



# SPERRIN & DEVENISH EDUCATION BRANCH AGM NEWSLETTER 2024

## **Sperrin & Devenish Education Branch AGM 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. Please come along and bring a work colleague.

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 solidarity or welfare work, please contact your branch.

## **AGM Meeting Dates**

**Monday 22nd January 2024  
Model School, Enniskillen  
@ 10am**

**Monday 29th January 2024  
Holy Family PS, Omagh  
@10.30am**

**Thursday 1st February 2024  
Sacred Heart College  
@ 10am**

**Thursday 8th February 2024  
Holy Trinity PS Enniskillen  
@ 2.30pm & 3.00pm**

## **UNISON EDUCATION MEMBERS STRIKE**

UNISON members across the whole Education Authority took strike action on Thursday November 16<sup>th</sup> across hundreds of schools throughout Northern Ireland. Thousands of UNISON members have decided to stand up and be counted. They have decided they have been waiting too long. 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 have 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.

The particular changes we want to see applied to the pay structure include a grading structure:

**That standardises all grades with more than 4 points to a max of 4 points in length.**

**That removes overlaps between grades.**

**That consolidates admin and former ancillary and general grades into a single structure.**

**That restores the supervisor differential to an agreed level and addresses recruitment challenges.**

**That assimilates to the new scales on the principle of next, equal to or higher point.**

All of these changes would combine to produce pay improvement.

UNISON members are also continuing action short of strike. This means only working to agreed job description.

The extra effort that our members have given over and above their formal work will no longer be freely given. Our members feel they have been taken for granted for long enough.



The UNISON Free School meals campaign objective is to seek universal, nutritious, free schools meals for all pupils to both reduce poverty and improve public health and to safeguard and promote the vital work of our members within school catering. School meals services should be publicly provided.

**NOT YET A UNISON MEMBER? JOIN TODAY!**

**Call Membership on 028 9027 0190 or join online <https://join.unison.org.uk>**



## **MEMBERS IN VOLUNTARY GRAMMAR, INTEGRATED & IRISH MEDIUM SCHOOLS**

UNISON members within Education Authority (EA) schools have just recently been balloted to take strike action against their employer (EA) on the grading structure.

In schools who have **recently** changed status to integrated, UNISON support staff members who remain on EA contracts are entitled to be involved in this dispute. Members in Integrated and Voluntary Grammar Schools who don't have EA contracts are not covered in this dispute, and you ask:

### **WHY NOT?**

The strike is with the Education Authority—although your school is funded by them your school is not part of a negotiating structure. If the NJC grading structure is improved as a result of the upcoming industrial action, we will seek that these changes apply to you also.

Once NJC new rates have been agreed, UNISON will seek to have these applied to support staff in your schools. If your employer refuses, you can decide to dispute and UNISON will support. UNISON will be pursuing for non EA schools to be included in the bargaining structure for support staff when a new Education Minister is appointed.

## **RETAINER PAYMENTS**

The EA has made proposals to trade union side which they state will improve payments as the school year ends. These will be discussed with your branch reps to ensure we get feedback from members. An update will be circulated once this consultation is complete.

## **GREEN UNISON**

Green UNISON is a new campaign calling on employers across the public sector to decarbonise public services. Members and activists have a crucial role to play in greening our public services and ensuring a just transition to a low carbon and sustainable economy. Members in Education are especially encouraged to get involved. Sign up to our Green UNISON Network .

## **Membership Services**

### **UNISON Welfare – ‘There For You’**

Use this service which is FREE to all UNISON members and is there for you at times of difficulty and crisis. For full details please see UNISON's website.  
[www.unison.org.uk/get-help/](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/)

### **Legal Advice**

Thompsons NI are our specialist employment solicitors. For free legal advice and support on non employment matters, contact 0800 0857 857.



For branch news follow our Facebook Page.  
Search: **Unison Sperrin & Devenish**

## **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 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 contact your local branch reps.

## **UNISON is the largest union for Support Workers**

Throughout 2023 our bargaining team and your branch continued working to protect and secure employment rights and health and safety standards for our members who work as classroom assistants, and in school transport, cleaning, catering, estates and youth services. Our lay team participates directly in all the EA bargaining directorates - operational services (estates, catering, cleaning, transport); children & young peoples services; education (curriculum and services); finance; HR. **Contentious issues are:**

- development of the new EA payroll EA1;
- blended contracts for classroom assistants;
- increased responsibility of supervisory staff in catering and cleaning without proper reward;
- the need for a framework recognition agreement with Voluntary Grammar schools and the ever growing integrated sector (all individual employers);
- growing concern around resources for EA youth services;
- implication of the Brazil judgement on the calculation of annual leave for term time workers.

## **Update Your Details**

Check your membership status by checking your payslip for deductions or your bank for direct debit. If this is not up to date, then you may **NOT** be a UNISON member. Please contact membership services on 028 9027 0190 to 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->



UNISON College has free E-learning courses available for UNISON members. All of our courses are now hosted at <https://unisoncollegeni.org.uk>



## **BRANCH CONTACTS**

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