

SCHOOL REPORT



The Regional Newsletter for All
School Support Staff in the North
West

October 2008

UNISON is the largest trade union for staff in schools and local authority education departments.

Our members include teaching assistants, nursery staff, administrators, secretaries, policy officers, technicians, cleaners, caretakers, school meals workers - in fact anyone working in schools or supporting education.

UNISON is campaigning to make sure the vital contribution these staff make to schools and education is recognised and rewarded by calling for:

- **Better pay and conditions**
- **Improved career structures**
- **Access to training and development**
- **Fair treatment for term-time, part-time and temporary staff**
- **High quality, well-resourced education services accountable to the local community**

If you are not currently a member of UNISON and wish to join, please contact 0845 355 0845 for more information, or contact your local UNISON branch.

Hello and Welcome

This is the first in a series of special Newsletters for School Support Staff in the North West Region. The aim of this newsletter is to get across the message that UNISON members in schools are facing further significant changes. It is crucial for the Schools Forum Committee in the North West that our members are fully informed about these changes, in particular:

- A new negotiating body for School Support Staff
- Academies
- Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group

It is important that you get involved in activities that your Branch may organise over the next year. It is crucial that we recruit more workplace contacts to assist in distributing information and being our source of information.

Over the next year the Schools Forum, with the support of the Region, will endeavor to keep open communication channels to provide advice and support to our members.

New Negotiating body for School Support Staff

The new Schools Support Staff Negotiating Body is being set up to give a bigger voice to the more than 300,000 school support staff, with UNISON, to establish a separate negotiating forum for Support Staff pay and conditions, where the specific role they play is recognised and reflected openly across all schools.

We know that Support Staff play a crucial part in helping maintain the momentum of school improvement, with changes to teachers contracts, helping them to focus more on teaching and less on administration and other tasks. These changes have largely been achieved by deploying more Support Staff in schools, developing new roles and broadening their range of responsibilities. Over the past ten years Support Staff numbers have grown from 136,500 to 326,400 (full time

equivalent).

UNISON believes the national framework will facilitate a much greater degree of clarity and consistency in the terms and conditions of our members nationwide than is possible under the current arrangements.

UNISON believes that the formation of a national committee will work towards:

- Better pay and conditions
- Improved career structures
- Access to training and development
- Fair treatment for term-time, and part-time staff
- High quality, well resourced education services.

Independent Chair of Negotiating Body Announced

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has appointed Philip Ashmore as the independent Chair of the Negotiating Body.

Mr Ashmore is a member of the NHS Pay Review Body; and Director of the Passenger Transport Executive for Tyne & Wear; with 35 years experience of employee relations.

Dave Prentis, UNISON General Secretary, said:

"This is a very important development. Professional and support staff in schools deserve fair pay and the hard work starts now to make sure the new



negotiating body can deliver this".

If you want to know more, then contact your Branch, and find out who attends the Regional Schools Forum because at each meeting the North West receives a report from the two delegates, Roger Moore and Pam Howard, who represent the Region on the new body.

Academies - A Recipe for Disaster

In a recent interview, with the Anti Academies Alliance Newspaper Christina McAnea (Head of Education and Children's Services, UNISON) said:

"Almost every claim made for Academy Schools in England is contested; contested by a wide range of parents, support staff, teachers, education professionals, academics, staff and unions. UNISON has recently affiliated to the Anti-Academies Alliances Campaign.

What the Alliance and TUC have done in recent months is pull all of the published evidence on Academies together.

Academies are, in many respects, educations "secret garden." Exempt from the Freedom of Information Act and free of many reporting requirements as well as the disciplines expected of other schools.

Funding agreements will reflect the policy of the day, but thereafter changes to benefit children and young people in community

schools cannot be imposed on an established academy. For example, the new requirements on schools to promote well-being will apply to new academies via their funding agreements. So pupils in established academies will be at a disadvantage. How can you run a living, evolving community under contract?

We can track the historical journey of the academies' confused



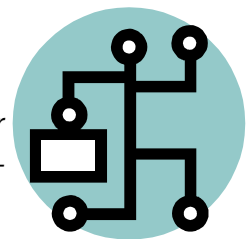
Christina McAnea

rationale, from tackling failing schools (which have declined

considerably, to the Government's credit, I am pleased to say, with no need for academies) to tackling disadvantage and to finally promoting choice and diversity.

We can examine the benchmarking of the academies' record against other interventions. We find that, for example, programmes like Excellence in Cities, that deliver extra support in the classroom, produce similar improvements at far less cost.

I cannot believe that with the Government's desire for public Services to collaborate to tackle the big issues of the day, they can leave Academies out of national strategies. Every Child Matters and the Children's Plan have a radical vision of transformation which brings together all of the different strands of health, educa-



tion and welfare. It is an agenda for an integrated approach, but academies sit alone, not only from public services but from each other.

Academies can pick and chose whether they want to co-operate on the 14-19 curriculum and diplomas; whether they want to tackle obesity, promote sex education, or work through the Extended School Initiative to help families overcome disadvantage directly or with other partners.

Ironically, institutions established under the guise of delivering pupils from disadvantage are able to entrench it.

There are several specific areas in which UNISON members have a direct interest (apart from their interest as parents and tax payers) in academies:

After years of lobbying the Government, support staff in schools are to be offered their own pay and conditions' negotiating body. It will cover not only schools that are currently under the Local Government Green Book, but also voluntary-aided, controlled, foundation and trust schools. The only school staff outside of the national agreements will be academies.

UNISON always makes strenuous efforts to protect staff who transfer to new employers, as well as those who are newly employed by them. There are agreements across the public sector to prevent private providers from lowering pay rates. There is no two-tier agreement applicable to academies, which are high maintenance in terms of industrial relations.

Their often Christian ethos does not bar them from paying poverty wages or refusing trade union facilities. This we believe must end. Recognition and other rights must equate to those in maintained schools. That is why we support the new TUC model agreement for academies and will be asking the DCSF to include it in funding agreements.

There is also the matter of the missing Local Authority role. With the growth of academies, I think the DCSF is realizing that they do not have the capacity to manage dozens of local academies directly from Great Smith Street.

They rely upon the SSAT, but they are not answerable to anyone. Large providers like ULT, with as many schools as a small authority, must guide their own management, legal, professional and technical capacity from scratch. They do not have recourse to the local authority in the same way as a community school.

Trade Unions must work with academy providers in the interests of school staff and the service that they care about. We have a national agreement with ULT and are seeking national recognition with both Ark and Oasis academy chains.

Finally, we do not doubt that some sponsors wish to make a contribution to education, or that the government wants to tackle disadvantage. But we and the Alliance know that there are better routes to travel: better value for money, better public accountability and better to be part of the public services family

that delivers for the many not the few."

Campaigning

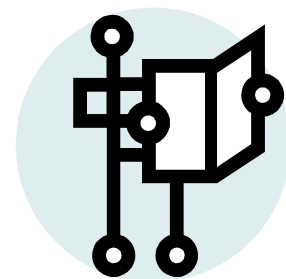
UNISON is working with the teaching unions in campaigning against academies and in this Region we have developed (with NASUWT support) a pack for branches to work in partnership with the community and trade unions.

In September, the TUC launched a joint recognition agreement to be promoted in academies. This is a positive step forward, presenting a strong, united front to not only protect the pay and conditions of staff in academy schools but also to secure union recognition.

For further details of this model recognition agreement please contact your local UNISON Branch.



Anti academy protesters in Oldham



Appropriate Deployment of Support Staff in Schools

WAMG (Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group) has issued guidance (Briefing Note 22) relating to the way school support staff are being deployed. The document raises the issues on:

- PPA Time
- Split Contracts
- Cover Supervision

The WAMG document, which has the support of UNISON, states quite clearly that:

- Schools should seek to deploy their staff in such a way as to maximise the benefits these staff bring to the school. Schools should review their current employment practices to ensure that support staff receive fair and consistent pay and conditions.

- Schools should, with UNISON support, review their individual cover policies to ensure that these activities are only undertaken by those members of staff with appropriate levels of skills, status and experience.

- It is vital that schools have distinct and documented cover and PPA policies in place that define the roles and responsibilities of support staff members.

- UNISON and the local authorities have a crucial role to play in engaging with schools to ensure that our members are not misused or exploited in the school.

Please ensure you see this guidance note, it reduces the bad practices some head

teachers are trying to get away with.

Independent Safeguarding Authority Scheme (ISA)

The ISA is a new public body which has been created to help prevent unsuitable people working with children and vulnerable adults. From October 2009 all staff working or volunteering with vulnerable adults or children will be required to register with the ISA.

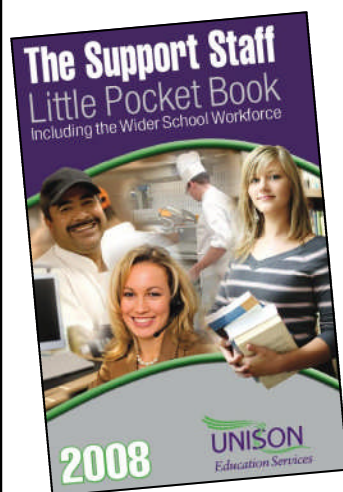
The scheme, which starts in October 2009, will cost £64. UNISON strongly believes that the cost of the scheme should NOT be borne by our members and currently we are campaigning for the fee to be paid by employers.

If you have any concerns about the ISA registration, please discuss these with your Branch.

NOTE TO BRANCHES:

Please ensure your WAMG Group has a Senior Officer chairing the Committee, for example, Director or Assistant Director level. If your Council does not comply with this please contact the TDA or alert the Region by emailing: kbrads@unison.co.uk

The Support Staff Little Pocket Book 2008



Have you seen, or better still received, a copy of the UNISON pocket book for School Support Staff? This booklet contains a wealth of information and advice for all School Support Staff. If you would like a copy, contact your Branch today.

UNISON Liverpool Schools Photography Contest

Well done to Meron Camillius of St Finbars Catholic Primary school who has 'snapped' up the top prize of £500 worth of

Winning Photograph



photography vouchers to spend on equipment for the school. UNISON invited Liverpool school pupils in years 5 and 6 to take part in the competition as part of Liverpool 08 Capital of Culture. Pupils were asked to base their photographs on what work meant to them.

The following winners will receive a certificate and special prize, whilst all participants will

get a certificate and disposable camera.

1st Place – Meron Camillius of St Finbars Catholic

2nd Place – Emile Tootle of Rice Lane Junior School

3rd Place – Ryan Parkinson of Dovedale Junior School