

15 July 2024

Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

Dear Bridget,

United Learning's proposal to induce teachers to leave the Teachers' Pension Scheme

You will no doubt have been made aware of a letter sent on 11 July by the Chief Executive of United Learning Trust (ULT) to its teachers which outlines a proposal to offer a higher annual salary in exchange for opting out of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) in favour of a private scheme. At the very least, this undermines the spirit of the pension regulations, which were last reviewed in 2021.

We write to share our alarm at this wrong-headed and divisive move, particularly at a time when you have made clear that the new government is seeking to 'reset the relationship' with the sector. The proposals set out in Jon Coles' letter, on which trade unions were not consulted, will do nothing to resolve the systemic teacher and leadership supply crisis in our schools. Instead, it could all too easily lead to a drop in participation rates in the TPS, which may in turn possibly threaten its stability and long-term future. This also risks exacerbating the existing gender pension gap, and a range of other equalities concerns.

Moreover, the letter contains no cautionary note that all scheme members would need to take independent financial advice, implying that such decisions are simple. In addition, a *Schools Week* [blog](#) by Jon Coles stretches credulity by suggesting that ULT will 'offer... flexibility to change contribution rates or move between schemes year by year'. This is a recipe for confusion and mis-selling. It is alarming that the blog is a clarion call for other trusts to follow suit and "do the same". This heightens the threat to very future of the TPS.

We are united in our view that no teacher or leader should have to sacrifice the value of their future pension (salary deferred) in order to improve their take home pay. Such short-sighted and ill thought through policies simply store up problems in the decades to come and undermine the proposition for committing to a career in teaching. We are certain that government would not want such an important public sector scheme to be put at risk.

We request an urgent meeting with you in order that we can reach an understanding on the future of pay and pensions for teachers and leaders, not just in ULT but across the sector. We also ask that the Department engages with ULT to encourage them to withdraw this proposal.

Yours sincerely,



Daniel Kebede
NEU General Secretary



Paul Whiteman
General Secretary, NAHT



Dr Patrick Roach
General Secretary, NASUWT



Pepe Di'lasio
ASCL General Secretary