



**The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP**  
Secretary of State for Education

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT  
tel: 0370 000 2288 [www.education.gov.uk/contactus/dfe](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus/dfe)

**To: Gary Smith**

17 October 2024

Dear Gary,

It is with great pleasure that I write to you to inform you of the introduction of our landmark Employment Rights Bill. I also want to thank your organisations for their invaluable support in helping us get to this important milestone.

The Plan to Make Work Pay is central to this Government's pro-worker, pro-business agenda and sets out an ambitious programme to ensure workplace rights are fit for a modern economy, empowering working people, and contributing to economic growth.

The Bill is the first phase of delivering our Plan to Make Work Pay, supporting employers, workers, and unions to get Britain moving forward. Alongside other planks of our modern supply side approach, including planning reform, kickstarting a skills revolution, a modern industrial strategy and a plan to tackle inactivity, the Bill will support the Government's strong commitment to increase productivity and create the right conditions for long-term sustainable, inclusive, and secure economic growth.

The majority of measures within the Bill are led by the Secretary of State for Business and Trade. As you will be aware, these measures include, but are not limited to, measures to introduce 'Day 1 rights' and protections like Unfair Dismissal (while allowing employers to operate probation periods) and entitlement to Paternity Leave; establish Bereavement Leave; address one-sided flexibility through ending exploitative zero-hours contracts; end the unscrupulous use of fire and rehire; strengthen and champion Trade Unions; and establish the Fair Work Agency, transforming the enforcement of employment rights and protections.

Measures included in the Bill within my Department's purview include the reinstatement of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB). As you know, the body will be tasked with establishing a national terms and conditions handbook and fair pay rates for support staff and providing advice on training and career progression routes.

Support staff make up more than half of the school workforce in state-schools in England. Establishing the SSSNB through the Bill will help to ensure schools can recruit and retain the staff needed to deliver high-quality, inclusive education and drive high and rising standards – ensuring we give every child the best possible life chances.

Whilst a previous SSSNB existed in 2009-10, we recognise that the school system has evolved since then. As such, we have been - and will continue to be - working across the sector to ensure the SSSNB is appropriate for the world of 2024. The new body will therefore have a wider remit than the original SSSNB and will include

support staff employed by academy trusts. This recognises that around 50% of schools are now academies, and more diverse support staff roles now exist. It will also ensure that the SSSNB can achieve national and consistent terms and conditions and fair pay rates for school support staff across schools and address the specific recruitment and retention challenges for this group.

The introduction of the SSSNB demonstrates how much we value the school support staff workforce. School support staff play a vital role in all our schools and they will be crucial in supporting our work to drive high and rising standards and ensure we give children the best possible life chances. To give all support staff, regardless of the type of school they work in, professional recognition and strengthen their workplace rights is an important step forward.

We are committed to implementing our Plan to Make Work Pay in full. Not all of the commitments within the Plan require primary legislation to implement; in many areas the Government has existing powers to deliver on commitments through secondary legislation and non-legislative means. In addition, the Government has been clear that some parts of the Plan will take longer to review and implement. In order to provide Parliament, workers and business clarity on how Government intends on delivering on the Plan, we have published the report, [Next Steps to Making Work Pay](#), which sets direction and gives businesses and workers confidence in our long-term programme of work. Work is already underway to prepare consultations on several aspects of the Plan, including the SSSNB.

Thank you again for your constructive support in our progress to date on this work and I invite your organisations to continue to engage thoroughly with the Bill and its measures. I would also be grateful if you could share this information with industrial and political staff and lay members, and with Members of Parliament who are members of GMB, and please also let my officials and Special Advisers know if you have any particular concerns.

I know you will continue to support policy development of this measure and look forward to continuing to work together on this important issue.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bridget Phillipson".

**The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP**  
**Secretary of State for Education**