

MPs gather to hear from school support staff

On 8 May, UNISON members travelled to Westminster to speak to politicians about the vital work they do in schools.

Over 100 guests including 30 MPs from all three main parties attended the event at parliament, which marked the launch of the union's Education our Future report.

Education our Future sets out UNISON's views on the future of education, including our desire for everyone to have equal access to a lifetime of high-quality education and for support staff to be celebrated for the important contribution they make in early years, schools, further and higher education and careers services.

The event provided a chance for UNISON members to meet face-to-face with MPs. Members shared their experiences of working on the frontline of education and encouraged politicians to pay greater attention to the important issues that affect support staff.

Representing school staff at the event were site manager, Andrew Anderson; higher level teaching assistant, Sandra Coventry as well as school business director, Debra Moore and school cook, Sue Warriner. They talked to MPs and peers, including shadow education secretary Stephen Twigg, shadow education minister Sharon Hodgson and education spokesperson Baroness Jones, telling them about the valuable roles



that support staff carry out in our schools.



To learn more about UNISON's vision for education, download a copy of Education our Future at: unison.org.uk/acrobat/20303.pdf

Local Government Pension Scheme negotiations now completed – time to have your say

After months of tough negotiations, the proposals for the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland from 2014 have been signed off by ministers for consultation. At the time of writing, UNISON is arranging regional briefings for branches and members, to let you know exactly what is being proposed from 2014 so that you can have your say. The other LGPS unions and the Local Government Association will do the same.

UNISON will be consulting you about the proposals in a postal

ballot. Please take time to read the proposals, tell your workmates to do the same and go to briefings held in your branch or region. And don't forget to recruit colleagues not in the union. They need the strength and democracy of UNISON behind them to protect their pension – now and in the future.

Detailed information about all aspects of the LGPS 2014 proposals can be found on the website and more information will also appear there as details for the ballot are finalised. See: unison.org.uk/pensions/lgps.asp

There are materials on the website covering the new scheme, including:

a joint union statement | the scheme at a glance | LGPS 2014 overview | protection | a career average pension | member contributions | the 50/50 option | retirement | glossary | frequently asked questions | examples | proposals for the new scheme.



UNISON speaks **up** for teaching assistants

Teaching and learning assistants are invaluable in school classrooms, however many are underpaid and underappreciated. That's why UNISON is speaking up for teaching assistants.

Teaching assistants now make up nearly a quarter of the UK school workforce, supporting the work of teachers and pupils, particularly those with additional educational needs. As the leading union for school support staff, UNISON knows just how important teaching assistants are.

However, with schools increasingly facing budget difficulties and trying to cut corners, TAs are under growing pressure. And as if that wasn't enough, the role of TAs has been criticised following research that suggested that pupils who spend a lot of their time with a TA don't achieve as well as other pupils.

UNISON is fighting to set the record straight. We believe that blaming TAs for negative results for pupils is wrong. Instead, the problem is with how TAs are deployed, trained and supported in schools.

We have met with Professor Peter Blatchford and Rob Webster, who were behind the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project and they agree that their research has led to some misleading headlines in the media. As a result, they have agreed to work with UNISON on issues of joint concern for teaching assistants and other support staff.

Responding to UNISON's comments in defence of TAs, Professor Blatchford said: "We believe TAs often do a great job under difficult circumstances, and their goodwill can sometimes be taken for granted in schools. We have been careful to say that TA numbers should not be cut, but rather TAs have enormous potential to add value to what teachers do".

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Sign up to UNISON Schools Update email

Receive updates on issues that affect you at work, including pay, health and safety, and the latest government policies that impact on schools. Sign up at: unison.org.uk/news/maillinglist.asp

CONTACT

Telephone
0845 355 0845

Email
education@unison.co.uk
unison.org.uk/education/schools

Say 'no' to forced academies

UNISON is opposing attempts by the government to force some schools in England to become academies.

The government has identified up to 700 primary schools that it considers to be underperforming. These schools are being ordered to become academies, even though there is no evidence to show that this will lead to school improvement. Parents, local communities and the school workforce are speaking out, saying that the best way to raise standards is not by forcing a school to become an academy but by supporting the heads, teachers and support staff in the existing school to improve teaching and learning.

UNISON has drafted advice for members regarding 'forced academies', including a checklist of steps you can take if your school is being forced to become an academy. Download the advice at: unison.org.uk/file/A14192.pdf

For top tips on how you can support, recruit and organise UNISON members who work in academies, read our Organising in Academies leaflet at: unison.org.uk/acrobat/20832.pdf

Make a difference – be the voice for your school

UNISON's success is down to our members – and, in particular, the UK-wide network of school reps who ensure that support staff have a voice in schools. If you don't have a UNISON representative in your school, then why not take the time to become one, and make a difference at work.

School reps talk to members, distribute information and get their views; recruit new members; help members get advice on workplace problems; and act as spokesperson or representative for support staff in your school. You can

do as much or as little as you want. A wide range of UNISON members are reps, whether they are a school business manager, librarian, TA or school meals worker – and some reps job-share the role with a colleague.

Your local UNISON branch is on hand to support you and you will have training to help you in your role. You are also entitled to paid release from your job to carry out your duties.

For more information contact your local UNISON branch or phone the UNISON helpline on **0845 355 0845**.



Asbestos

a deadly problem in schools

The majority of Britain's state schools contain asbestos. Asbestos was used as a building material from the 1950s until the mid-1980s, often in fireproofing and insulation. But asbestos can become dangerous if it begins to deteriorate or is damaged. The fibres can be released and breathed in. This can lead to lung complaints including mesothelioma – a form of cancer that is almost exclusively caused by exposure to asbestos.

UNISON believes that urgent action needs to be taken to address this deadly problem.

UNISON and the Joint Union Asbestos Committee (JUAC) is calling for pro-active inspections, asbestos training and the removal of asbestos from all schools.

To take action over asbestos in schools, three things you can do are:

- Ask your headteacher for an update on asbestos in your school
- Talk to your local UNISON health and safety rep about the steps you can take. If you need help contacting a local rep, please call the UNISON helpline on 0845 355 0845.
- Read more about it:
 - unison.org.uk/education/schools/hand.asp
 - juac.org.uk

School Staff seminar success

UNISON's annual national school support staff seminar saw over 100 delegates meet in Harrogate to discuss the latest issues affecting UNISON members in schools.

A range of exciting speakers at the seminar included Karen Jennings, UNISON assistant general secretary and Craig Bankhead from Show Racism the Red Card, an anti-racism campaign which works in UK schools. Hot topics on the programme included pensions, violence in schools and the latest government plans for

education. There were also workshops to discuss the current issues in children's services; training and skills for support staff and how to keep pace with the changes in academies. Speaking at the seminar, Karen Jennings said: "Without the hard work of support staff, much of what goes on in our schools would simply grind to a halt. UNISON will continue to fight for a better deal for hundreds of thousands of school support staff".

The highlight of the seminar was an inspiring presentation from two UNISON organisers, Ashley

Harper and Joe Rollin. Ashley and Joe regularly visit schools in the Yorkshire and Humberside region and speak with members about the issues that affect them at work.

Many of the members they speak to are worried about the administration of medicines and medical procedures in their school. They talked about how they used this important issue as a springboard for successfully organising and recruiting members and helping staff to feel empowered to make a positive difference in their school.

Schools need libraries – *read all about it*

A good library service is at the heart of the school community and UNISON wants to make sure it stays that way.

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) says that 2,000 library staff and over 3,000 hours a week of service are being cut across the UK. Library staff provide expert support and advice, carefully selected books and learning resources and a safe space that is accessible to all. Volunteers or administrative staff are replacing school librarians and school libraries are beginning to close.

UNISON wants to raise awareness of the value of school libraries and Schools Library Services. We have joined forces with CILIP and other campaign groups to highlight the importance of libraries in providing access to learning and as a vital lifeline for many communities.

Read more about UNISON's Love Your Libraries campaign at:
unison.org.uk/localgov/loveyourlibraries.asp

**Love
Your
Libraries**

Join UNISON — your friend at work

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FREEPOST RSKU-RRCA-HHSJ, EDUCATION, UNISONCENTRE, 130 EUSTON ROAD, LONDON NW1 2AY.

1. YOUR PERSONAL DETAILS

Please tick or fill in the boxes below

Mrs Ms Miss Mr Other

First name Other initial(s)

Surname/Family name Date of birth / /

Home address

Postcode

National insurance number (from your payslip)

How would you describe your ethnic origin?

Bangladeshi Asian Other Black UK
 Chinese Black Black Other
 Indian African White UK
 Pakistani Black Irish
 Asian UK Caribbean White Other

Please tick this box if you require materials in a different format (eg large print or Braille) – be sure to supply contact details below

Please give a telephone number/voice/text/email address for UNISON to contact you – indicate if work or home
 Contact tel/voice/text/email

2. YOUR EMPLOYMENT DETAILS

Employer's name

Your job title/occupation

Department/section

Workplace name and address

Postcode

Payroll number (from your payslip)

3. WHAT YOU WILL PAY – FROM 1 October 2003

Please tick the appropriate box for your earnings before deductions.

Weekly pay	Annual pay	YOUR SUBSCRIPTION—WHAT YOU PAY		Band
		per week	per month	
Up to £38.47	Up to £2,000	£0.30	£1.30	A
£38.48–£96.16	£2,001–£5,000	£0.81	£3.50	B
£96.17–£153.84	£5,001–£8,000	£1.22	£5.30	C
£153.85–£211.53	£8,001–£11,000	£1.52	£6.60	D
£211.54–£269.23	£11,001–£14,000	£1.81	£7.85	E
£269.24–£326.92	£14,001–£17,000	£2.24	£9.70	F
£326.93–£384.61	£17,001–£20,000	£2.65	£11.50	G
£384.62–£480.76	£20,001–£25,000	£3.23	£14.00	H
£480.77–£576.92	£25,001–£30,000	£3.98	£17.25	I
£576.93–£673.08	£30,001–£35,000	£4.68	£20.30	J
£673.08+	over £35,000	£5.19	£22.50	K

Please tick the appropriate box to indicate how often you are paid
 Weekly
 Fortnightly
 Four Weekly
 Monthly

Please tick this box if you are a student member in full-time education (including student nurses or Modern Apprentices).
 Your subscription is £10 per year.

4. POLITICAL FUND

UNISON's Affiliated Political Fund (APF) is used to campaign for and promote UNISON policy and the need for quality public services within the Labour Party, locally and nationally, in Parliament and Europe. UNISON APF affiliates to the Labour Party.

UNISON's General Political Fund (GPF) is used to pay for campaigning at branch, regional and national levels of the union and for research and lobbying in Parliament and Europe. It is independent of support for any political party.

It is important that you indicate a choice of fund by ticking one of the boxes below.
 Your subscription shown above includes a political fund payment so you do not pay any more by being in one of the funds.

5. YOUR AUTHORISATION

- I wish to join UNISON and accept its rules and constitution.
- I authorise deduction of UNISON subscriptions from my salary/wages at the rate determined by UNISON in accordance with its rules to be paid over to them on my behalf and I authorise my employer to provide information to UNISON to keep my records up to date
- I authorise deduction of the following Political Fund payment as part of my subscription: Tick one box only
 Affiliated Political Fund General Political Fund

Now please sign and date below

Signature

Date

OTHER WAYS TO PAY

direct debit cheque
 (please tick if appropriate)

If you have been a member of a trade union before, please state which one:

DATA PROTECTION

UNISON will process your membership information together with other information for administration, statistical analysis, conducting ballots and other statutory requirement purposes.

We may also send you newsletters, journals and surveys and let you have a business relationship for your benefit. We, or they, may contact you by mail, telephone, SMS, fax or e-mail to let you know about goods, services or promotions which we think may be of interest to you.

If you do not want any mailings from UNISON besides those required by statute as shown in bold above, please tick this box.

We may share your information with organisations with whom we have a business relationship for your benefit. We, or they, may contact you by mail, telephone, SMS, fax or e-mail to let you know about goods, services or promotions which we think may be of interest to you.

If you do not wish to receive such information please tick this box.