

Teachers reject government's fifth offer

A special meeting of the EIS Salaries Committee, held online, unanimously rejected the latest revised pay offer from the Scottish Government and COSLA.

The new offer, which the teaching unions say was announced in the media yesterday before it was given to them, offers only a marginal improvement on previously rejected offers.

The revised offer, agreed by The Scottish Government and COSLA, was:

2022-23

- 6% for all staff earning up to £80,000 from 1 April 2022
- £4,800 for all those earning in excess of £80,000

2023-24

- 5.5% for all staff earning up to £80,000 from 1 April 2023
- £4,400 for all those earning in excess of £80,000

The EIS said it rejects the offer and will continue with its current programme of strike action until a more credible offer is put onto negotiating table.

EIS General Secretary Andrea Bradley said: "This is another

inadequate offer to Scotland's teachers, which was unanimously rejected by the EIS Salaries Committee earlier today.

"The 6% value of the offer for 2022-23 is insufficient, with CPI inflation currently sitting today at 10.5%. The 6% offer for this year is only 1% less of a pay cut than that previously offered, twice, by the Scottish Government and COSLA.

"Teachers have already lost more than 1% of their salaries through being forced into strike action so, essentially, teachers already more than paid for this revised offer themselves. This is just yet more smoke and mirrors from the Scottish Government and COSLA in attempting to make this offer appear more generous than it actually is."

Ms Bradley continued: "The suggested year two component of 5.5% hasn't been negotiated via the appropriate forum, the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT), at all. Indeed, teaching unions haven't even submitted our pay claim for 2023/24 yet, as a consequence of the current dispute.

"In attempting to tag on next year's pay settlement, without any negotiation at all, the Scottish Government and COSLA are attempting to tie the hands not just of teacher trade unions but all public sector unions – and this is unacceptable to the EIS."

Ms Bradley said: "The conduct of the Scottish Government and COSLA in this process has been equally unacceptable. From dragging the process out interminably, to seeking to create divisions both between different grades of teachers and different groups of workers, to seeking to bypass the agreed negotiating processes and sharing information on pay offers with the media before sharing them with the trade unions representing teachers – these have not been good-faith actions.

"Their emphasis throughout has been on spin rather than

genuine attempts to reach an agreed pay settlement through proper negotiation.

“As a result of the clear decision to reject this offer, taken by our Salaries Committee today, our Executive Committee has also unanimously agreed that the current programme of strike action will continue as scheduled.

“The EIS remains, as ever, willing and available to engage in further discussions with both the Scottish Government and COSLA, through the appropriate forum within the SNCT, to attempt to reach a resolution to this dispute.”

The EIS has emailed its members on Wednesday afternoon, advising on the decisions to reject the offer and continue with strike action and the reasoning behind those decisions.

Education Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville said: “It is deeply disappointing that the EIS has rejected this offer outright, without consulting members – and in doing so, continuing with damaging industrial action, which is particularly concerning in the run up to the SQA exam diet.

“It is a fair offer – the fifth that has been made to unions – and would have meant a salary rise of 11.5% for most teachers in April, with a cumulative rise of almost 30% since January 2018.

“We looked for compromise – as we were asked to do – and dug deep under very challenging financial circumstances to arrive at a deal that is affordable and sustainable.

“I urge the unions to continue discussions with the Scottish Government and COSLA so this dispute can be resolved as soon as possible.

“I appeal, again, for unions to suspend planned strike action while talks are ongoing to avoid further disruption to our children and young people’s education.”

Scottish Labour education spokesperson Michael Marra said: "The government's failure to reach a deal with teaching unions is a huge disappointment for families and education staff. We cannot afford more disruption in our schools with the exam season approaching and our young people already suffering from huge loss of learning through the pandemic years.

"The SNP must now seek to move to rolling negotiation. We waited three months for this latest offer to be made. Ministers must be back at the table this week with councils and unions to strike a deal.

"The failures of process that trade unions are highlighting smack of gross incompetence from the SNP, and, crucially, undermine the trust needed in negotiations to get a deal done."

Scottish Liberal Democrat leader Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP said: "Teachers care deeply about their pupils and the last thing they want to do is close the gates, but this government has left them with no other option.

"Scottish Liberal Democrats have calculated that Scotland's school pupils have now lost 2.1 million days of education due to strike action, which is set to double if an agreement is not reached.

"To get Scottish education back on track, we need to get the basics right. That means boosting pay and conditions for staff, permanent contracts, creating more time for lesson planning and cutting class sizes so that pupils get the support they deserve."