

Tricia Palmer
Assistant Director
Organisational services
Medway Council
Gun Wharf
Dock Road
Chatham

12 November 2012

Regarding the proposal to opt out of national agreement for pay and terms and conditions

Dear Ms Palmer

Following the meeting of the Teachers Representative Forum I am submitting a collective response regarding the implementation of the proposed opting out of the national pay, and terms and conditions (NPTC) being extended to schools.

The proposal was first raised in September and at the time there was no indication that it would be applied to schools. The application of this proposal to schools will not save the council any money, as schools have their own devolved budgets. However the implementation of these changes will have a negative impact upon schools. This comes at a time when Medway schools are already under significant scrutiny and are already experiencing significant pressures to improve results and rapid national change.

In conjunction with the union representatives listed below I would want to highlight several key concerns;

- 1) The opt out from NPTC will create a two tier system of pay increase within schools, where teachers (who are largely well paid) may get a small increase, while non-teaching staff (who are generally on lower pay) will not get any increase. This may result in dissatisfaction towards teachers enhancing the effect of points 2 and 3 below.
- 2) The impact of the notification of the proposed further pay freeze, and the possible loss of NPTC, has already had a detrimental impact upon non-teaching staff morale. This may make retention of experienced staff more difficult and make employees less likely to give additional "good will" time to teachers.
- 3) The dissatisfaction and poor morale may make industrial action more likely and the impact of any action more severe. This may have a detrimental impact upon OFSTED inspections.
- 4) Despite the equality impact assessment across Medway being allegedly insignificant, that will not be the case for school staff. In schools the impact will unduly affect low paid and female staff (a very high percentage of support staff are female and on low pay (e.g. in my school out of the 65 people affected 97% are female and more than 90% are on low pay due to pro rata 26 ¼ hour 39 week contracts))

- 5) Finally, for schools these measures may make schools more likely to seek Academy Status because Head teachers will see decisions being imposed (seen in the lack of implementation of the past two year's incremental freeze). Should the change be imposed Head teachers may also see that once opted out of NPTC there will be less resistance by staff to a change to academy status. I would certainly be one of the heads to consider this option, as I am morally against academy status, but the main reason for remaining with the Local Authority was to protect my staff's rights. I think the budgetary impact of between 30- 40% of primary schools becoming academies should be considered in relation to the Local Authority budget. This would not just be on the education budget but also the proportion of government grants for other functions and buildings. I hope I do not paint an overdramatic picture, but head teachers and governing bodies do have a great deal of freedom and this imposition may result in a much smaller LA that cannot service its functions. The loss of just the four special schools £10m budget falling outside the LA would further reduce the Local Authorities' budget by nearly £900,000.

I think the specific impact on schools should be carefully considered in the light of the above issues on the morale within schools, the impact of possible accelerated move to academy status and the workload of Headteachers.

I think there are several ways forward, and one would be to the limit the impact of the change to employees earning over £15000pa (gross). This would preclude most school support staff and LA low paid staff. It may not have a significant impact on the reduction in the £900,000 of savings. However this would not alleviate the impact upon school business managers, some of whom are NAHT members.

The easiest solution would be to make any change in school staff NPTC the decision of the school's governing body, and that would offset potential equal pay claims from previous frozen incremental points for non-school staff. Obviously letters have been issued to staff and there is already disquiet. Having school governing bodies' make the decision would remove significant numbers of affected employees from the procedure, but have no impact upon the £900,000 of necessary savings being made.

I look forward to your response to these considerations.

Yours sincerely

John Somers
Branch Secretary NAHT (Medway Branch)

Supported by

Mike Ongley

Sue Calder

Branch secretary

Branch Secretary

GMB

NUT

CC Medway Councillors, Juliet Seviour, Barbara Peacock, Ralph Edwards, Sue Calder, Mike Ongley,
Neil Davies