



**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP**  
Secretary of State

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14 November 2013

Dear Christine, Chris

Thank you for your letter.

I am, however, saddened that you seem to be refusing to take part in the programme of talks which you had called for, simply because they are too inclusive. It appears that you are rejecting dialogue just because other organisations which represent teachers will be involved. It is only right and fair – in the interests of transparency – that everyone should be represented in talks which could affect the whole of the profession.

Instead of welcoming constructive dialogue, I note that you are threatening to take unnecessary strike action. Strikes will damage the education of pupils, inconvenience parents and damage the respect in which the profession deserves to be held.

Fewer than a quarter of teachers voted to go on strike. The numbers who chose to take part in industrial action have been declining. The public were opposed to your action. The talks we are offering give you a chance to reset the agenda so we can all work together for the children who should be our first concern. But it appears that you now want to walk away from dialogue and opt for confrontation. I do hope that you will think again.

I am very grateful to the other organisations who have decided to engage constructively and have agreed to take part in talks on behalf of their members. I am determined that constructive engagement about policy implementation, which is in the interest of everyone in the profession, should not be jeopardised by any factional intransigence.

Nor should it be thwarted by a misreading of the law. In your letter you seem to be under the misapprehension that Section 244(2) of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 requires any talks between us which might end your dispute to be exclusive. That is emphatically not the case. The legislation defines only what comprises a trade dispute. It does not prescribe how an agreement to resolve the dispute must be

reached. I hope you will agree that the more we can involve all teachers in shaping the future of education, the better.

A programme of talks will therefore go ahead and my office is in the process of setting up the first meeting with the other representative organisations. I hope you will reconsider your opposition and make sure constructive conversations can take place.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping tail.

MICHAEL GOVE