needs of their pupils and the specific context of their school. Further, the Panel supports the provision of targeted HR support in relation to the management of support staff in special schools.

TNC Comment: The EA is currently developing proposals for a new enhanced support model. Under these proposals, schools, including special schools, will have greater authority to determine how best to allocate resources to support the needs of their children and young people with a statement of SEN. In order to achieve this, it is recognised that school principals and SENCOs will require additional support which will enable them to focus more time on training staff and meeting the needs of children and young people in their school. The EA will be consulting publicly on these proposals by April 2026.

Recommendation 10

We acknowledge that the workload concerns of teaching principals in nursery schools in terms of administrative demands are very real. The Panel recommends the facilitation of release time for principals in the nursery school sector.

TNC Comment: TNC recognises the very real administrative demands on nursery principals and suggests potential remedies to this issue will be explored as part of the Common Funding Formula Review. The relevant circular will be amended to reflect the outcome of this review and the NITC will be provided a status update on progress during the Autumn term of the 26/27 academic year.

Recommendation 12

We believe that TNC should negotiate, agree and implement guidance on the working patterns for school leaders. The guidance should be disseminated to school leaders and Boards of Governors who together should regularly review and ensure that working patterns are consistent with the guidance. A designated governor should be appointed in each school to act as a workload and wellbeing champion for principals and vice-principals.

TNC Comment: Working patterns for school leaders will form part of the forthcoming review of the Workload Agreement. In the interim, the previously communicated letter on working time regulations applies. TNC will communicate to all schools the recommendation that a designated governor should be appointed in each school to act as a workload and wellbeing champion, commencing with principals.

Recommendation 13

The Panel is of the view that planning for learning processes should support professional dialogue at school level rather than create an administrative burden for both teachers and principals. Accordingly, the Panel

recommends that schools review their planning for learning procedures to ensure they are proportionate and support professional dialogue.

TNC Comment: A working group was established under Heads of Agreement Action 26 to consider the workload associated with, and effectiveness of approaches to, short, medium and long-term planning; as well as evaluation through pupil observation in Early Years and Special Schools. This work is approaching completion and subject to all parties' agreement it is anticipated communication could be issued at the start of the summer term.

Recommendation 16

Excessive tracking and monitoring at school level have been clearly identified as an administrative burden and generator of excessive workload. The Panel is firmly of the view that no more than three formal tracking points should be required over a school year and recommends that schools review their current practice to reflect this guidance.

TNC Comment: A working group was established under Heads of Agreement Action 24 to examine the workload and effectiveness of tracking in schools and concluded that there should be no more than three formal tracking points required over a school year.

Recommendation 18

Regarding the current arrangements for controlled assessment, it is clear that certification is essentially dependent on the goodwill of teaching staff to mark internal assessments without, in all instances, adequate time being provided in DTBs or through informal TOIL arrangements. The Panel recommends that teachers either be afforded the time for marking or be paid for marking directly by the Awarding Body for the marking duties carried out on its behalf.

TNC Comment: The TNC notes the panel's conclusion and is mindful of the recent announcement regarding future qualification arrangements. TNC will engage with DE and CCEA regarding how these changes will affect this particular issue moving forward. In the interim, TNC will remind teachers and school leaders of Action 16 Heads of Agreement that Principals, in consultation with teachers, should take into consideration the workload and time requirements for the marking of controlled assessments.

Recommendation 19

The Panel recommends that the EA develops a more robust framework to support schools in processing parental complaints, some of which may be vexatious. The emphasis should be placed on a proactive approach to supporting principals in resolving disputes rather than face escalation and prolongment.

TNC Comment: EA will engage with other sectors, and NIPSO, in order to update the model complaints policy for schools to reflect this recommendation.

Recommendation 21

TNC are currently considering a 'Preventing Violence at Work' guidance document and hope to issue this to all schools in the near future. The Panel recommends that a public awareness campaign is commissioned by the Department to highlight the detrimental impact of challenging pupil behaviour in schools and to stress a zero-tolerance approach to verbal or physical violence towards staff in all educational settings.

TNC Comment: Substantial work has taken place to develop a Preventing Violence at Work Framework. Alongside this framework, the TNC will remind schools that TNC 2011/2 Tackling violence/abuse against teachers in schools is the policy for all schools and that all employing authorities must comply with the requirements contained within the policy.