

AUTUMN 2021

utu NEWS

The journal of the Ulster Teachers' Union



**“Art Competition
Winners Celebrate”**



McClintock Primary School

**Autumnal
colours.**

Artwork by Eva, in Laghey PS

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- BELFAST BRANCH – 22ND NOVEMBER @ 7.30PM
- CARRICKABBEY/LARNE – 24TH NOVEMBER @ 8.00PM
- CAUSEWAY BRANCH – 17TH NOVEMBER @ 8.00PM
- FOYLE BRANCH – 11TH NOVEMBER @ 4.30PM
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AREA ASSOCIATION AGMS

- SOUTHERN AREA ASSOCIATION – 16TH NOVEMBER @ 4.30PM
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IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING ANY OF THE ABOVE AGM MEETINGS, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH US ON
02890 662216 OR
OFFICE@UTU.EDU

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Students across Northern Ireland used their artistic creativity to showcase the sights to see in their local area.

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Read about how you can 'Teach for the Planet' to ensure that climate education, based on science and with a civic action focus, becomes as fundamental as reading and writing.

AND MUCH MORE!



PRESIDENTIAL COMMENT



“ONE DAY AT A TIME”

Readers of a certain age will remember a very popular Country and Western style song which reached Number 1 in the U.K. singles charts in 1979 – it was played in our car cassette player on a daily basis!

It became a very suitable strapline for my school’s (Drumrane P.S.) WhatsApp Group: “One day at a time” seemed to be all we could manage on so many occasions over the past year as it summed up exactly how we all felt. In a film produced the following decade, the grandma looks back on her life and says that she would much rather have been on the rollercoaster of life than the merry-go-round. What a rollercoaster this past year has been! None of us will ever forget its twists and turns, its highs and its lows.

When I took up post as Ulster Teachers’ Union President on 1st April 2021, Spring was well on the way. We had just completed two months and two weeks of teaching key worker children in the school building and the rest of our classes at home. Workload revolved round collating registers with increasing numbers of these “Key worker” children, ensuring that there were enough staff members able to come in to school on a rota, sanitising, negotiating Apps, online platforms etc.

After Easter, as the vaccination programme rolled out, there was an increasing sense of optimism and sheer relief that we were able to return to a little bit of normality with all of our classes sitting in front of us to learn.

GCSE and A Levels took on a new approach – but one that teachers coped with incredibly well, given the strain of making and submitting informed judgements that would become our young peoples’ official results in this ever changing landscape.

The summer seems so long ago now, but it was great to get that little heatwave back in July and a little headspace to enjoy our beautiful country. Indeed, the beauty all around us was the theme of the UTU International Relations competition, and

you can read more about it on page 19.

The school year started very optimistically in August – new guidance was digested, and the children returned with their new shiny shoes and once again permitted schoolbags in tow.

In Drumrane on the 31st August, we had a lovely socially distanced tea party to mark the retirement of Mrs Sandra Brown – a lifelong member of UTU and Past President (2014 - 2015) and her colleague Mary. (See page 26). Life felt optimistic and teachers were positive. Children didn’t really get Covid sure, after all.....

All good things, however, come to an end! The rollercoaster whirred on. The messages coming into UTU HQ throughout the first week in September made us realise that the climate of, “New beginnings” was beginning to change throughout our schools. That first weekend (3-5th September) many principals, including myself, and staff were doing, “Track and Trace”- sending entire classes to book a PCR test as a result of positive cases.

“It has been said that education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”

“JUST GIVE ME THE STRENGTH TO DO EVERY DAY WHAT I HAVE TO DO”

On Monday 6th September we hosted a leadership zoom and you could really feel the fear, despair, exhaustion and frustration of principals at this huge feat.

However, strength comes in support, and the many encouraging phone calls between colleagues that week got us all through and has continued to do so. The PHA/DE changed their policy the following Friday and once we had all digested the change, we have settled into the new rhythm, although still very much realising that things could change at any moment.

Thank you for supporting each other as colleagues in your schools as well as juggling planning, preparation, families, friends, and ensuring every single pupil in your care fulfils their true potential. It has been said that education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.



PRESIDENTIAL COMMENT



The seasons come and go.

"Autumn days when the grass is jewelledand the silk inside a chestnut shell..."

I love the beauty of autumn days and the way the trees change – the old leaves fall and make way for a new start. The harvest crops are gathered safely in, ready to provide us for the winter ahead. In the words of William Wordsworth – "Though nothing can bring back the hour Of splendour in the grass Of glory in the flower: We will grieve not, rather find Strength in what remains behind." Which brings me to the next line in my song:

YESTERDAY'S GONE, AND TOMORROW MAY NEVER BE MINE...

As soon as November comes, our minds are taken to remember men and women who, when the challenge of war from across the seas threatened our country, they prepared to give all and made the ultimate sacrifice.

On Page 27 there is a link to a song I wrote two years ago, feel free to use it in any way you wish in your schools and churches if it helps people remember.

The DE and Stormont Executive will certainly learn from the past and what the pandemic has meant for education. This term the working group reviews are ongoing, are also reflecting on past practice and looking for change going forward in areas such as SEN and Leadership workload, assessment, teacher health and wellbeing etc.

The children we all teach only have one chance to learn – we want to teach the very best lessons we can. Once the days are gone in our classrooms these children will never get the chance to increase their knowledge, or experience those opportunities afforded to them at that moment in time, again. "A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination and instil a love of learning."

We all need our working terms and conditions to be acceptable, so that we feel things are fair in the workplace and we can get on with the job that we are paid to do and give our energy to caring for, supporting and educating our pupils – they will forget what you said but they will never forget how we made them feel.

Since we started to return to the office to work in September, it has been a privilege to get a

closer insight into the work that the team of field officers and office staff in the Office HQ do on the Malone Road, under the excellent leadership of our General Secretary, Jacquie White. There are endless meetings, consultations, conversations, committee meetings all taking place on a daily basis, with you the member at the centre of every conversation.

I would like to take this opportunity to formally congratulate Stephen Mc Cord in his new position as Deputy General Secretary.

"Stephen lives and breathes the Union, Sure he's been our President twice. He's humble, so knowledgeable and gracious, Always giving members the best of advice."

I am so grateful for this Union and that I went to my local branch meeting, many years ago now. It was so friendly and supportive and I would encourage you all to zoom into your local meeting to listen to what the current issues are, and what colleagues are doing to help them get through each day.

At the AGM, members who feel that the time is right for them, can let their name go forward to the Area meeting, to sit on CEC and this is the Central Committee just like a Board of Governors. You can see who is from your area on CEC on page 11 and the dates are on page 2. I'd like to publically thank all the members of CEC, who meet monthly, and our sub committees for their willingness to serve us all. It will be lovely to meet in person, someday soon.

I leave with a quote from Dr P Tournier. "You can still live intensely.... If there is a 'minus' there is also a 'plus'....One loses something only to acquire something else... an aspect of life which could not be known before." Yes indeed, Covid has meant that many things have changed, but the seasons roll on. The last 19 months have been tough but soon it will be winter and all that the Christmas season means to our children must be celebrated. I encourage you not to grow weary and lose heart but to keep going, one day at a time – Spring is coming!

So thank you all for all you do for this generation of children as we all learn from the past and the lessons Covid has taught us,

"Through all the changing scenes of life."

UTU President 2021-22



GENERAL SECRETARY COMMENT



Colleagues

We are currently going through a period of great potential change in education here in Northern Ireland.

Work is underway regarding the nine areas of Review which formed part of the Pay and Workload Agreement. Small working groups comprising three representatives from the teaching unions and three from management side have been meeting regularly with regard to the Workload Agreement, the Review of Substitute and Temporary Teachers and the Employment Model Review.

A scoping group of Principals and Vice-Principals has met on two occasions with the purpose of establishing key workload drivers and potential solutions with regard to School Leaders' workload and this work, along with further wider input, will form the basis of an initial report.

Unions have been working to access input from practitioners regarding the workload associated with SEN and we thank those who took the opportunity to contribute to the UTU sessions. The paper which is being developed from this input will now form the basis of the work due to be commenced shortly and running in parallel with the wider changes to SEN practice.

The remaining reviews – Teacher Health and Well Being, Consultation Arrangements and the Reviews of Accountability and Assessment - are not yet operational but work is on-going behind the scenes which will inform progress.

The Panel to carry out the Independent Review of Education has now been established and the outcomes promise to have a significant impact on much of the work listed above. The Review arose out of the commitment made in New Decade New Approach which promised:

“an external, independent review of educational provision, with a focus on securing greater efficiency in delivery costs, raising standards, access to the curriculum for all pupils and the prospects of working towards a single education system.”

Initial reading of the background and credentials of the Panel members would suggest an unwelcome leaning towards the systems of assessment already in place. What is equally concerning is the focus on the post-primary sector with a marked absence of representation from nursery, primary or special education, or, indeed, from representatives of practitioners or the employment and business world which the children in our schools are moving towards.

We may not have an opportunity for another fundamental review of our education system for many decades to come so it is crucial that it results in a system which puts our children and our profession at its core.

The Covid crisis has uncovered many failings in our society which we knew were already there but which have been systematically ignored. This is as true of education as it has been for health, poverty and employment to name but a few.

We have an opportunity now to effect change. It is imperative that, at the end of this journey, we have an education system which values and nurtures the potential of every child and provides meaningful opportunities and support for each one to develop confidence and achieve.

It is also imperative that trust, value and recognition is restored to the teaching profession and that we can move forward not only with professional confidence but with the opportunity for a meaningful family life. We have worked to support the system; now it must work to support us.

“It is imperative that, at the end of this journey, we have an education system which values and nurtures the potential of every child and provides meaningful opportunities and support for each one to develop confidence and achieve.”

J. E. White

JACQUIE WHITE
GENERAL SECRETARY



European Day of Languages at schools in Northern Ireland

Omagh County Primary School celebrated *European Day of Languages* on Friday 24th September. Pupils throughout the school participated in a variety of different workshops and lessons to celebrate the 13 languages spoken at the school.





"It was lovely to see the effort that many of the children (and parents) had gone to with the dressing up. The teachers came up with some really creative ideas for the children to enjoy and learn from during the course of the day. A special mention to School Meals who were so helpful in supplying lovely pizza and pasta salads for the children's lunch. In the midst of all that has been happening in the past 18 months it was delightful to see the children having fun and learning at the same time!"

Back in August we decided to mark **'European Day of Languages'** with an Italian day in Dromara Primary. All classes planned various activities in connection with Italy – learning the language; studying the geography; finding out about main cities; enjoying the rich history with the founding of the Roman Empire; focusing on traditions like the beautiful Venetian Masquerade Masks and even making these; taking on some STEM challenges connected to the leaning tower of Pisa; enjoying classical music and the Italian National Anthem, **'Fratelli d'Italia'**. Of course school dinners with an Italian flavour were served up and children and staff entered into the spirit by dressing up - some great costumes included Julius Caesar, Luigi and Super Mario and even a pizza slice to name but a few. The staff even enjoyed a beautiful Italian style lunch – what a spread – just gorgeous! A great, fun and educational day was had by all.





OUT
OF
THIS



SCHOOL PROGRAMMES AT ARMAGH PLANETARIUM

Armagh Observatory and Planetarium (AOP) is passionate about education. Its mission is to inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers. During lockdown, it underwent a state-of-the-art makeover, including the installment of a brand-new theatre experience, an inclusive and immersive sensory room and an interactive exhibition area to help explore outer space and broaden curiosity. Making the

topic of Space easy and relatable is something AOP strives for. Its staff are passionate, enthusiastic, and committed to making your experience memorable, bringing the wonders of Space to the classroom. There are a range of educational experiences to suit all Key Stage levels and match learning objectives. So, whether you would like to visit the Planetarium or make the most of the virtual Cosmic Classroom, there is something to suit your pupil's needs.



“
Making the topic of Space easy and relatable is something AOP strives for. Its staff are passionate, enthusiastic, and committed to making your experience memorable, bringing the wonders of Space to the classroom.”

SCHOOL VISITS

AOP offers onsite visits to enjoy a two-hour visit, led by one of the education team members. These visits cater for primary and post primary levels. The visit consists of:

- 1 hour in the Dome Theatre
- half an hour workshop
- half an hour exhibition tour

COSMIC CLASSROOM

‘*Cosmic Classroom*’ brings the wonders of the solar system direct to your school with its brand-new online offering.

Students will learn how to navigate the night sky and travel to their favourite planets all from the comfort of the classroom. They can test their knowledge with the quick-thinking quiz and get the chance to ask our experts what they have always wanted to know about Space! This exciting and educational session is also accompanied by downloadable resources to consolidate

learning. This session is suitable for KS1 and KS2 classes.

Introductory Price: £80 per one-hour session for one class and access to Zoom is required.

SENSORY AREA FOR INCLUSIVE VISITS

AOP aims to make visits to the Planetarium as inclusive and easily accessible as possible. Its brand-new sensory room provides an enjoyable and calming multisensory experience for all visitors, with features including bubble tubes and interactive exhibits. This bespoke area has been carefully thought out and designed to inspire imagination and creativity.

The brand-new changing places offer a state of the art safe and inclusive area with a hoist, remote controlled changing table, a shower and a remote-controlled toilet. The walls have a calming space themed image to create a comforting



Out of this world learning at the Armagh Observatory Planetarium



Some of the Cosmic learning aids for Students to learn and explore our Solar System



Hands-on science: Students preparing for bottle rocket blast off



Students learning how to navigate the night sky and travel to their favourite planets all from the comfort of the classroom.

experience. All schools visiting that require additional support will be catered for.

CAREERS EVENTS

Reach for The Stars: Astronomy Careers Event

The Armagh Observatory and Planetarium is inviting **Key Stage 3** and **Key Stage 4** students to learn more about exciting job roles in Astronomy in 2022. Places will be allocated on a **'first**

come, first served basis', therefore it is important to register your interest early. Resident Astronomers from across the world will share their stories and take questions from students making this an unmissable event.

This event will be delivered remotely via Zoom.

To book your school visit and for more information visit www.armagh.space/education or contact reception@armagh.ac.uk or call **028 37523689**.

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS - APRIL 2021-MARCH 2022

PRESIDENT

ALISON STEEN, *DRUMRANE PRIMARY*

VICE-PRESIDENT

LOUISE CREELMAN, *BUSHVALLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL*

EX-PRESIDENT

STEPHEN McCORD, *UTU HQ*

GENERAL SECRETARY

JACQUIE WHITE, *UTU HQ*

HONORARY TREASURER

GILLIAN DUNLOP, *LARGYMORE PRIMARY*

BELFAST AREA ASSOCIATION

JON BLEAKNEY, *LAKEWOOD SCHOOL,*

N'ARDS/N.DOWN BRANCH

JULIE BROWN, *BALLYDOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL,*

BELFAST BRANCH

NAOMI BILLINGTON, *CARROWDORE PRIMARY SCHOOL,*

BELFAST BRANCH

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CAUSEWAY BRANCH

LYNELLE FENTON, *BRAIDSIDE INTE PRIMARY SCHOOL,*

MID-ANTRIM BRANCH

SOUTHERN AREA ASSOCIATION

ASHTON SHIELDS, *KING'S PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL,*

BANBRIDGE/DROMORE BRANCH

DAVID THOMPSON, *DUNGANNON PRIMARY SCHOOL,*

MID-ULSTER BRANCH

JILL RAVEY, *RIVERSIDE SPECIAL SCHOOL,*

ORCHARD COUNTY BRANCH

ANDREA SAWYERS, *AUGHER CENTRAL PRIMARY SCHOOL,*

MID-ULSTER BRANCH

HEATHER WILSON, *DUNGANNON PRIMARY SCHOOL,*

ORCHARD COUNTY BRANCH

WESTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

AUDREY DEMPSEY, *OMAGH COUNTY PRIMARY,*

SOUTH-WEST BRANCH

JANICE MULLAN, *ETA EDIT EOTAS,*

FOYLE BRANCH

JOY CARROTHERS, *COOLEY PRIMARY*

SOUTH-WEST BRANCH

ARE YOU DUE A TAX REFUND?

62% of UTU members using the online tax code review we offer have had money back from HMRC after discovering they had paid too much tax because their employer had been given the wrong tax codes by HMRC. The average they have had back is £193.22 each, although some members have more than £600. Over 4,400 members have applied for the service, provided for us by lead tax code specialists, The Tax refund Company. If you have not used the service and want to get back any money you may be owed by HMRC, [click here](#). If you don't get any money back, the service is completely free.





Cycle, walk and scoot to school like a pro with the Active School Travel Programme

The Active School Travel Programme is an exciting initiative for schools who wish to see more of their pupils choosing an active and healthy journey to school. Sustrans is funded by the Department for Infrastructure and the Public Health Agency to continue delivering the Active School Travel Programme across Northern Ireland until July 2022. Currently, Sustrans is working directly with 200 schools across the country. Increasing the number of children who regularly walk, cycle or scoot to school has numerous benefits including:

- **Increased physical activity levels resulting in improved health and wellbeing**
- **Reduced congestion and pollution around schools**
- **Improved academic performance and attendance rates**
- **increased road safety awareness**
- **increased confidence, self-esteem, and independence for young people.**

This initiative provides schools with a planned programme of activities throughout the year, both in and out of the classroom. You'll also get direct hands-on support from a dedicated



“Everything about this programme is so beneficial. It should be something every school has access to on an ongoing basis.” – Teacher from participating school

about our commitment to the development of the Sustrans Active School Travel Programme throughout the school. Pupils have benefited tremendously from being more active and we have seen a continued rise in numbers with each event that is promoted.”

At the end of the 2018-19 school year, the number of children walking, cycling and scooting to school at participating schools across the country increased from **35%** to **53%**. At the same time, the number of pupils being driven to school fell from **58%** to **41%**.

Sustrans Active Travel Officer. The fundamental aim of the programme is to provide schools with the skills and knowledge to get more children walking, cycling and scooting as their main mode of transport to school.

Upon achieving the Sustrans Gold Award for commitment to active travel, Mrs Sandra Isherwood, School Principal of Jones Memorial Primary in Enniskillen said, *“We have been faithful and enthusiastic*



How can your school get involved?

At this moment, Sustrans is not able to take on any new schools to the 2021-22 programme; however they will be recruiting in early 2022 for the 2022-23 school year. You can email Sustrans with an expression of interest so that you can be directly notified when the application process is open – schoolsNI@sustrans.org.uk.



UTU Member BEATS the Chasers

UTU member, Alan McClarty, Head of Drama at Cambridge House Grammar School in Ballymena took on the Chasers and won, in the ITV quiz hosted by Bradley

Walsh on Saturday, October 2. Alan said: "I have always been told I should apply for a quiz show by friends and family. A friend of mine, had previously been on The Chase and had sent me a link to the application for a different show and I then saw that Beat the Chasers was looking for applicants. In my opinion, it is one of the best game shows in recent years. I thought I'd go for it and I applied then and there.

I filled in a form and recorded a short video. A few weeks later the production team rang me. I was auditioned right there on the

phone. I had to answer some quiz questions and explain my reasons for entering.

I then had a virtual audition on Zoom. This was fun. We played games and talked about ourselves, before doing a two minute 'Final

Chase.' At the end of this we were told if we would be considered for the show. I was lucky enough to get through. It was several weeks later that they said I had been selected for filming.

As chance would have it, I was due to be in London at the time as I was running a half marathon there. It

gave me an excuse to extend my stay for a couple of days." Initially sworn to secrecy about the outcome of his appearance, Alan did describe his experience on the show as "incredible". He won an incredible £35 000 !!





SUPERHEROES OF D.H. CHRISTIE

Children and staff at D.H. Christie Memorial PS in Coleraine had an amazing and enjoyable Superheroes Day on 29th April 2021.

On this day everyone dressed up as superheroes, where it was not just Batman, Superman and Spiderman at school that day- it was filled with a celebration of our real-life superheroes of the community. This was a day to acknowledge our wonderful NHS and the school managed to raise an impressive total of £706.50. To see a snapshot of this wonderful day head to the school Facebook page to see a video of a day that will never be forgotten for children and staff at D.H. Christie Memorial P.S.





D.H. Christie wanted to donate this to the staff of the NHS. "We decided to buy vouchers with the money and donate the coffee vouchers to the staff in Causeway Hospital. Culture Coffee shop in Coleraine/ Portstewart matched the amount of money that we raised and donated the same amount of vouchers, plus free tea/ coffee. So in the end with the help from Culture Coffee we were able to donate 400 vouchers for the 400 nurses in Causeway Hospital. "





Stories Passed Down, Not Made Up

Titanic Belfast is the world's most authentic retelling of the iconic story. In the city where it all began, we invite students of all ages to experience the true legend of RMS Titanic and discover the world-famous story through the eyes of those whose hard work and ambition built her.

Titanic Belfast welcomes education visitors all year round for self-guided tours of the Titanic Experience. On arrival school groups will be supported by a welcome host, who will set the scene before you enter the self-guided tour which extends over nine interactive galleries where students will discover the sights, sounds, smells and stories of the ship.

Supported by pre and post-visit downloadable resources which cover the activities and themes found in the

exhibition and detail links with curriculum targets in Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland, our self-guided tour allows you and your students to explore Titanic Belfast and the fascinating story of RMS Titanic at your leisure.

In addition to our self-guided tour Titanic Belfast's interactive, curriculum linked workshops and guided tours are led by experts and give you and your students the chance to get a deeper, richer learning experience. These range from our guided '**Full Speed Ahead!**' tour of the Titanic Experience, and our '**Built in Belfast**' tour of the Titanic Slipways, plaza and Titanic Belfast's iconic building to our '**Abandon Ship!**' workshop which develops pupils' transferable skills in communication, problem-solving and decision-making as well as promoting self-confidence, self-esteem, co-operation and teamwork.

We strive to support teachers and students prior to, during and after their visit, with a dedicated Learning and Outreach Officer on hand to help plan and facilitate your visit. A free Teacher Recce is offered prior to any self-guided tour visit and additional aides such as our Sensory Guide are available online, while our guided tours and workshops are also adaptable for special education needs.

A visit to Titanic Belfast can offer your pupils:

- **Thinking Skills**
- **Communication**
- **The World Around Us**
- **STEM**
- **History**

Stimulating enquiry, encouraging independent and collaborative learning, and awakening a genuine thirst for knowledge - Titanic Belfast is a learning resource like no other.

If you'd like to find out more about a school visit to Titanic Belfast, please get in touch by emailing our team at education@titanicbelfast.com or visit titanicbelfast.com/education.



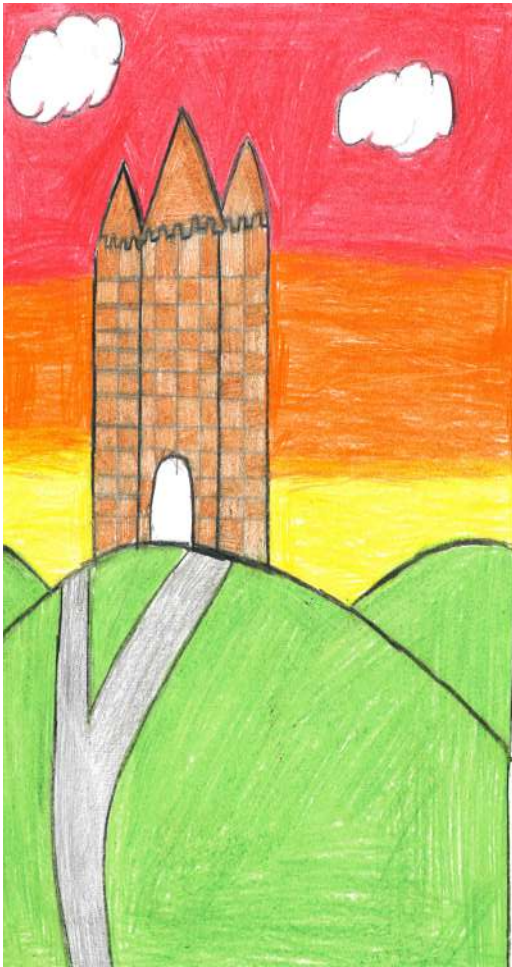


STUDENTS SHOW OFF THEIR ARTISTRY FOR UTU'S ANNUAL CREATIVE COMPETITION

The UTU International Relations and Global Solidarity Sub-Committee wanted children to creatively express their feelings about their local area. The entries far exceeded any previous competition and the standard

was absolutely amazing. The members of the committee had so many wonderful entries to look at. Prizes were distributed as e-gift cards to the overall winners. We hope you enjoy looking at some of the winning entries.





Scrabo tower facts

Did you know?
Scrabo Tower used to be a volcano.

Scrabo Tower was built in 1857.

Scrabo Tower is 135 feet high.

There are 122 steps in Scrabo Tower.

People used to live in Scrabo Tower.
Come visit Scrabo Tower

Name: Lucy Gilmour

School: Loughries Integrated primary school

Class: P6

Teacher: Mr Stewart



WINNERS

FOUNDATION

- 1st - Tom W, McClintock PS
- 2nd - Liberty S, Braidside IPS
- 3rd - Millie L, Augher PS & Caiden M, Dromara PS

KS1

- 1st - Ellie B, Ballydown PS
- 2nd - Saffron A, Omagh County PS
- 3rd - Anna W, Ballydown PS & Micah N, Drumrane PS & Alexandra Mc, Drumrane PS

KS2

- 1st - Jasmine B, Brackenagh West PS
- 2nd - Zara T, Ballydown PS
- 3rd - Oliver W, Islandmagee PS & Lucy G, Loughries IPS & Katie C, Cooley PS

KS3

- 1st - Joel G, Limavady HS
- 2nd - Jacob M, Limavady HS
- 3rd - Benjamin, Limavady HS & Eve K, Parkhall Integrated



Click here to watch a compilation of amazing competition entries

THINKING ABOUT RETIREMENT?

SIGN UP FOR OUR PRE RETIREMENT WEBINARS HOSTED BY
PLATINUM FINANCIAL SERVICES.

24 NOVEMBER 2021
26 JANUARY 2022
24 FEBRUARY 2022
22 MARCH 2022

RESERVE YOUR PLACE BY CONTACTING US ON EVENTS@UTU.EDU,
STATING YOUR NAME, TR NUMBER AND THE DATE YOU WOULD LIKE
TO ATTEND

HOSTED BY **PLATINUM
FINANCIAL**



**THE WONDERFUL ARTWORK OF
ELMGROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

MEET ANNA LEITCH, THE NEWLY CROWNED MISS NI AND UTU MEMBER

Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be the next Miss Northern Ireland 2021. I have been so overwhelmed by the support and encouragement from all the staff at Cookstown Primary School and indeed my principal, Paul Mitchell who has continually supported me throughout my journey as I prepare to compete at the Miss World final in Puerto Rico next month. Having just completed my Masters in Education Leadership at Queen's University this year and within my role as a primary school teacher, I wanted to use this as a platform to be an inspiring role model for young children and adults. Within this role, I felt I had the infrastructure around me to influence young people who are the people of the future. I believe it is essential to build up their confidence and self-esteem and be the best possible version of themselves. Due to COVID-19 a lot of children have come back to school with poor social skills due to lack of social interaction and it is all about building that back up again. With an extensive knowledge on mental health and wellbeing strategies, I can use these skills and activities

to promote a positive mental attitude where children feel secure in themselves and confident to take on anything and fulfil their dreams. I have been working alongside the charity *'Aware NI'* and *'YoungMindsUK'* to raise awareness about Mental Health. Since NI Hospice is a charity closely linked with the Miss Northern Ireland contest, I am hoping to introduce their new programme *'Kindness Counts'* into my own school and indeed many others. Not only am I able to reach out to young children, but on platforms like Instagram I feel I can reach out to young women and young adults alike as a lot of the parents in my school are in their twenties. This is already happening due to receiving express permission from my children's parents to post pictures of them in our classroom and around the school learning and growing. It is a rare



opportunity and a privilege to connect with those parents on this sort of level.

My primary two class last year were a big help in supporting me through my campaign in becoming Miss Northern Ireland. I will be forever grateful to them and their parents for all their support and encouragement over the past year. When I returned to school after winning the title back in September wearing my rather large and very sparkly crown, the words *'Miss Leitch is a princess!'* echoed throughout the entire school. My class were mesmerised and extremely proud to have Miss Leitch as their class teacher who was also now *'a princess!'* I am very excited as to what lies ahead for me this year and will continue to promote a positive mental attitude amongst the children in my school so that they can go out and achieve absolutely anything.



The Wonder of Christmas....

What do the children in your class think is so wonderful about Christmas? Could they design the **official UTU card for 2021?**

Pupils can use any media they wish to create their design on an A4 page and use **pencil, crayon, pen or paint.**

We will judge this competition in four sections -

- **NURSERY & FOUNDATION**
 - KEY STAGE 1
 - KEY STAGE 2
- **SPECIAL SCHOOL**

The winner from each section will receive a bag of edible treats to share with their classmates. The overall winner will receive a **£30 voucher** just in time for Christmas!

Please post to **Ulster Teachers' Union, 94 Malone Road, Belfast, BT9 5HP** or alternatively, email entries to **office@utu.edu**



Closing date for the competition is **Thursday 25th November!**

(A month before Santa comes)



Like and follow the
 Ulster Teachers' Union
 on our social media channels



TRAINING COURSES

2021/22

To register for any of the courses below, please email events@utu.edu by **Monday 8th November**, with your name, school (if applicable) and TR number, indicating which course(s) you wish to attend.

First Term:

- 11/11/2021 - **Representing members at School** (WEBINAR) - 2pm to 3pm **(For School Reps)**
- 01/12/2021 - **Sick Leave and Attendance procedure** (WEBINAR)- 4.00pm to 5pm **(All members welcome)**

DATES TO BE CONFIRMED FOR THE FOLLOWING COURSES: - Protecting Your Professional Identity, Dealing with Assaults/Restraints, Maternity/Paternity/Adoptive/Shared Parental Leave and Brief Absences/Flexible Working/Career Break



**WORKING TOGETHER FOR
 TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS**





ASK THE OFFICIALS

Dear UTU,
I am moving house in the next few weeks. The buyers are insisting it is on a weekday. When and how long can I take off?

Dear member,
 You are entitled to a house removal day ([TNC 2014/18](#)). Give your Principal adequate notice and complete any leave of absence proforma that your school have or put in writing your request to the Board of Governors.

Dear Ulster Teachers' Union,
I am freezing!! My class are freezing!! I have been following all the rules regarding Covid and my room is well ventilated. Over the past two weeks the weather has really changed but my room is so cold! I don't even think the heating is on for much of the day. I won't be able to continue working like this.
Frustrated and Foundered

Dear member,
 We have had queries like this over the past few weeks and like last year the advice from EA is to continue to ventilate your room for your safety and the children in the room. Contact you Principal and point out the problem with the temperature of your room. If it is possible to measure the temperature this will also help. The heating should be on to adequately heat the room to at least 16C (the legal minimum working temperature).

Dear UTU Official,
My mother-in-law has been diagnosed with a serious illness She will need us to care for her for several weeks until she has recovered. Am I entitled to take time off to care for her?

Dear member,
 Unfortunately, not. However, you could speak to your Principal and BOG about a temporary variation of contract. You would detail in your request why it is needed, what would work best for you and how long it is required for. Where this is urgent the BOG can request a temporary variation until a final decision is reached. TNC 2009-7 Temporary variation of contract ([education-ni.gov.uk](#))

Hopefully this will help in the short term.

Dear UTU,
I have recently taken up a permanent position and have finally had an offer accepted on my first home! A colleague has suggested leaving the Teacher Pension Scheme to save money and give me some extra wiggle room in covering my expenses. Is this a good idea?
P.Mc

Dear P.Mc
 You should speak to an independent financial advisor or reach out to Platinum Financial Planning Ltd. who are UTU's trusted financial advisors. Not only will you need to think about what you gain financially in the short term, you will need to think of the long-term implications. As an employee you pay into the NI Teachers' Pension but so does the employer and at a higher rate. And remember there are extra benefits because you belong to the NITPS. You should look at the website Overview of the Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme (NITPS) including member factsheets | Department of Education ([education-ni.gov.uk](#)) and also the leaflet factsheet-1-final-version-(sept-2015).pdf ([education-ni.gov.uk](#)). You should be aware that the NITPS is one of the best public sector schemes available.

PAST PRESIDENT SANDRA BROWN SAYS FAREWELL TO TEACHING AFTER 37 YEARS IN THE CLASSROOM

Mrs Sandra Brown retired from Drumrane Primary School on the last day of August after a lifetime of teaching. Sandra taught in Central Primary School in Limavady for a short time before moving to Burnfoot Primary where she remained until its closure in 2008. She then became a member of the teaching staff in the newly amalgamated Drumrane Primary School, which opened in September 2008. Sandra taught generations of children in the Burnfoot community. Sandra was also part of the UTU Central Executive Committee for many years which culminated in her role as President in 2014/15.



An ode to Sandra...

(3 verses from the 21 that were written!)

*You're an educational legend
You've taught weans for nearly 40 years
And we've gathered here today to salute you
Through laughter, sharing memories
and tears.*

*You're like a walking museum really.
You've used a Banda machine,
and a blackboard with chalk!
You've punched many a milk bottle
with a knitting needle
And loved taking children up Straw Rd,
on a nature walk.*

*So thank you for a lifetime of service
As your teaching career comes to an end.
You've been so good, kind, forever faithful
As Union President, teacher and friend.*



POPPY SONG - GRACE SEMPLE

Click on the image above to watch Grace's rendition of the Poppy song.

Poppy Song

Tune - *Down by the Salley Gardens.*

Verse 1

We are gathered to remember
Men and women of the past
Who gave their lives for others
Battles fought so that peace would last.



CHORUS

And so I'll wear my poppy
With pride for all to see
Giving thanks for all the heroes -
Sacrificed, so that I go free.

Verse 2

We are gathered to remember
Stagnant trenches dark and cold
And our hearts will always treasure
All the sons that did not grow old



CHORUS

Verse 3

We are gathered to remember
Flanders fields where the poppies grow
And the Royal British legion
Who make sure that the whole world knows

Written by Alison Steen, to help us remember.

BETTER CONVERSATION AROUND MENOPAUSE WOULD HELP END TABOO

World Menopause Day is held every year on the 18th October, led by the International Menopause Society (IMS). The purpose of the day is to raise awareness on the menopause and support options for improving health and wellbeing.

The Ulster Teachers' Union believes better conversation around the menopause would empower more women in the workplace. Schools in England added the topic to the curriculum last year for the first time. "This is to be welcomed so long as schools receive the funding and staffing to deliver it because for too long the menopause has been regarded as a bit of a joke," said Jacquie White, General Secretary of the Ulster Teachers' Union.

"It is as much a part of the human condition as any other biological issue but lack of awareness has seen it remain a taboo. However, in having a fundamental impact on women's private and professional lives it also therefore affects society generally."

Alison Steen, UTU President also commented that "What's often overlooked is that as a recognised occupational health issue menopause deserves the same attention, understanding and support as any other. An openness around the topic is a start and will be increasingly necessary as the pensionable age rises seeing more women approaching, going through and beyond the menopause remain in the workforce."

In March 2021 the Education Authority (EA) launched a Menopause Policy: <https://www.eani.org.uk/about-us/equality/gender-action-plan/menopause-workplace-policy>. This was a highly welcomed initiative given that the EA employs approx. 40,000 staff of whom approximately 26,500 are women and, of those women around 19,000 are of the age affected by menopause.

Jacquie White also noted that "Most working women over 50 used to be at the tail end of their careers, but now a record-breaking 3.5m older women are in employment in the UK - many starting new careers and setting up businesses in mid-life. According to the Department for Work and Pensions, the proportion of women aged 50 to 64 with jobs has risen by more than 50 per cent in the past 30 years.



Yet we hear stories from women who have been ridiculed as they try to get a severe hot flush under control. Would the joke have been made if the issue was mental health-related?

As a result, it is very rarely discussed and many managers will have no awareness of the issues involved. This means many women feel they have to hide their symptoms and will be less likely to ask for the adjustments that may help them.

However, the failure to make reasonable adjustments can lead to a discrimination claim as it is a breach of the law. So, given that the menopause usually affects women of a certain age employers must ensure that working practices do not adversely affect women of menopausal age, to avoid any claims of sex and/or age discrimination.

The menopause affects every woman differently and so there is no 'one size fits all' solution to it and every case must be treated on an individual basis."

The UTU is delighted with this policy initiative and believe it to be a huge benefit to all women employed in the EA.

The UTU is delighted with this policy initiative and believe it to be a huge benefit to all women employed in the EA, it is our intention to bring this forward to management side and have a similar policy for the teaching workforce.

"Let's Talk Menopause".

Contact office@utu.edu if you would like any further information.

TRAVEL SOLUTIONS – YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL GROUP TRAVEL SPECIALISTS

Travel Solutions the Belfast based Tour Operator established in 1996 recently acquired Henry Gowan Educational Tours. This positions Travel Solutions as the leading school group travel specialist for the Northern Ireland Education sector.

We offer a wide range of travel and holiday product which as managed end to end by our dedicated Group Travel department. The company holds full licences issued by the UK and Irish Governments, which ensures we can offer you 100% financial protection. Our relationships with transport and hotel partners ensure the service and prices we secure are extremely competitive and will allow us to reflect this in the prices we quote you.

Why Travel Solutions?

- 100% financial protection
- Tailored itineraries
- Personal and professional service
- Low deposits – only £50 per person
- Locally based booking team

As you get ready to travel again, be assured that we have taken measures so you can book with **confidence**.

COVID Promise

You can cancel your trip up to 42 days before departure if you have concerns about travel or COVID health restrictions and receive a full refund of all monies paid. You will receive your refund within 14 days. Don't delay, contact our Groups Travel

Travel Insurance

Our Fairsure Gold Travel Insurance (with Accident & General) includes COVID cover. This allows for extra accommodation and travel costs should a member of your party catch COVID whilst on the trip and needs to isolate in line with government advice at the time. Full policy details on request.



Don't delay, contact our Groups Travel Department today on 028 9045 5030 (*option 2*) Email: groups@travel-solutions.co.uk or complete our enquiry form online at www.travel-solutions.co.uk/educational-group-travel/. We look forward to being of service to you. Regards, **The Travel Solutions Team.**



As Autumn approaches, and the leaves start to fall from the trees, Primary 1 and 2 students from **Laghey Primary School**, have been busy using the natural environment around their school to craft these amazing leaf people that made all the staff in UTU HQ smile.

Crafting
WITH
NATURE
AT LAGHEY PRIMARY SCHOOL



TEACH FOR THE PLANET IT STARTS WITH US ALL

The climate crisis is possibly the greatest threat facing humanity and our planet.

Action is needed now otherwise we will have little time left to reverse the current course. As global temperatures continue to rise, we as teachers must begin to educate for the future.

The UK Government will host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (**COP26**) in Glasgow on **31 October – 12**

November 2021. This allows us as teachers to think about ways that education could be transformed to fight against climate change and lead to a more sustainable world. Students have a right to gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to sustain our world for present and future generations, and they have the right to receive an education which prepares them for the world of work in a green economy. It is time to come together to build something more resilient in our education institutions, our communities, and our economy, while considerably reducing our ecological footprint through a just transition. Education International, the global voice of educators, hereby calls on every government in the world to deliver on their commitments to climate change education and education for sustainable development in the Paris Agreement (**article 12**) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (**targets 4.7, 12.8 and 13.3**).

This manifesto outlines the profession's vision for quality climate change education



and the policy framework necessary to implement it.

Educators everywhere are standing up for the planet and for their students. We have a crucial role to play when it comes to climate action. What we teach matters. The survival of our students matters. We must inspire students and communities to action.

Teach for the Planet aims to ensure that climate education, based on science and with a civic action focus, becomes as fundamental as teaching reading and writing.

The campaign will drive global mobilisation for quality climate education leading up to the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in November 2021.

#Teach4ThePlanet

[HOME - UN Climate Change Conference \(COP26\) at the SEC – Glasgow 2021 \(ukcop26.org\)](https://ukcop26.org)

[Teach for the Planet \(ei-ie.org\)](https://ei-ie.org)



Half term fun for everyone

Enjoy a day out with a discount

Your Ulster Teachers' Union Membership Plus card entitles you to exclusive offers of **up to 50% off** at **1,500 venues** across the country! **Login today to start saving.**

Indoor activities

Don't let the rain run your fun!

Armagh Observatory	<i>Armagh</i>	2 for 1
CMS Cinema Club	<i>Countrywide</i>	Up to 40% off
Crumlin Road Gaol	<i>Belfast</i>	10% off
Elementary Escape Rooms	<i>Portrush</i>	15% off
Forbidden Quest	<i>Belfast</i>	15% off
Lisburn Bowl	<i>Lisburn</i>	10% off
Old Bushmills Distillery	<i>Bushmills</i>	2 for 1
Prison Island	<i>Belfast</i>	Up to 15% off
We Are Vertigo	<i>Belfast</i>	Up to 15% off

Family venues

Fun for the little ones!

Airtastic	<i>3 locations</i>	Up to 20% off
Aurora Aquatic	<i>Bangor</i>	2 for 1
Clip 'n' Climb	<i>Dundonald</i>	20% off
Coco's Playground	<i>Newcastle</i>	2 for 1
Exploris Aquarium	<i>Portaferry</i>	10% off
Funky Monkeys	<i>Countrywide</i>	15% off
Funworks	<i>Newtownabbey</i>	2 for 1
Galgorm Fairy Trail	<i>Ballymena</i>	25% off
JumpLanes	<i>Coleraine</i>	20% off
Jungle King	<i>Derry/Londonderry</i>	2 for 1
Mountpanther Farm	<i>Downpatrick</i>	20% off
Pickie Funpark	<i>Bangor</i>	10% off

Outdoor activities

Get out and about!

Colin Glen	<i>Belfast</i>	20% off
Drumbo Park	<i>Lisburn</i>	2 for 1
Footgolf N.I.	<i>Belfast</i>	2 for 1
Irish FA Tours	<i>Belfast</i>	15% off
Lakeland Karting	<i>Kesh</i>	20% off
National Trust	<i>Countrywide</i>	2 for 1
S51 Airsoft	<i>Carrickfergus</i>	Special Offer
Todds Leap	<i>Ballygawley</i>	10% off



www.membershipplus.co.uk

Win a


FORTNUM & MASON
PICCADILLY SINCE 1707

Christmas
Treat
Hamper!



To enter visit
cornmarketinsurance.co.uk/utu-hamper
Competition closes 12th of December 2021.

Promotional photography required. No purchase necessary. No cash alternative to prize. Only one entry per person. Competition closes 23:59hrs on the 12th of December 2021. Winner will be notified within three days of the draw by phone, if winner doesn't respond with 72 hours Cornmarket reserve the right to select another winner. Prize draw is open to persons aged 18 and over who are UK residents. To enter, you must be a member of the Ulster Teachers' Union. Draw excludes duplicate entries, any employee of Cornmarket and anyone directly or professionally associated with the promotion. Entries not submitted in accordance with these rules, delayed or incomplete entries will be disqualified. By entering the competition, the winner consents to take part in any publicity accompanying or resulting from this promotion, and for his/her name and county to be used for publicity purposes by Cornmarket in printed and/or online formats. The promoter, Cornmarket Insurance Services Ltd., reserves the right to alter, amend and foreclose the promotion without prior notice.

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