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Corporate Director, ELS
Kent County Council

Corporate Director Education Learning and Skills
Sessions House
County Hall
Maidstone
ME14 1XQ

24 September 2014

Dear Director

We are writing on behalf of all employees working within the boundaries of your local authority area who are members of ATL, NAHT, NASUWT and NUT.

You will recall that, from last April, local schools agreed through your Schools Forum to 'de-delegate' funding for supply cover costs, including for trade union facilities time. We believe that this was the right decision – and a very big majority of Schools Forums made the same decision.

We believe that the central retention and distribution of the fund is the most effective and efficient arrangement and we would like to work with you to ensure that this arrangement continues. Discussions are now taking place in your authority on funding arrangements for supply cover costs from April next year and we are asking you to pass the information in this letter to members in your Schools Forum and to encourage them to vote again for de-delegation of funding arrangements for supply cover costs.

Successive governments have recognised the importance of good industrial relations and have legislated to provide a statutory basis for facilities time as follows.

- Paid time off for union representatives to accompany a worker to a disciplinary or grievance hearing.
- Paid time off for union representatives to carry out trade union duties.
- Paid time off for union representatives to attend union training.
- Paid time off for union 'learning representatives' to carry out relevant learning activities.
- Paid time for union health and safety representatives during working hours to carry out health and safety functions.

These provisions are contained within the Employment Relations Act 1999 and the Trade Union Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 and the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1997.

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ATL, NAHT, NASUWT and NUT have members and union representatives in academies as well as maintained schools within your local authority area and, in addition to seeking your support for continued de-delegation, we are seeking your agreement for the local trade union funding arrangement to be formally extended to academies within your local authority boundaries.

As the DfE Advice on Trade Union Facility Time acknowledges, the trade union recognition agreement between the authority and the recognised unions will have transferred to the academy school as the new employer of the transferred staff as part of the conversion process to academy status under TUPE. We believe that, following conversion, academies should also become parties to local authority trade union facilities arrangements.

The academies within your boundaries will have received funding for trade union facilities time in their budgets and they are entitled to use that funding to buy-back into local authority arrangements. Indeed, many academies across England have already agreed to buy in to local authority trade union facilities arrangements.

Pooled funding will help the local authority and all schools to meet their statutory obligations on trade union facilities time. Setting up a central funding arrangement will allow academies to pay into a central pool if they wish to. But most importantly, it will help maintain a coherent industrial relations environment where issues and concerns, whether individual or collective, can be dealt with more effectively.

We urge you, therefore, to support the de-delegation funding for supply cover costs and to continue or establish (if you did not do so previously) a mechanism whereby academies within your boundaries are able to buy into a central fund for trade union facilities time. If you agree to do so, we will write to academy principals to encourage them to buy in to your arrangement.

Yours sincerely

Mary Bousted

Russell Hobby

Chris Keates

Christine Blower