

Belfast Education Branch AGM Newsletter 2024

It's about You, Your Branch, Your Say and Your Vote

Our Branch AGM is the single most important meeting of the year.

Every year UNISON requires its branch officers and stewards to stand for re-election. The AGM is your opportunity to have a say in how the branch is run and who will represent you in 2024.

It will be a great opportunity to meet with other members and UNISON stewards and to find out how UNISON has been active on your behalf during the year.

If you would like to become more active in UNISON: Representing your colleagues or becoming involved in your union please contact your branch.

Branch AGM Date

**Sat 24th Feb 2024
12.00 noon— 6.00pm
Ten Square Hotel, Belfast**

A fun-filled event for all members. Information on all the work that the branch has been doing on your behalf throughout the year along with:

- ◆ Hot food fork buffet
- ◆ Information stalls
- ◆ Prizes and surprises
- ◆ Fabulous Entertainment

Registration via Eventbrite, click on the link below
<http://bit.ly/AGMBelfast>

If you have any difficulties or queries please contact the branch.

Update Your Details

Changed your name, moved house or have a new number? You can update your details using our online form. Go to <https://www.unison-ni.org.uk/update-your-details> or contact membership services on 028 90270190.

THOUSANDS OF UNISON MEMBERS TOOK TO THE PICKET LINE!

OFFICIAL PICKET

UNISON members sent a very clear message to the Department of Education of our first strike in over a decade. Thousands of UNISON members have decided to stand up and be counted. They have decided they have been waiting too long for a pay and grading review.

They want pay justice. In 2019 discussions on pay reform were promised. The Covid pandemic stalled movement. Education workers understood that, but efforts to get negotiations going have ground to a halt. Members recognise there is some goodwill in the Education Authority to get this matter sorted but the EA continue to tell us there is no agreed funding to support negotiations. The Department of Education has been sitting on the fence. Where is their voice in support of this just cause? The Northern Ireland Secretary of State, now responsible for the Education budget should be told in no uncertain terms that asking workers to wait until an Executive and the Assembly returns is just not good enough.



**TOGETHER WE RISE
IN UNISON**

NJC Pay Award 2023/24

The NJC pay uplift (covering NI, England and Wales) due since April 1st 2023 has finally been agreed. We recently updated members on the long delay in resolving this issue. Efforts to improve on the offer were unsuccessful and it has taken some months to confirm that members of the negotiating unions would accept the initial offer.

We have now asked the Education Authority to confirm payment and make all necessary arrangements to ensure education workers are paid without delay. The payments are to be paid in the December payroll including back pay. Our NJC Committee continues negotiations for 2023/24.



UNISON College has 550 Free E-learning courses available for

UNISON members. Check out the full list of courses here: <https://bit.ly/2KzKJXA>

BECOME A UNISON REP

- Challenge workplace issues
- Make your voice heard
- Offer advice and support

Interested in becoming a rep?

To get more information and register your interest go to:
www.unison-ni.org.uk/get-active-become-rep



LGBT+

UNISON's LGBT+ committee has been busy this year attending Pride events across Northern Ireland including the 1st ever Pride in Causeway and the 30th Anniversary of Foyle Pride. Next year marks the year of the LGBT+ worker, if you would like to get involved or find out more information please contact the branch. A full report on the work of the committee will be given at the AGM.



Rallies and Demos

The Branch attended several rallies and demos this year including, International Women's Day, May Day, Pride and International Solidarity rallies calling for a ceasefire in Gaza.



BRANCH CONTACTS

Branch Secretary Ann Taggart	07843 840 616
Branch Chairperson Catherine McKenna	07813 72 2852
Regional Organiser Joe McCusker j.mccusker@unison.co.uk	07775 856 286
Area Organiser Susan Neill s.neill@unison.co.uk	07341 563 467
UNISON Direct	0800 0857 857



UNISON Belfast Education Branch

Supporting our Members

This year the branch has:

- Provided advice and representation to members facing disciplinarys, experiencing bullying and harassment, or suffering injuries at work;
- Held workplace meetings with members;
- Supported our members with Health and Safety concerns and raised these concerns at the EA quarterly meetings;
- Regularly met with management on a range of issues within schools;
- Attended EA Directive meetings bringing forward the concerns of our members within, catering, transport, classroom assistants and cleaning;
- Represented our members at all Education Authority, voluntary grammars and integrated schools;
- Policies currently being discussed - Domestic Violence & Abuse Policy and Menopause Policy.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE SURVEY

UNISON recently conducted a survey on workplace violence experienced by support staff working in a classroom setting. Out of responses received, 66% report being worried about violent behaviour from pupils, with 57% experiencing or observing violent incidents towards staff on a daily or weekly basis. Respondents reported a lack of support from management and a feeling of normalisation of violence.

UNISON Northern Ireland plans to use these survey findings and feedback to the campaign to make the workplace safer and more sustainable for support staff. If you are currently working in a similar role and would like to get involved in a campaign please either contact your local branch reps or UNISON Head Office on 028 9027 0190.

Black and Migrant Workers

UNISON has a dedicated network for Black and Migrant Workers. Please see *UNISON NI Migrant Workers page on Facebook* or contact n.donnelly@unison.co.uk for further information.

Our group holds on-line monthly meetings and sends out regular e-bulletins to all Black & Migrant Worker members in our region. We offer free weekly English preparation classes in the Belfast office (IELTS and OET) and provide access to immigration advice via UNISON Direct (phone helpline 0800 0857857); or through monthly face-to-face appointments locally (n.donnelly@unison.co.uk)

Free School Meals For All

Our Free School Meals For All campaign remains a priority for our branch. If you would like more information on the campaign or to get more involved, contact the branch.

