

As you know all Councils continue to face significantly challenging financial situations. A difficult budget decision by elected members to remove Pupil Support Assistants (Classroom Assistants) from schools was approved as part of a package of savings for 2018-2021. The removal of these assistants was pushed out to the 2nd year (August 2019) to allow schools to prepare for the proposed changes. PSA Classroom Assistants were introduced to support teachers with non-teaching tasks, moving forward there will only be the provision for Pupil Support Assistants (Additional Support Needs) within schools. No change has been planned for Pupil Support Assistants (Additional Support Needs). To realise the budget decision to remove Classroom Assistants from our schools we have worked closely with our Trade Union colleagues to ensure that all staff have been treated fairly and equitably. The decision to take the saving in year 2 (2019/20) has enabled schools to manage into the changes in their Pupil Support allocation with temporary staff having been employed since 2016 when vacancies have occurred. As such the planned saving was achieved by the non-renewal of temporary contracts for staff who had a planned contractual finish date of June 2019.

I understand completely the frustration this has caused many of you as some of the temporary staff have built up strong relationships and have provided very good support to teaching staff, however, I am sure you will realise that there was no expectation by these staff beyond the terms of their contract. Therefore where temporary staff have been deployed and a need for PSA (Additional Support Needs) support continues, then we will endeavour to ensure a permanent member of staff is redeployed to work with identified children.

The Education Department continues to be committed to our vision of “Everyone Attaining , Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences” despite the difficult financial constraints that are being imposed on Councils and we appreciate the dedication and support of all staff in delivering a quality education during these testing times. I would be grateful if you would find the time today to communicate this message to your staff and parent body.