

Dr Suzanne Kingon
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Dear Principal

INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY TRANSLINK DRIVERS – IMPACT ON PUBLIC EXAMS

As you know, industrial action involving Translink bus drivers has been called for seven days from Tuesday 17 May 2022. It is extremely unfortunate that this action will coincide with a busy week of public exams when schools have been working exceptionally hard all year to support pupils taking exams.

While we expect that the vast majority of pupils will be able to access lifts from parents, other family members or friends in order to attend public exams, there may be a small number of pupils, particularly those in vulnerable circumstances, who are unable to make alternative arrangements. In such circumstances, and where other options have been exhausted, we appreciate that some schools may endeavour where practical to provide assistance with travel arrangements to support pupils to attend their scheduled public exams. In these exceptional circumstances, the Education Authority (EA) will provide financial support to schools to mitigate costs incurred providing support to pupils at risk of missing public exams due to industrial action. Such funding is available to facilitate attendance at public exams only.

I would emphasise that there is no expectation that schools have any responsibility to make travel arrangements for their pupils to exams. This remains the responsibility of pupils and their parents. However from discussions with a range of schools, it is clear that many of our school leaders want to assist pupils who may be disproportionately impacted by this industrial action. The current circumstances are truly exceptional, as we support pupils through a managed return to public exams after two years of unprecedented disruption to their education. For this reason, the Minister has agreed that funding should be made available to all schools for this purpose in recognition that many schools will endeavour in any case to assist pupils in such circumstances.

Schools will be reimbursed based on actual expenditure incurred up to a maximum level of funding per school dependent on total Year 11 to 14 enrolments. Details of the

maximum level of reimbursement available are contained in Annex A. Schools should retain records of costs incurred and a Head of Centre Declaration will be required. Should you need to claim reimbursement as outlined in this letter, you should contact your school's LMS officer within the EA in the first instance. The EA will provide further details on the process for reimbursement.

We hope that a resolution to the dispute can be found before next week. The Department has been in regular contact with colleagues in the Department for Infrastructure, and we note that Translink is attempting to negotiate an exemption for school services should the strike go ahead. I would assure you that the Department will continue to monitor developments over the coming days.

In conclusion, I thank you for your continued efforts to support our children and young people at this difficult time

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suzanne Kingon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

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Annex A – Maximum funding available for reimbursement

Band	No of pupils enrolled Years 11- Year 14	Maximum level of funding per school
Band 1	0 - 150	£500
Band 2	151 - 700	£1,000
Band 3	701 - 800	£1,500
Band 4	801 and above	£2,000