



# EDUCATION NEWS

## THE FIGHT CONTINUES FOR FAIR PAY THE NEW EDUCATION MINISTER MUST ACT!

NJC PAY UPDATE

### FAIR PAY FOR EDUCATION WORKERS

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## PAY UPDATE

While UNISON members are not satisfied with the offer there was not a strong enough vote or appetite to take industrial action.

Northern Ireland NJC trade unions met to discuss the results of each unions consultations and assess the responses of our membership.

This meeting was attended by Northern Ireland representatives of UNISON, NIPSA, GMB and SIPTU. At that meeting, all unions confirmed a common view that this year's pay award has failed to address the expectations of our members. On that basis the unions agreed to seek to explore a future common campaigning approach, up to and including future industrial action, to defend and improve our members' living standards.

Unite outside of this meeting decided to take industrial action. We remain convinced that taking joint union action (and no one union going on a solo run) and working together provides us with the best opportunity for real success on collective living standards issues.

## APRIL SHOUT OUT FOR BETTER PAY

*Have your say on  
pay.*

During April, UNISON reps will be visiting workplaces to find out your thoughts on pay.

We will be bringing your messages to your employer and the Department of Education to demand better pay for Education workers.

We will be stepping up the campaign in May.

## INTEGRATED SCHOOLS

UNISON has created a forum for members in integrated schools. The forum will meet regularly to:

- Discuss common interests in integrated schools
- Develop ideas to support members and the sector
- Build relationships and networks locally

If you would like to get involved and join our campaign please contact your local branch.

## MEETING WITH EDUCATION MINISTER

UNISON along with NIPSA, Unite and GMB met with the Minister for Education, Michelle McIlveen on 21st March to discuss pay and to make the case for a COVID recognition payment for education workers.

Commenting on the meeting Louise O'Hara, Regional Organiser said, "The Department of Education must step up to the mark and take responsibility for the education workforce. The UNISON members who play their part in educating and keeping our children safe must be recognised and compensated fairly. Platitudes and thanks will not pay the ever increasing bills."

It was made clear to Minister McIlveen that there was growing unrest amongst the membership and that failure to address the issues around pay and grading as a matter of urgency by the Department of Education and the next Minister would leave unions no option but to embark upon a program of industrial action.

## HEALTH & SAFETY

The health and safety JNC takes place quarterly and UNISON ensures that any health and safety issues affecting our members regionally are on the agenda. Obviously over the course of the pandemic Covid-19 was the main health and safety focus. We ensured that risk assessments were used in order to keep members as safe as possible and that PPE was provided readily. A number of other issues currently being discussed include:

- Workplace Violence Policy
- Ventilation issues
- First aid training and cover
- Accident reporting mechanisms
- Slips, trips and falls incidences and how to decrease them

## UPDATES FROM UNION / MANAGEMENT MEETINGS

### CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS

UNISON have been working tirelessly during the pandemic for classroom assistants on health & safety for all our members and risk assessments to make sure your workplaces are safe during the pandemic. UNISON have been reminding principals that classroom assistants are not expected to cover classes for long periods of teacher absences. We have also worked hard on the Menopause Policy and Domestic Violence Abuse Policy with EA. UNISON have been pushing for schools to reduce the use of temporary positions and to advertise permanent posts.

*Samantha Bronze*

### CLEANING

UNISON has been raising the concerns of our cleaning members in the Operation and Estates Directorates and in the quarterly Cleaning service meeting. We are all well aware of the extra work made more difficult by the high number of vacancies in Cleaning and are working hard to find a solution to these vacancies. UNISON has urged the EA to offer 16 hour contracts. Temporary work is no good to anyone and the cost of £33 for a police check every time you are out for longer than 3 months is an added strain to people who are already struggling financially.

*Daphne Hutchinson*

### CATERING

UNISON has raised the need to offer additional working hours within kitchens and address disappearing pay differentials in catering. We have demanded that anyone on temporary contracts be made permanent. UNISON members have been making sure children have a hot nutritional meal daily and have been working with the EA to ensure all schools provide a meals service in the dinner hall. We have also insisted that free school meals application forms are distributed to parents from June. There should be no delays in the process at the start of the school year. No child should be without their entitlements from day one. UNISON's campaign for Free School Meals for All is growing stronger every week. We are determined to ensure that no child will go hungry and school meals service jobs are protected.

*Anne Taggart*

### TRANSPORT

UNISON has ensured in the past year that our members in transport have had full representation in disciplinary matters, sickness and contract issues. We were successful on insisting on full PPE provided for our drivers and escorts. Screens erected for drivers on buses, sanitisers and deep cleans of the buses to keep our members and the passengers safe. As we come out of this pandemic, we will be insisting full protection should remain in place as long as is needed. We have also insisted that transport escorts with four years' service be made permanent members of staff and senior management have agreed to implement this without delay. Our members in transport worked extremely hard and stepped up to the plate when needed.

*Catherine McKenna*