

Written Statement to the Northern Ireland Assembly

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**UPDATE ON TEACHERS' PAY AWARD FOR THE 2025–26 FINANCIAL YEAR –
DECEMBER 2025**

18 December 2025

Paul Givan MLA

Minister for Education

I wish to update Members of the Assembly on the current position regarding the pay offer for Northern Ireland teaching staff and related matters.

I am pleased to confirm that I have now received Executive approval for my Ministerial Direction in relation to the teachers' pay offer for the 2025–26 financial year. This approval represents an important milestone in progressing arrangements to address teachers' pay and provides a clear basis on which discussions can now move forward.

Executive approval was secured through use of the Urgent Decision procedure. This approach reflected the importance I attach to avoiding any further delay in addressing teachers' pay, particularly given the length of time that teaching staff have already waited.

The First Minister and the deputy First Minister have considered the matter, and I welcome their agreement to approve the Ministerial Direction. This decision enables formal discussions to progress without further delay and represents an important step towards ensuring that teachers and school leaders are treated fairly and consistently with other public sector workers.

My decision to bring forward a Ministerial Direction underlines my continued commitment to Northern Ireland's teaching professionals and to the pupils, families and school communities they serve. Teachers and school leaders play a central role in supporting learning, wellbeing and opportunity for our children and young people, often in challenging circumstances. It is therefore essential that their contribution is properly recognised.

I welcome the opportunity for the Teachers' Negotiating Committee to meet early in the New Year to take the pay offer forward and I will continue to press for the resources our schools need to support teachers, pupils and families right across Northern Ireland.

I know members across all parties will share my gratitude for the commitment and dedication of our teachers and school leaders and will agree that it is not acceptable that teachers should have to wait longer than other public sector staff for a pay award. Our teachers and school leaders deserve to be paid at a level which recognises the value of the outstanding job they do.

I make one final point: while I welcome the belated decision that has been taken, I am troubled by the misinformation that has surrounded it. In the aftermath of the Executive meeting Sinn Fein issued a statement rejecting the allegation the Ministerial direction was blocked by Sinn Fein from being placed on the Executive agenda saying, "the Education Minister needs to do his homework." It was further reported that Sinn Fein's position was the matter could not proceed because, "the paperwork had not been provided."

This position was repeated in an interview of Pat Sheehan MLA on BBC Radio Ulster's Evening Extra programme on 17 December in which he stated, "He [Paul Givan] hadn't all the paperwork done, and he's been asked to go away and provide that and bring forward an urgent procedure that the First and deputy First Minister can sign off on. ... Well, I think, I think we'll have to be clear where the blockage lies. The blockage lies with Paul Givan, if he had done his paperwork correctly, which he hasn't done, and brought it to the Executive this morning, then it would have been dealt with. I mean, the Executive can't deal with half-baked proposals as Paul Givan has tried to do previously. He needs to do it right, and then he needs to bring it forward, and it's quite simple it's Paul Givan who is blocking teachers' pay going forward. All he needs to do now is bring forward an urgent procedure, make sure that the paperwork is done, and then it will be signed off, it doesn't even have to go to the whole Executive, it can be signed off by the First and deputy First Minister." This claim is categorically and demonstrably untrue.

I submitted an Executive paper seeking approval for a Ministerial direction on Monday 15 December. No issues were raised with the paper by any Minister in advance of the meeting on Wednesday 17 December requiring clarification or correction. The paper was agreed by the deputy First Minister but was not agreed for the agenda by the First Minister. I raised the matter under AOB at the Executive meeting. No issue was taken

by any Minister in relation to the adequacy of the Executive paper that had been produced. I subsequently reissued the exact same Executive paper with a cover note seeking approval by way of urgent procedure on Wednesday evening. I was informed on Thursday that Executive approval had been secured to the identical Executive paper that had been provided to Ministers on Monday.

I should note that to the best of my knowledge no Sinn Fein Minister repeated the allegations attributed to Sinn Fein or repeated by Pat Sheehan MLA. I am not in a position to state that Pat Sheehan MLA knowingly breached the, "The Code of Conduct and The Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of Members" – see provisions on honesty – that will be a matter for others. That what he stated cannot be reconciled with the truth is incontrovertible.

Politics involves the cut and thrust of debate and will necessarily involve strongly held views: that is to be welcomed. Demonstrable falsehoods are to be deprecated. The famous quote often attributed to former US Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan seems appropriate: "people are entitled to their own opinions, but not their own facts".