



CONFERENCE HANDBOOK

CONFERENCE 2026

TEACHING **TODAY**. INSPIRING **TOMORROW**.

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WELCOME TO CONFERENCE 2026

We are delighted to welcome you to this year's Annual UTU Conference, a key event for our members and also educators across Northern Ireland. As we gather to discuss the challenges and opportunities shaping our profession, this handbook serves as your guide to the sessions, speakers, and key topics that will drive our conversations.

With a focus on collaboration, representation, and advocacy, we aim to empower our members with the tools and insights needed to support both their professional growth and the future of education. *Thank you for being part of our 107th Conference—your voice and participation help shape the path ahead.*

Teaching Today. Inspiring Tomorrow.



PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

It is my great pleasure to welcome all delegates and guests to our **107th Annual Conference**.

This Handbook is your guide to the important business of Conference, laying out the precisely planned Conference programme for the next two days. You may refresh your knowledge of Standing Orders and contemplate carefully the resolutions which will guide our discussions and debate, thereby establishing the policy of the Union for the next year. The names of officials, staff, your CEC representatives and delegates, as well as the minutes of last year's Conference have also been included. Our thanks and appreciation go to our valued sponsors and exhibitors, who are also listed.

At a time when education continues to face unprecedented pressures and expectations, one thing has remained constant: the extraordinary professionalism, courage, and compassion of teachers. Our theme this year, *"Teaching Today, Inspiring Tomorrow,"* reflects not only the work we do each day, but the lasting legacy we leave for generations to come.

In classrooms across the country, teachers continue to give their very best in circumstances that are becoming increasingly challenging. Workload has grown to levels that are, for many, simply unbearable, with responsibilities added faster than time, resources, or support. Yet even under this strain, teachers persist.

You plan, you reassure, you adapt, you advocate, and you keep supporting your pupils. Your resilience in the face of overwhelming demands is nothing short of remarkable. You persist because you believe in the transformative power of education, a belief that education changes lives.

But resilience alone is not the answer. This Conference is an opportunity not only to celebrate your dedication, but also to acknowledge the reality you live with

and the changes our profession urgently needs. Recognising workload is not a complaint, it is a call for sustainability, fairness, and respect.

I have had the privilege of attending numerous meetings with our sister unions, INTO, NASUWT, NEU and NAHT. Without exception, I have witnessed the tireless endeavour to achieve the best possible outcomes for our members, especially with regards to fair pay, tackling the immense pressure of workload and the undervaluing of our profession and professionalism. These concerns are real and significant and UTU will hold management to account.

And so, over the next two days, enjoy chatting about your experiences, rest a little, be inspired by each other, take time to renew past acquaintances and form new ones in these beautiful surroundings. It is also a time to look ahead with optimism, knowing that the work we do today will shape the tomorrow our young people step into.

Thank you for your compassion, your creativity, and your extraordinary dedication. It is an honour to stand with you.

Finally, I would like to wish all our delegates, colleagues and friends an uplifting and inspiring conference.

With respect and gratitude



Janice Mullan
President





CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

THURSDAY 19TH MARCH:	
4:30PM	Registration, Exhibition Viewing and Coffee
5:30PM	Session 1: Opening of Conference and Resolutions
6:45PM	Session 2: Private Session for UTU Delegates
7:30PM	Close of Session
8:00PM	Dinner: Fratellis Restaurant

FRIDAY 20TH MARCH:	
	Registration for Guests
9:00AM	Session 3: Resolutions: Public Session
10:15AM	Musical interlude: Macosquin Primary School Choir, Conductor: Cathy Allen & Pianist: Kelsey McCrory
10:30AM	Session 4: Chaired by: Larry Flanagan, Chair of TUAC Working Group on Education and Skills President's Address: Janice Mullan General Secretary's Address: Jacquie White
11:45PM	Tea and Coffee/Exhibition Viewing
12:15PM	Rising to the Challenge: - Chris Quinn, NI Commissioner for Children and Young People and Rachel Hogan, SEND Specialist Legal Adviser, The Children's Law Centre
1:00PM	President's Lunch - Fratellis Restaurant
2:15PM	Session 5: Resolutions - Public Session
3:30PM	Artificial Intelligence - The pros and cons for education. <i>Janice Mullan and Matthew Robinson.</i>
4:00PM	Tea and Coffee/Exhibition Viewing
4:30PM	Session 6: Resolutions - Public Session
5:20PM	Prize Draws for Competitions
5:30PM	Close
7:00PM	Drinks Reception - Danny Boy Suite
7.30PM	Conference Dinner - Roe Park Suite: Installation of President and Vice-President

STANDING ORDERS

1. The Order of Business shall be drawn up by the Conference Motions and Agenda Committee and printed in the Handbook.
2. Any motions appearing on the Order Paper shall not be withdrawn, except with the consent of Conference.
3. Notwithstanding 1 above, the order of any item on the Agenda may be altered on motion. It shall also be open to the President to suggest alterations in the Order of Business as and when he may consider them necessary and such alterations shall become operative with the consent of Conference without discussion.
4. Twenty delegates shall form a quorum.
5. When the President calls Conference to order or rises to speak all Delegates shall immediately be seated.
6. The proposer of any motion or amendment shall be allowed not more than five minutes and each succeeding speaker not more than three minutes. The first of the Delegates who intimates to the President at Conference his opposition to any motion shall be entitled to five minutes as first opposing speaker.
7. No person shall address Conference until called upon by the President. When called, a speaker shall proceed to a microphone and shall speak therefrom after announcing his name, and the Branch he represents. When the President has called a speaker all other Delegates shall immediately be seated.
8. No delegate shall be permitted to speak more than once on the same proposition. The first opposing speaker and the proposer shall have the right to sum up, but they shall not be permitted to introduce new matters into the discussion.
9. At any time during the discussion of a motion or amendment it shall be open to any Delegate to move "That the question be now put", and if it should appear on a show of hands that a majority of Delegates are in favour of terminating the discussion, the question shall be put and voted upon, except that no speech shall be interrupted for the purpose and that the proposer be not denied the right of reply. The acceptance of the motion "That the question be now put" shall always be at the discretion of the President.
10. Whenever an amendment is moved to any motion no other amendment shall be accepted until the first amendment is disposed of.
11. All amendments and addenda to any motion shall be submitted in writing on the prescribed Amendment Slips (CONF-26-PG7) signed by the proposer and seconder to the General Secretary before the end of the Session previous to that at which it will be tabled for discussion, or as soon thereafter, as is practicably possible.
12. All motions shall be put from the chair when the President considers that sufficient time has been given for discussion. The decision on a motion shall be taken by a show of hands. A demand for a recount may be made by any 10 Delegates standing in their places. No more than two recounts shall be allowed. A card vote shall be taken, if requested, by 10 members standing and raising their voting cards in the air. Any card vote subsequently taken shall be deemed to be conclusive. The card vote shall be based on the allocation of votes based on Branch membership as outlined in (CONF-26-PG8). The President shall have a vote and, in the event of a tie, a casting vote.
13. It shall be competent at the conclusion of any speech for any Delegate to move "That Conference proceed to the next business". If seconded it shall be put forthwith and, if carried, the motion under discussion shall be considered dropped.
14. Questions of Order or Explanation may be asked. The President shall not refuse to consider any Point of Order, but his decision thereon shall be final.
15. It shall be competent upon any delegate to challenge the President's ruling. Should this challenge be seconded the President will vacate the chair in favour of another Officer and the matter shall then be considered. Only the proposer of the challenge and the President may speak on the matter which, shall then be voted on.
16. At all proceedings of Conference members shall disclose any pecuniary interest and/or relevant family relationships, as applicable, to the business about to be discussed, and withdraw for the time being, if so requested by the President.
17. A motion to suspend Standing Orders must specify the purpose, and must be seconded. It shall be carried only if supported by at least two-thirds of those present. Once the purpose of the motion has been fulfilled, the proceedings shall immediately revert to Standing Orders. The President shall not refuse to accept a motion for the suspension of Standing Orders, but he may postpone putting it to the Conference until the completion of any discussion which is in progress when the motion is tabled.
18. In these Standing Orders the title "President" is deemed to apply to that person occupying the chair at any Session of Conference.
19. All references to the masculine gender shall be interpreted as equally applicable to the feminine.



AMENDMENT SLIPS

THE ATTENTION OF DELEGATES IS DRAWN TO PARAGRAPH 11 OF STANDING ORDERS CONFERENCE 2026:-

"All amendments and addenda to any motion shall be submitted in writing on the prescribed Amendment Slip signed by the proposer and seconder to the General Secretary before the end of the Session previous to that at which it will be tabled for discussion, or as soon thereafter as is practicably possible."

RESOLUTION NUMBER: _____

RESOLUTION TITLE: _____

TEXT OF AMENDMENT: _____

NAME OF PROPOSER: _____ BRANCH: _____

NAME OF SECONDER: _____ BRANCH: _____

THIS IS AN EXAMPLE. COPIES OF FORM AVAILABLE FROM CONFERENCE OFFICE.



CARD VOTE ALLOCATION

For the purposes of a card vote in accordance with **paragraph 64 of the Rules and Constitution** of the Union, and **number 12** of the standing orders of Conference, each branch shall be entitled to the number of votes indicated as follows:

BRANCH	MEMBERSHIP	CARD VOTES
BANBRIDGE/DROMORE	189	----
BELFAST	548	----
CARRICK/ABBHEY/LARNE	383	95
CAUSEWAY	292	29
FOYLE	266	33
LISBURN/B'NAHINCH	310	51
MID-ANTRIM	391	----
MID-ULSTER	173	173
NEWRY & MOURNE	193	21
N'ARDS/N.DOWN	543	271
ORCHARD COUNTY	552	276
SOUTH-WEST	345	49



CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

1. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Conference calls on the Department of Education and the managing authorities to provide clear guidance on the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence within schools by both students and staff.

Guidance is needed to support schools in the use of AI within the classroom as a tool to support teaching and learning, but not as a replacement for the professional knowledge, judgement, and skills of teachers.

Conference is concerned about the legality, copyright, and ownership issues related to the use of AI, and by extension the integrity of assessments. Conference further emphasises the need for any guidance to ensure that personal, pupil, and staff data is kept confidential, securely stored, and fully protected in line with data protection legislation, with clear safeguards against misuse or unauthorised access.

2. STRENGTHENING AND BUILDING ON THE EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS OF SUPPLY TEACHERS

Conference notes that, for a significant period of years, NQTs and RQTs have been unable to secure tangible and robust contractual arrangements in the early years of their career.

Conference has grave concerns that the recent pronouncements of both the Department of Education and the Education Authority, which have in effect suspended the recruitment process due to budgetary constraints, have served to exacerbate the situation for teachers who have yet to secure meaningful contracts of employment.

Conference recognises that such a situation deprives these teachers, who have no option but to work in supply conditions, of employment rights enjoyed by others and on which others can rely.

Conference further recognises the growing negative impact that this situation is having on retention of early career teachers in the NI education system.

Conference urges the DE and employing authorities to:

- Reinstatement of the ability of schools to recruit teachers according to the needs of the school
- Ensure that the rights of supply teachers are properly represented in TNC procedures
- Create the proper conditions for supply teachers to access appropriate and timely TPL at no cost to themselves

3. MID-ANTRIM BRANCH - SCHOOLS IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Conference highlights that teachers and schools play a significant part in providing a safe and stabilised environment for children and young people, irrespective of any outside crisis or breakdown in community relations.

Conference recognises that during periods of civil unrest, sectarian tension, or community violence, school staff are often required to manage heightened anxiety, trauma, and division within their classrooms while maintaining normal educational provision.

Conference calls upon the Department of Education and managing authorities to:

- Provide immediate, practical and visible support to schools affected by community unrest, including additional pastoral and counselling resources for pupils and staff.
- Issue clear guidance to principals on managing safety, communication with parents, and safeguarding during periods of instability.
- Ensure flexibility in attendance, assessment and inspection expectations where community safety issues impact normal school operations.
- Provide access to trauma-informed training and crisis response support for staff.
- Engage directly with school leaders in affected areas to assess need rather than relying solely on existing funding formulas.
- Publicly affirm support for schools in areas impacted and take proactive steps to reduce the burden placed on staff during such crises.

Conference further calls for the establishment of a rapid-response framework to ensure that when community relations break down — as witnessed last year — schools are not left to manage the consequences alone.

4. INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION AND SEN PREPAREDNESS

Conference calls on the Department of Education to engage with the Department of Economy to ensure that student teachers in the teaching colleges and universities are adequately prepared to teach pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in mainstream classrooms. Conference further calls on mandatory assessed SEN training as a core component of initial teacher education, in recognition of the significant increase in SEN pupils attending these settings.

Conference demands that both Departments liaise to ensure that the colleges and universities develop and offer teaching qualifications specifically designed for educators working in special schools and special provision guaranteeing that teachers entering these roles have the necessary expertise to meet the complex needs of the learners.

CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

5. SOUTH-WEST BRANCH- ROLE OF THE SENCO

Conference calls on the Education Authority to acknowledge the important role of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs). As schools are increasingly required to implement a graduated response to meet students' needs, SENCOs face immense pressure. Conference calls on the Department of Education and Employing Authorities to provide non-contact time that is proportionate to the size of their SEN register for SENCOs. This time is crucial to ensure that the needs of children are addressed promptly and effectively.

6. WORKLOAD REVIEW

Conference notes the unsustainable and increasing workload pressures experienced by teachers and school leaders across all sectors. Conference further notes the decision of the Education Minister to establish the Independent Workload Panel to examine the causes and impact of teacher workload, the extensive engagement undertaken by the Panel with the teaching workforce and its representative organisations, and the publication of the Independent Workload Panel Final Report in November 2025.

Conference welcomes each of the twenty-seven recommendations contained within the Independent Workload Panel Final Report and welcomes the ambition of those recommendations to deliver systemic and sustainable change rather than short-term mitigation.

Conference calls on the Central Executive Committee to press the Education Minister, the Department of Education and Managing Authorities to urgently progress and fully implement all recommendations of the Independent Workload Panel, to seek clear timelines, accountability mechanisms and appropriate resourcing for implementation, to oppose any selective, partial or diluted application of the recommendations, and to continue to work with the NITC to monitor progress and challenge any failure to reduce workload in practice at school level.

7. COMPOSITE MOTION -FOYLE BRANCH AND CEC - SAFEGUARDING PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY AND RESTORING MULTI-DISCIPLINARY SUPPORT IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Conference recognises that teachers working in Special Educational Needs settings fulfil a vital professional role in supporting some of the most vulnerable children and young people in our education system. They operate daily in highly complex and demanding environments, managing significant behavioural, emotional, learning and medical needs.

Conference expresses serious concern at the increasing medical and therapeutic responsibilities being placed upon teaching staff as a result of declining healthcare and multi-disciplinary provision in Special Schools. Teachers are now frequently expected to undertake duties ranging from the administration of prescribed medication to emergency and at times life-saving interventions. At the same time, essential services including Speech and Language

Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and other therapeutic supports have been reduced to minimal advisory roles, with little consistent, direct engagement in schools.

Conference believes that these developments fall outside teachers' professional training and remit. The transfer of complex medical and therapeutic responsibilities to teaching staff places unacceptable pressure on teachers and classroom assistants, undermines professional integrity, impacts staff wellbeing, and risks poorer educational and health outcomes for pupils. Most critically, it exposes vulnerable children and young people to significant health and safety risks.

Medical and therapeutic needs must be met by appropriately qualified healthcare professionals as part of a fully functioning multi-disciplinary team. Such provision should not be absorbed into teaching roles by default.

Conference therefore calls on the Minister of Education, the Department of Education, the Department of Health, and the relevant Health and Social Care Trusts to:

1. Guarantee the provision of a qualified nurse in every Special School.
2. Urgently restore meaningful, regular, and hands-on multi-disciplinary support in Special Schools, including Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and other essential therapeutic services.
3. Ensure that Special Schools are properly staffed with the appropriate healthcare and therapeutic professionals necessary to safeguard the safety, dignity and wellbeing of pupils, and to protect teachers' professional integrity.

Without immediate action, Special Schools cannot continue to deliver the high standards of care and education that every learner deserves.

8. TRANSFORMED

Conference recognises the need for reform in the NI education system.

Conference welcomes the initial indications from DE that changes will be appropriately paced and implemented.

Conference urges DE to ensure that the importance of pace of change is fully recognised and that progress takes full account of any negative impact of budgetary restraint on the full inclusion of all schools in the process.



CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

9. ADDRESSING THE UNSUSTAINABLE ROLE OF TEACHING PRINCIPALS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

The recent Workload Review Panel has highlighted the excessive administrative and managerial burdens placed on school principals in Northern Ireland. In primary schools, the role of a teaching principal—where principals are expected to carry out full teaching duties alongside leadership responsibilities—has become increasingly untenable. These pressures compromise leadership capacity, staff wellbeing, and the quality of education delivered to pupils.

Conference believes that the wellbeing and effectiveness of principals are critical to the success of schools and the quality of education provided to pupils. The recommendations of the Independent Workload Panel represent a practical and evidence-based approach to reducing unnecessary burdens. The role of a teaching principal in primary schools is no longer viable given the complexity of modern school leadership and increasing compliance requirements.

Conference calls on the Department of Education to implement fully all recommendations of the Workload Review Panel relating to principal workload without delay.

The Department must:

- Reduce bureaucratic and compliance tasks that do not directly contribute to teaching and learning.
- Provide adequate administrative and clerical support to principals in all schools.
- Streamline reporting and accountability processes to eliminate duplication and inefficiency.

Conference urges the Department to examine and implement measures to address the unsustainable nature of the teaching principal role as a matter of priority, including:

- Reviewing staffing and funding models to allow principals to focus on leadership rather than full-time teaching.
- Providing additional administrative and leadership support in small schools.
- Developing alternative leadership structures that reflect the realities of modern education.

Conference demands that the Department of Education publish a clear implementation timeline and provide regular progress reports to stakeholders.

Conference insists that any future workload reviews include meaningful consultation with principals and teaching staff, ensuring that solutions are practical, equitable, and responsive to the realities of school leadership.

10. TEACHERS' NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

Conference acknowledges that Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC) documents, agreed through the established negotiating frameworks of Management Side and the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC), are the recognised and formal mechanisms through which issues across schools should be raised and addressed.

Conference notes that these procedures are long-established, agreed by all parties, and are intended to provide clarity, consistency and timely resolution of matters affecting schools and teachers. Conference expresses alarm at the ongoing and unacceptable delays in adhering to these agreed TNC procedures.

Conference believes that failure to comply with agreed timelines, and the absence of meaningful communication, is causing significant stress and uncertainty for all involved in these processes.

Conference demands that all parties adhere fully to the agreed TNC timelines and procedures.

Conference further demands that where genuine delays arise, clear, regular and transparent communication is provided, including detailed explanations and a defined timeline to urgently bring matters to a conclusion. Conference asserts that platitudes are unacceptable and that continued delays undermine confidence in the negotiating frameworks and the welfare of teachers.

11. COMPOSITE MOTION - SOUTH WEST BRANCH / CEC - PREVENTING VIOLENCE AND ASSAULTS ON SCHOOL STAFF

Conference expresses grave concern at the rising number of assaults on teaching and non-teaching staff in Northern Ireland schools, often linked to unmet additional needs and wider systemic pressures within the education system. Conference is alarmed that violence and abuse in the workplace risk becoming normalised due to inconsistent reporting procedures, ineffective monitoring, and inadequate resourcing to properly support staff and schools.

Conference further notes that TNC 2011/2, Tackling Violence and Abuse Against Teachers in Schools, is already in place. While this document includes reporting mechanisms, the failure to properly gather, collate, and act upon this information is shocking and unacceptable, and represents a serious failure to safeguard staff.

Conference affirms that all members of the school workforce have the right to safety, dignity and protection at work. No one should go to work expecting to be assaulted.

CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

Conference therefore calls for:

- An immediate review and strengthening of TNC 2011/2
- The urgent implementation of a clear, consistent and compulsory reporting mechanism across all schools, in all sectors
- The systematic collection, collation and publication of data on incidents of violence and abuse
- Adequate staffing levels and timely access to specialised support for pupils with additional needs
- The Department of Education and the Education Authority to take immediate action to ensure safe working environments
- School governors and managing authorities to take responsibility for addressing every reported incident and to guarantee that no member of staff suffers detriment as a result of reporting an incident of violence at work.

Conference insists that the safety and wellbeing of the entire school workforce must be treated as a fundamental priority and that employing authorities will be held accountable where robust preventative and protective measures are not implemented.

12. STANDARDS FOR IPGCE PROGRAMMES AND TEACHER QUALIFICATION

Conference notes with concern the increasing availability of International Postgraduate Certificate in Education (IPGCE) programmes.

Conference is alarmed that some of these courses do not require candidates to hold a prior degree, yet claim to qualify individuals to teach after only one year of study. This raises serious questions about the depth of subject knowledge and pedagogical expertise required for effective teaching.

Conference further expresses concern about the additional workload placed on teaching staff who are expected to monitor and support students undertaking these courses, often without adequate time, training, or resources.

Conference calls on the Department of Education and GTC NI to interrogate such courses to ensure that they are of an appropriate standard and that candidates completing these programmes are appropriately qualified to teach in schools in Northern Ireland, safeguarding the integrity and quality of our education system.

13. DISTRESSED BEHAVIOURS IN SCHOOL

Conference acknowledges the draft Statutory Guidance on Restrictive Practices in Educational Settings in Northern Ireland. However, Conference calls upon the Education Department to fully interrogate the situation as pertains to a small cohort of young people who display extremely distressed and challenging behaviour in Educational settings and ensure that these young people can be appropriately supported by all Government Departments.

14. COMPOSITE MOTION - WESTERN AREA / CARRICKABBEY AND LARNE BRANCH / CEC MINOR MAINTENANCE AND SCHOOL ESTATE DISREPAIR

Conference expresses deep concern at the deteriorating condition of the school estate across Northern Ireland. Essential maintenance work is routinely delayed due to excessive bureaucracy, slow response times, and rising costs within the Education Authority (EA), leaving schools increasingly reliant on temporary and unsafe "DIY" solutions. What should be minor repairs are frequently allowed to escalate into major issues, placing additional pressure on school budgets, increasing workload demands on staff, and adversely affecting the learning environment of pupils.

Conference believes that school leaders and Boards of Governors are best placed to identify and respond promptly to minor maintenance issues and that current centralised systems are failing to deliver timely, efficient, or cost-effective solutions.

Conference therefore demands that schools be granted the authority to commission minor maintenance works costing less than £3,000, using tradespeople of their own choosing. This would reduce unnecessary delays, improve value for money, and enable schools to address health and safety concerns before they escalate into more serious and costly problems.

Conference further calls on the Education Authority and the Department of Education to prioritise urgent and sustained investment in the school estate and to streamline maintenance and repair processes to ensure a responsive, efficient system that reduces administrative burdens and guarantees that children and staff can learn and work in buildings that are safe, functional, and fit for purpose.

15. BUDGET

Conference recognises and welcomes the efforts of the Minister to deliver on the pay uplift for this academic year.

Conference, however, has grave concerns about the looming budgetary situation on both future pay settlements and the working conditions of teachers and school leaders generally. Conference welcomes the stance of the Minister to protect the classroom as a priority in his proposals to address the projected budgetary shortfall. Conference calls on the Minister to protect the workforce in the interests of children.

16. PROCUREMENT

Conference notes with grave concern the recent cost-saving measures announced by the Education Authority (EA), which are likely to disproportionately disadvantage children and young people from already financially and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Conference calls upon the EA to urgently and critically examine expenditure, decision-making processes and procedures within its own departments, and to address the significant waste of public funds arising from poor planning and inefficient procurement practices. Conference further calls upon the EA to prioritise value-for-money, transparency and accountability in its spending, particularly in relation to buildings and maintenance, in order to protect frontline educational provision and safeguard the needs of the most vulnerable learners.

CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

17. EXTREME WEATHER

Conference notes the growing frequency of extreme weather events which are impacting our schools and resulting in risks to health and safety both in the vicinity of the school buildings and the journeys to and from the buildings.

Conference is concerned that school leadership teams are being left in such very difficult circumstances to take decisions around attendance and the closure of schools which can subsequently be called into question.

Conference calls on the Department of Education to develop policy for school closure in situations of extreme weather which removes uncertainty from schools, provides a framework for timely decision-making and gives confidence to school leaders that the resulting decisions have the full support of the system.

18. SEN TRANSFORMATION

Conference recognises that a rollout on the scale of the SEN Transformation Programme will inevitably encounter initial challenges. However, Conference calls on the Education Authority to urgently review and streamline procedures for referral to Local Impact Teams (LIT) and associated support services. These procedures must be evaluated through the lens of ensuring that every child with additional needs has those needs identified and met promptly, appropriately and effectively, without unnecessary delay or excessive bureaucracy. Conference rejects any approach that serves merely to artificially suppress SEN statistics or transfers responsibility for systemic failures onto teachers, who are already managing the realities of the SEN crisis on the frontline.

19. HEALTH & WELLBEING SUPPORT

Conference notes the increasing impact of excessive workloads, staff shortages, and unmet student needs on the physical and mental health of teachers across Northern Ireland. It highlights the inconsistent and often delayed access to Occupational Health and other essential supports provided by the Education Authority.

Conference believes that teacher wellbeing is essential for maintaining a safe working environment and delivering high-quality education. Timely access to appropriate health professionals is critical in preventing long-term illness and supporting staff retention.

Therefore, Conference calls on the Department of Education and the Education Authority to establish a fully funded, timely, and equitable health and wellbeing support system for all teachers. This includes guaranteed access to Occupational Health services, mental health support, physiotherapy, and allied health professionals, all supported by clear and efficient referral pathways.

20. WESTERN AREA ASSOCIATION - PARITY FOR ALL TEACHERS WHO ARE TIMETABLED TO TEACH SEN

Conference notes that mainstream teachers are now required to teach SEN pupils from SPIM classes during integration, despite receiving no SEN points. Conference further notes that subjects such as Art, Music and Technology are routinely used for integration, yet these teachers already face larger classes, limited support and complex teaching environments. Conference believes this expectation is unfair and unsustainable. Conference calls on the Department of Education to develop a framework and formula to provide appropriate recognition, support and resourcing for mainstream teachers working within the SEN provision.

21. SOUTH EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION COMMUNICATIONS OVERLOAD

Conference notes the increasing volume and frequency of emails, circulars, guidance documents and policy updates issued by the Department of Education and managing authorities to schools.

Conference further notes that school leaders and teachers are being overwhelmed by constant, often repetitive, communications, many of which require immediate action or implementation, adding significantly to already excessive workload pressures.

Conference believes that this continual bombardment of information undermines strategic school leadership by forcing reactive rather than planned response. It also contributes to stress and workload burden for school leaders and teachers reducing the time available for teaching, learning, and pupil support

Conference therefore calls on the Department of Education and Managing Authorities review its current approach to communications with schools and to "stop and take stock" of existing initiatives before introducing further guidance, consultations, or policy changes. Conference demands that DE and Managing Authorities seek a more coordinated, streamlined and predictable communication structure, including consolidated updates issued at scheduled intervals.

22. DEEPFAKES

Conference expresses serious concern regarding the increasing accessibility and sophistication of deepfake technology and other forms of AI-generated media. Conference recognises the significant safeguarding, reputational, and professional risks posed to teachers and school leaders through the malicious creation or circulation of fabricated images, audio, or video content. Such misuse has the potential to undermine trust, damage careers, and cause profound personal distress.

Conference calls Department and Employers for clear guidance and protocols, legal protections, and rapid response procedures to support and protect staff who may be targeted. Conference also calls for increased funding to support preventative education within schools to raise awareness among pupils about the ethical, legal, and disciplinary consequences of creating or sharing deepfake content.

CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

23. CARRICKABBEY AND LARNE BRANCH - CLEANING STAFF - VALUE, RESPECT, AND ADEQUATE COVER

Conference acknowledges the vital contribution of cleaning staff within our schools. Despite often being low-paid and employed on limited hours, cleaners play an essential role in maintaining safe, hygienic, and welcoming environments for pupils and staff. Their work underpins the health, dignity, and daily functioning of every school community.

Conference notes with concern that when cleaning staff are absent, there is frequently no effective system in place to provide adequate cover. This results in classrooms, corridors, toilets, and shared spaces not being maintained to the necessary standards, compromising both hygiene and the overall school environment.

Conference calls on the Education Authority to ensure that staffing arrangements for cleaning personnel are robust and responsive. This must include the provision of appropriate absence cover through increased hours for existing staff where desired, or through timely recruitment to fill gaps. It is essential that cleaners are properly valued, supported, and equipped so that schools remain clean, safe, and conducive to learning.

24. ACADEMIC SELECTION

Conference recognises and welcomes the huge volume of educational research carried out by our most respected institutions which serves to show that academic selection does not enhance social mobility or educational outcomes for our children but rather compounds social division and impacts negatively on those children who most need educational and emotional support.

Conference is further aware that academic selection serves to distort the curriculum in KS2 and is therefore not compatible with the Minister's plans under TransformED.

Conference urges the Department of Education to create the circumstances for a full, frank and open-minded consideration of the future of academic selection, focusing on the findings of academic research, and take decisions which are based on the best interests of all children in our society.

25. AREA PLANNING

Conference has long had concerns about the seemingly piecemeal approach to Area Planning and the disrespectful approach by employers to teachers and school leaders who find themselves caught up in this process.

Conference views the proposal of the Education Minister to appoint an Independent Commission to establish the way forward for Area Planning as a recognition that the current sporadic approach, and, indeed, the current structure of the education system here, does not best serve the needs of the children in our society.

Conference has long believed that division should not be perpetuated and that our children should be educated together within properly crafted systems which best serve the educational needs and requirements of pupils.

Conference calls on the Department of Education, and all political parties, to take some difficult decisions and create a structure for our education system which creates opportunity, equality and uses resource in the best interests of a better future for our children.

Conference further calls on the employing authorities to ensure that change which takes place through the application of DE policy reflects the value placed on schools and school staff expounded by the Minister.

1. PRIVATE SESSION - CENTRALISATION OF AREA ASSOCIATION FUNDS

Conference instructs that any outstanding funds held in Area Association bank accounts be centralised and transferred to UTU Headquarters, to be held and administered in accordance with UTU financial regulations.



CONFERENCE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT

Janice Mullan, BA (Hons), MSc, PGCE, ATCL, ETA, EOTAS

VICE-PRESIDENT

Jon Bleakney, BEd (Hons), Lakewood Special School

IMMEDIATE PAST-PRESIDENT

Lynelle Fenton, BEd, (Hons), Braidside Integrated Primary School

GENERAL SECRETARY

Jacquie White, BEd, (Hons), PQH(NI), UTU Headquarters

DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY

Stephen McCord, BMedSc (Hons), MEd, PGCE, UTU Headquarters

HONORARY TREASURER

David Thompson, MBE, BEd (Hons), Dip AS Ed, PQHNI, Dungannon Primary School

BELFAST AREA ASSOCIATION

Jaki Gargan, BEd (Hons), Glastray College

David Majury, BSc, PGCE, St Columbanus' College

Naomi Billington, BEd, Carrowdore Primary School

Paul Smith, BSc (Hons), PGCE, PGCert, MEd, Earlview Primary School and Nursery

SOUTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Andrew Armstrong, BEd(Hons), PQH(NI) , Dromara Primary School

Grace McCullough, BEd (Hons), MEd, Regent House School

Andrew Fee, BEd, Elmgrove Primary School

NORTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Jill Johnston, BSc (Hons), PGCE, Larne High School until August 2025, Victoria College Belfast from August 2025.

Estelle McCord, BA, MA (Distinction), PGCE, Larne High School

Lynn Robinson, BEd (Hons) ALCM, Ballymena Primary School

Jillian Jones, BEd (Hons), Drumrane Primary School

SOUTHERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Heather Wilson, BA (Hons), Dungannon Primary School

Jill Ravey, BEd (Hons), Riverside Special School

Steven Savage, BEd (Hons), Cairnshill Integrated Primary School

Aaron Davidson, BEd (Hons), Moyallon Primary School

WESTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Audrey Dempsey, BEd (Hons), PQHNI, Omagh County Primary School

Pauline Hurst, BEd (Hons), PQHNI, Enniskillen Model Primary School

Alison Steen, BEd (Hons), PQHNI, Drumrane Primary School

OBSERVER

Aaron Davis, BEd (Hons), MEd, Knockevin Special School

Matthew Robinson, MStJ, BEd (Hons), St Columbanus College

OFFICIAL DELEGATES

FOYLE

Julie Brown, Irish Society Primary School
Lara Connor, Donemana Primary School
Diane Keys, Coleraine College
Julie McClelland, Rossmar Special School
Zoe Rodgers, Blackmountain Primary School
Charlene Trolan, Rossmar Special School
Gordan White, Lisneal College
Lorna Wilson, Oakgrove Integrated Primary School

LISBURN & BALLYNAHINCH

Hannah English, Glasswater Primary School
Elaine Davidson, Retired Teacher
Gillian Dunlop, Largymore Primary School
Colin Irwin, Cregagh Primary School
Jennifer McCann, Retired Teacher
Heather Milligan, Dromara Primary School

NEWTOWNARDS & DOWN

Carney Cumper, Substitute Teacher
Stephen Cumper, Retired Teacher

CARRICKABBEY & LARNE

Llenore Coles, Temporary Teacher
Amy McMullan, Larne High School
Debbie Wallace, Greenwood Assessment Centre
Caitriona McCreight, Greenwood Assessment Centre

NEWRY & MOURNE

Alana Campbell, Kilkeel High School
Ruth Cunningham, Annalong Primary School
Lynette Freel, Annalong Primary School
Diane Haugh-Graham, Fair Hill Primary School
Sandra Henderson, Kilkeel Primary School
Austin Kincaid, Kilkeel High School
Janelle Kincaid, Newcastle Primary School
Lorna McKinney, Kilkeel Primary School
Gillian Stevenson, Annalong Primary School

SOUTH-WEST

Karen Atchison, Substitute Teacher
Pamela Brown, Castlederg High School
Janet Burke, Denamona Primary School
Joy Carrothers, Cooley Primary School
Emma Daley, Fivemiletown Primary School
Carol Elliott, Castlederg High School
Jill Funston, Omagh County Primary School
Gayle Mathers, Omagh County Primary School
Nicola Heenan, Fivemiletown Primary School
Kerry McGarry, Enniskillen Model Primary School
Helen Morton, Fivemiletown Primary School

CAUSEWAY

Michelle Cheshire, Lislagan Primary School
Louise Creelman, Lislagan Primary School
Mark Creelman, Garvagh Primary School
Caroline Friel, The Irish Society Primary School
Callum Hannigan, Millstrand Integrated Primary School
David Kearney, Culcrow Primary School
Miles Kelly, Knockahollet Primary School
June Murphy, Ballymoney Primary School
Jennifer Sturgeon, Substitute Teacher
Alex Tannahill, Garryduff Primary School

MID ULSTER

Andrea Sawyers, Augher Central Primary School

ORCHARD COUNTY

Jan Snoddy, Dromore Central Primary School
Gillian Ward, Substitute Teacher

PAST PRESIDENTS

Susan White, Hart Memorial Primary, Past President
Sally McKee, Past President

OBSERVERS

MID-ULSTER BRANCH

Yvonne Little, Donaghmore Primary School



FRATERNAL DELEGATES AND GUESTS

ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY TEACHERS IRELAND

Padraig Curley, President

COUNCIL FOR THE CURRICULUM, EXAMINATIONS & ASSESSMENT

Gerry Campbell, Chief Executive

COUNCIL FOR CATHOLIC MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

Fiona Dowds, Director of HR

CONTROLLED SCHOOLS' SUPPORT COUNCIL

Arlene McPhilips, SMT/ Head of Marketing, Research and Comms

EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Mervyn Storey, Chairperson of the Board of the Education Authority
Patricia McLaughlin, EA Head of Service For Exceptional Teaching Arrangements
Robbie McGreevy, Chief People Officer

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SCOTLAND

Anne Keenan, Assistant General Secretary
Mark Smith, Vice-President

EDUCATION TRAINING INSPECTORATE

Barry O'Rourke, Assistant Chief Inspector

IRISH FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

Frank Jones, General Secretary
Miriam Hamilton, Deputy General Secretary

IRISH NATIONAL TEACHERS ORGANISATION

Mark McTaggart, Northern Secretary
Marie O'Shea, Assistant Northern Secretary
Brendan Horan - Vice-President
Marty Lavery, Northern Chair
Paul Groogan, Senior Official
Kevin Daly, Senior Official
Lisa Magennis, Trade Union Official
Stephen Dowds, Trade Union Official

LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY

Elaine Clarke, Director of Employment Relations Services

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HEAD TEACHERS

Graham Gault - Northern Official

NASUWT

Justin McCamphill, National Official
Wayne Broom, President
Shaunagh Lambe, NI President

NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION

Tanya Wakeley, President
Debra Beale, Vice-President

NORTHERN IRELAND COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Chris Quinn, NI Children's Commissioner

SCOTTISH SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Seamus Searson, General Secretary
Monique Dreon-Goold, President

THE TEACHERS' UNION OF IRELAND

Michael Gillespie, General Secretary

STRANMILLIS STUDENT UNION

Jessica Martin, President
John Nicholl, Vice-President

SHEAN DICKSON MERRICK

Owen Williamson, Director
Jennifer Connolly, Solicitor

TEACHERS' NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

Declan Marlow, TNC Management Side Support Officer

THE CHILDRENS LAW CENTRE

Rachel Hogan, SEND Specialist Legal Adviser
Paul Hamilton, Training and Engagement Co-ordinator

TRANSFEROR REPRESENTATIVES' COUNCIL

Peter Hamill, Secretary

OTHER GUESTS

Beverley Weir
Ann Orr
Liz Love
Jack Stewart
Nuala O'Donnell
Diarmaid de Paor

HONORARY VICE-PRESIDENTS

John Carr
Lexie Scott
Arlene Allen
Lewis Love
Alistair Orr
Audrey Stewart



CONFERENCE INFORMATION

HEADQUARTERS STAFF

General Secretary	Jacque White
Deputy General Secretary	Stephen McCord
Field Officer	Leigh Cooper
Field Officer	Rebekka Gilpin
Organising Officer	Joseph Wyglendacz
Executive Officer	Karen Taylor
Financial Executive Officer	Heather Arrell
Database Administrator	Denise Allely
Support Officer	Meriel Segal
Operational Officer/PA to Gen Sec	Lindsay Osborne
Communications Officer/PA to Deputy Gen Sec	Tony McCabe

CONFERENCE SUB-COMMITTEE

Janice Mullan, President
Jon Bleakney, Vice-President
Lynelle Fenton, Immediate Past President
Jacque White, General Secretary
Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary
David Thompson, Honorary Treasurer
Lindsay Osborne, Operational Officer
Jill Ravey
Lynn Robinson
Jacqueline Gargan
Andrew Armstrong
Alison Steen

Convener: Lynelle Fenton, Immediate Past President



106TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE MINUTES

Minutes of the One Hundred and Sixth Annual Conference of the Ulster Teachers' Union

1. The 106th Annual Conference of the Ulster Teachers' Union was held in the Roe Park Resort Hotel, Limavady, Co. Londonderry from Thursday 10th April to Saturday 12th April 2025.

2. Representatives were present from the major teachers' unions within UK and Ireland including the Educational Institute Of Scotland, Association Of Secondary Teachers In Ireland, National Education Union, Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association, Irish National Teachers' Organisation, National Association Of Schoolmasters Union Of Women Teachers, Teachers' Union Of Ireland, Irish Federation Of University Teachers, European Trade Union Committee For Education, Irish Congress Of Trade Unions, and the National Association Of Head Teachers.

3. Representatives were also present from the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, Education Authority, Education and Training Inspectorate, Ni Certification Office, Shean Dickson Merrick, Children's' Law Society, Labour Relations Agency, Controlled Schools' Support Council, Equality Commission, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment, Transferor Representatives' Council, Retired Teachers Association, and Stranmillis Student Union.

SESSION 1 – THURSDAY 10TH APRIL - 5:30PM – PUBLIC SESSION

4. The Acting President, Lynelle Fenton, welcomed guests and declared the 106th Annual Conference open.

5. The President encouraged delegates to be mindful of the housekeeping rules and timings on motions, as well as visiting all of the exhibitors in the foyer.

ADOPTION OF STANDING ORDERS

6. Standing Orders were put to Conference and were adopted unanimously. Proposed by Jon Bleakney, Vice-President Elect, seconded by Janice Mullan, Vice-President

7. The President again encouraged delegates to be mindful of the housekeeping rules and timings on motions. She also welcomed the exhibitors presenting.

8. The President moved the business to public session.

RESOLUTIONS

9. RESOLUTION 1: EDUCATION AUTHORITY SUPPORT - SOUTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Proposed by *Andrew Armstrong*, Lisburn/Ballynahinch Branch
Seconded by *Heather Milligan*, CEC & Lisburn/Ballynahinch Branch

Conference is calling on the Education Authority to work much closer with schools providing tangible support in a timely manner, taking account of schools' calendars and considering the teaching timetable requirements. With this in mind, Conference is calling on the EA to consider the timings of training available for both teachers and classroom assistants when there is no sub cover provided, and where pupils with complex needs in classes require consistency of staff. We would also call on EA to show more awareness of the need to provide support, documentation and training well in advance of when new initiatives commence.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

10. RESOLUTION 2: SEN SUPPORT - SOUTH-WEST BRANCH

Proposed by *Pauline Hurst*, CEC & South-West Branch
Seconded by *Rebekka Gilpin*, UTU Field Officer

Conference emphasises the critical need for timely intervention in supporting students with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Current procedures often delay necessary support, especially in early years, due to the lengthy process of obtaining a formal Statement of Educational Needs. These delays negatively impact students' educational progress and emotional well-being.

To address this, the Conference urges the Education Authority to implement a system that allows immediate support for pupils with SEN, bypassing the formal Statement requirement. This system should focus on early intervention to promptly meet young children's developmental needs. Additionally, the Education Authority must ensure that schools have adequate resources and training to provide immediate SEN support, enhancing the educational experience and outcomes for all students.

106TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE MINUTES

The amended resolution was carried unanimously.

11. RESOLUTION 3: SPECIAL SCHOOL SUPPORT - SOUTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Proposed by *Arron Davis*, CEC & N'ards & N.Down Branch
Seconded by *Heather Milligan*, CEC & Lisburn/Ballynahinch Branch

Speaker to resolution: *David Thompson*, CEC & Honorary Treasurer

Conference urgently calls on the Departments of Education and Health to collectively work together with financial support and adequate resourcing for special schools, particularly PMLD & SLD complex medical and behavioural needs.

Conference urges those department officials to engage with school leaders in such settings to ensure safe and proportionate decisions are made to protect staff and enable vulnerable learners to feel safe in school.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

12. RESOLUTION 4: SEN SECTOR - CARRICKABBEY AND LARNE BRANCH

Proposed by *Jill Johnston*, CEC & Carrick Abbey & Larne Branch
Seconded by *Estelle McCord*, Carrick Abbey & Larne Branch

Teachers in Special Educational Needs (SEN) settings play a crucial role in supporting vulnerable students but often face challenging and complex situations. No worker should expect to be harmed at work, and all teachers have the right to a safe environment. Incidents of violence or assault, even when arising from students' needs, must be addressed appropriately to protect staff well-being. Proper documentation and reporting of such incidents are essential for accountability and prevention of these incidents.

Conference calls for clear reporting procedures, immediate support for affected teachers, and robust risk management strategies to be enforced. We call on the EA to provide de-escalation training, enforce zero tolerance policies on workplace violence, and invest in adequate staffing and resources.

Conference demands that managing authorities ensure that adequate and timely training for all staff in SEN schools be implemented.

13. The President declared Session 1 closed at 6:18pm and thanks fraternal delegates for their presence at Session 1.

SESSION 2 – THURSDAY 10TH APRIL, 6.50PM – PRIVATE SESSION

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

14. The Acting President, Lynelle Fenton, asked to adopt the minutes of Conference 2024.

Proposed by *David Thompson*, CEC & Honorary Treasurer
Seconded by *Janice Mullan*, Vice-President

The minutes of the 105th Annual Conference were carried unanimously.

CEC REPORT

15. The Acting President invited *Jacque White*, General Secretary, to make the presentation of the CEC Report 2024/25 to the delegates.

16. The General Secretary, *Jacque White* reflected on last year's report and the initial sense of optimism it inspired. However, this optimism was dampened by the lack of progress on addressing workload issues. Despite this, there was a noticeable increase in activism among the membership.

17. She addressed the complexities involved in securing the pay and workload agreement, acknowledging the frustrations felt by members due to the slow progress on workload commitments. She outlined the details of the pay deal — a 5.5% increase — alongside time-bound commitments to tackling workload issues. Gratitude was expressed to the wider membership for their active participation and ongoing engagement throughout the process.

18. With the Education Minister's active involvement and commitment, there is a renewed focus on holding the management side accountable. The importance of continued collaboration with sister unions was emphasised as key to delivering on negotiated workload commitments.



106TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE MINUTES

19. The General Secretary, positively spoke of the extensive engagement with trade unions both domestically and internationally, marking a growing involvement in global trade unionism.

20. Sincere thanks were extended to all office staff and officials for their unwavering dedication, especially over recent months. Appreciation was also given to the Central Executive Committee (CEC) for their leadership and support during particularly challenging times.

21. The General Secretary proposed the adoption of the CEC report, which was seconded by Lynelle Fenton, Acting President.

22. The CEC Report was adopted unanimously.

23. The Acting President opened it to the floor for questions.

24. David Thompson, CEC & Honorary Treasurer, specifically thanked Jacquie White for her tireless work and unwavering commitment to the membership. He also thanked all UTU officials and staff for their work on behalf of the membership.

25. The Acting President also gave thanks to Jacquie White for her professionalism and spoke to her determination during recent pay negotiations.

FINANCIAL REPORT

26. The Acting President invited the honorary treasurer, David Thompson, to present the Annual Financial report for the year ending 31st December 2024 to Conference.

27. The Honorary Treasurer explained that this had been provided to delegates prior to the meeting. However, he stated that additional information would be presented to delegates, if missed from the report that was sent out. The Honorary Treasurer spoke to the report and talked through the perceived threats and opportunities, highlighting these in depth to conference delegates.

28. The Honorary Treasurer stated that the auditors, SLMD Ltd Chartered Accountants, confirmed the report as a fair, true & accurate statement. Thanks were also given to the auditors, with specific thanks being given to Heather Arrell, Financial Executive Officer, for her continued contribution to the

finances and the Union. He extended thanks to the General Secretary and the staff team for their continued work to help reduce costs.

29. There were no questions from the floor and no questions submitted in advance.

30. The financial Report was proposed by the Honorary Treasurer, David Thompson and seconded by Lynelle Fenton, Acting President.

31. The president also extended her thanks to Heather Arrell, Financial Executive Officer and David Thompson, Honorary Treasurer.

32. The Financial Report was carried unanimously

33. The Honorary treasurer proposed that SLMD Ltd Chartered Accountants be retained as auditors for 2025. This was seconded by Heather Milligan, CEC and unanimously agreed.

34. The Vice-President, Janice Mullan, proposed the dates and venue for the next UTU Conference to be

PRIVATE MOTIONS

35. PRIVATE RESOLUTION 1: **THE UNION**

Proposed by *Janice Mullan*, Vice-President & Foyle Branch
Seconded by *Jacquie White*, General Secretary

1.1 The Union, which shall be non-sectarian and non-political, shall be called THE ULSTER TEACHERS' UNION; and

After "UNION; and" add

"dedicated to cultivating an inclusive and equitable environment for all our members, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, or any other characteristic. We believe that diversity enriches our community and enhances our capacity to meet the needs of educators and students alike."

106TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE MINUTES

To read:

1.1 The Union, which shall be non-sectarian and non-political, shall be called THE ULSTER TEACHERS' UNION; and dedicated to cultivating an inclusive and equitable environment for all our members, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, or any other characteristic. We believe that diversity enriches our community and enhances our capacity to meet the needs of educators and students alike.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

36. PRIVATE RESOLUTION 2: **CHANGE OF TERM FOR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Proposed by *Lynelle Fenton*, Acting President
Seconded by *Grace McCullough*, CEC & Lisburn/Ballynahinch Branch

17 Members of the Executive, excluding the newly installed President, shall assume duties on the day following the last day of Annual Conference held in the year of election and shall so serve until the last day of the next following Annual Conference, subject to Rule 15.

After duties delete "the day following the last day of" insert "1 August following".

After "until the last day" delete "of the next following Annual Conference, subject to Rule 15." insert "the last day of July following the next Annual Conference, subject to Rule 15."

To read:

17. Members of the Executive, excluding the newly installed President, shall assume duties on 1 August following the day following the last day of Annual Conference held in the year of election and shall so serve until the last day of July following the next Annual Conference, subject to Rule 15

The resolution was carried unanimously.

37. PRIVATE RESOLUTION 3: **CONFERENCE**

Proposed by *Stephen McCord*, Deputy General Secretary
Seconded by *Janice Mullan*, Vice-President & Foyle Branch

47. Conference shall comprise the Officers, the Executive, Official Branch Delegates, Fraternal Delegates and Guests. Each Branch may send to the Conference ONE delegate for every TEN members paid up to 31st December preceding Conference, except that no Branch shall send more than FIFTY such delegates. For the purpose of calculating a Branch's entitlement the aforementioned paid-up membership shall be rounded to the nearest ten.

Delete "TEN members" insert "THIRTY members"

Delete "FIFTY" insert "TWENTY-FIVE"

To read:

47. Conference shall comprise the Officers, the Executive, Official Branch Delegates, Fraternal Delegates and Guests. Each Branch may send to the Conference ONE delegate for every THIRTY members paid up to 31st December preceding Conference, except that no Branch shall send more than TWENTY FIVE such delegates. For the purpose of calculating a Branch's entitlement the aforementioned paid-up membership shall be rounded to the nearest ten.

The resolution was carried.

38. PRIVATE RESOLUTION 4: **INCREMENTAL QUALIFYING PERIOD ADDITIONAL RULE 65.1.6**

Proposed by *Stephen McCord*, Deputy General Secretary
Seconded by *Pauline Hurst*, CEC

Question received from *David Thompson*, CEC & Honorary Treasurer
Clarification given by *Jacquie White*, General Secretary

65.1.7 Employed as a teacher (or part-time teacher) recognised by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland for part of at least twenty-six weeks during the year (regardless of hours worked per week).

The resolution was carried unanimously.



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39. PRIVATE RESOLUTION 5: MEMBERS TO CONFERENCE

Proposed by **Stephen McCord**, Deputy General Secretary
Seconded by **Janice Mullan**, Vice-President & Foyle Branch

48. Only members (other than Associate Members) of the Union may be appointed as Official Delegates to Conference.

After "Union" insert "as defined in Rules 65.1.1, 65.1.2, 65.1.3, 65.1.4, 65.1.5 and 65.1.7"

To read:

48 Only members (other than Associate Members) of the Union as defined in Rules 65.1.1, 65.1.2, 65.1.3, 65.1.4, 65.1.5 and 65.1.7 may be appointed as Official Delegates to Conference.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

40. PRIVATE RESOLUTION 6: THE OFFICERS OF THE UNION

Proposed by **Janice Mullan**, Vice-President & Foyle Branch
Seconded by **Stephen McCord**, Deputy General Secretary

Question received from **Gillian Dunlop**, Lisburn/Ballynahinch Branch
Clarification given by **Stephen McCord**, Deputy General Secretary

The Officers of the Union shall be President, Vice-President, Ex-President and General Secretary. The General Secretary shall be a non-voting member of the Central Executive Committee.

After "Ex-President" insert , "Honorary Treasurer"

To read: 6.

The Officers of the Union shall be President, Vice-President, Ex-President, Honorary Treasurer and General Secretary. The General Secretary shall be a non-voting member of the Central Executive Committee.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

41. PRIVATE RESOLUTION 7: HIS MAJESTY

Proposed by **Janice Mullan**, Vice-President & Foyle Branch
Seconded by **Aaron Davis**, CEC & N'ards & N.Down Branch

2.5 to afford to Her Majesty's Government, the Department of Education and other organisations – public or private – which have relation to educational affairs, the advice and experience of the associated teachers;

Delete "Her" insert "His"

To read:

2.5 to afford to His Majesty's Government, the Department of Education and other organisations – public or private – which have relation to educational affairs, the advice and experience of the associated teachers;

The resolution was carried unanimously.

42. The Acting President closed the private session at 19:19pm and reminded delegate to attend Fridays session promptly at 9:15am. She thanked all for attendance and provided information surrounding the evening dinner.

SESSION 3 – FRIDAY 11TH APRIL, 9.30AM – PUBLIC SESSION

43. The Acting President, Lynelle Fenton, opened Session 3 at 9.45am. She welcomed Delegates and Guests and reminded Conference of speaking rules and encouraged everyone to liaise with exhibitors.

RESOLUTIONS

44. RESOLUTION 5: ADMINISTERING MEDICATION - SOUTH-WEST BRANCH

Proposed by **Janice Mullan**, Vice-President & Foyle Branch
Seconded by **Audrey Dempsey**, CEC & South-West Branch
Speaker to resolution: **Aaron Davis**, CEC & N'ards & N.Down Branch
Given the increasing responsibilities on teachers and the risks involved in

106TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE MINUTES

administering medication to students, especially in emergencies, the Education Authority must address this issue to protect both student welfare and teachers' professional integrity. Teachers are primarily educators and may lack the necessary medical training for such critical tasks, which can add stress and distract from their teaching duties.

Conference calls for the Education Authority to establish a system that relieves teachers of this responsibility. Adequate medical personnel or trained healthcare staff should be provided in schools to oversee medication administration, ensuring student safety and well-being.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

45. RESOLUTION 6: EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY PROVISION IN SCHOOLS - WESTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Proposed by *Audrey Dempsey*, CEC & South-West Branch
Seconded by *Joy Carrothers*, CEC & South-West Branch

Speaker to resolution: *Lynn Robinson*, Mid-Antrim Branch

Conference is alarmed at the lack of educational psychologist assessments accessible to schools given the significant increase in complex needs attending mainstream schools.

Conference demands that children are assessed on a needs basis within a six month period from consultation.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

46. Resolution 7: FUNDING FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Proposed by *Jon Bleakney*, Vice-President Elect, CEC & Belfast Branch
Seconded by *Lynelle Fenton*, Acting President
Speaker to resolution: *Aaron Davis*, CEC & N'ards & N.Down Branch

Conference notes that SEN funding and transformation is cited as a priority for the Minister of Education and, indeed, forms one of the priorities in the recently-published Programme for Government.

Conference further notes that the aspirations here stand in marked contrast to the

punishing workload, critical lack of resources, support and training for teachers and widespread underfunding directed to our most vulnerable children.

Conference calls on the Minister to seek, as a matter of urgency, the funding required to deliver on this priority and ensure that the proper environment is created for children with SEN to access the curriculum successfully.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

47. RESOLUTION 8: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION - CARRICKABBEY AND LARNE BRANCH

Proposed by *Llenore Coles*, Carrick Abbey & Larne Branch
Seconded by *Estelle McCord*, Carrick Abbey & Larne Branch

Speaker to resolution: *Jill Johnston*, CEC & Carrick Abbey & Larne Branch
Speaker to resolution: *Matthew Robinson*, N'ards & N.Down Branch

Already across Northern Ireland we can see a teacher shortage at some levels, in some subject areas and in some locations. Any teacher shortage poses a serious threat to education delivery, quality, curriculum choices and outcomes for our pupils.

Teacher recruitment and retention will be driven by systemic issues such as inadequate pay, heavy workloads, and poor working conditions. This crisis impacts stress on remaining staff. The Department of Education must acknowledge this crisis as a priority and advocate for increased investment in education to improve salaries, working conditions, and resources.

Conference calls for the Department of Education to investigate root causes and propose solutions with educator and stakeholder input. Conference calls on the Department of Communities and Department of Education to explore expanding teacher training programs, offering financial incentives, and promoting teaching as a valued profession. Conference demands that strategies to retain teachers by reducing administrative burdens, enhancing mentorship, and ensuring manageable workloads with mental health support are prioritised with discussions with Managing Authorities.

The resolution was carried unanimously.



106TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE MINUTES

48. RESOLUTION 9: **DISRESPECT OF SCHOOL STAFF VIA PARENTS**

Proposed by *Jill Johnston*, CEC & Carrick Abbey & Larne Branch
 Seconded by *Janice Mullan*, Vice-President & Foyle Branch

Speaker to resolution: *Gillian Dunlop*, Lisburn/Ballynahinch Branch
 Speaker to resolution: *Stephen McCord*, Deputy General Secretary
 Speaker to resolution: *Aaron Davis*, CEC & N'ards & N.Down Branch
 Speaker to resolution: *Jacquie White*, General Secretary

Conference is increasingly concerned at the impact of abuse, verbally, physically, face to face and via social media, hurled at school staff by parents. Parents feel they have the right to aggressively confront staff on decisions they do not agree with, having total disregard and disrespect for school staff, policy and procedures. Conference calls on the Department to urgently lobby to have legislation introduced to protect and safeguard school staff.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

49. RESOLUTION 10: **ENGAGEMENT WITH THE EDUCATION MINISTER**

Proposed by *Stephen McCord*, Deputy General Secretary
 Seconded by *Jacquie White*, General Secretary

Speaker to resolution:

Conference calls on the Education Minister to engage in meaningful consultation with the teachers' unions before making decisions on the funding of new initiatives, policy reviews, or imposing fundamental changes onto our already stretched educational system.

Conference notes with concern that too often, key decisions are made without direct input from those working on the front lines of education. Effective policy must be informed by the expertise and experience of teachers and school leaders to ensure that changes are practical, sustainable, and in the best interests of learners and our education staff.

Conference urges the Minister to establish a transparent and structured process for ongoing dialogue with teachers' unions and the wider education community,

ensuring that those impacted by decisions have a voice in shaping them. The resolution was carried unanimously.

50. The President, Lynelle Fenton, closed session 3 at 10:30am and pointed delegates to the

SESSION 4 – **FRIDAY 11TH APRIL, 11AM – PUBLIC SESSION**

51. The Vice President, Janice Mullan, opened session 4 at 11:08 and welcomed everyone back to the Conference Hall. The Principal, and Former President Alison Steen, introduced her school choir of Drumrane PS. The choir performed musical pieces (including a humours adaption of 'When I'm 64'), with Alison Steen and parent Claire Adair as conductor and on piano.

52. Janice Mullan, Vice President, thanked the choir for their fantastic performance and gave the teachers and all children a token of appreciation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

53. Janice Mullan, Vice-President, called on General Secretary to make announcements to Conference. Jacquie White as General Secretary of the UTU and congratulates Jacquie White on her appointment.

54. Jacquie White, general Secretary, reported the obituaries. Conference marked their respect to Anthony Peter McArthur & Heather Marshall. As a mark of respect, all delegates stood and observed a few moments' silence in memory of former colleagues.

55. The General Secretary announced the new Vice-President of the UTU, Jon Bleakney.

56. The General Secretary announced Mr David Thompson elected as Honorary Treasurer.

57 The General Secretary announced the following results from elections to the Central Executive Committee:

106TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE MINUTES

BELFAST AREA ASSOCIATION (3 CANDIDATES FOR 3 SEATS)

Jaki Gargan
John Bleakney
Naomi Bilington

(now a vacancy due to election to Vice-President – a by election to follow)

NORTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION (6 CANDIDATES FOR 4 SEATS)

Estelle McCord
Lynn Robinson
Jill Johnson

Vacancy – *a by election to follow*

SOUTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION (3 CANDIDATES FOR 3 SEATS)

Grace McCullough
Andrew Fee
Andrew Armstrong

SOUTHERN AREA ASSOCIATION (4 CANDIDATES FOR 4 SEATS)

Jill Ravey
Heather Wilson
Aaron Davidson
Steven Savage

WESTERN AREA ASSOCIATION (3 CANDIDATES FOR 3 SEATS)

Audrey Dempsey
Pauline Hurst
Alison Steen

58. The General Secretary thanked all outgoing CEC members for their service and handed back to the Acting President.

CONFERENCE ADDRESS

59. Lynelle Fenton, Acting President introduced Janice Mullan for the conference address and thanked her for her continued support.

60. Janice Mullan, Vice-President gave the conference address on the Conference Theme “Caring for Teachers, Caring for Children” to great acclaim.

61. Lynelle Fenton, Acting President, gave thanks to the Vice-President, Janice Mullan for her conference address.

62. The Acting President introduced Nick Matheson MLA, Chair of the Education Committee, to address conference.

63. Nick Matheson MLA addressed conference and gave thanks to the UTU for being invited. He welcomed the continued involvement of the Trade Unions and spoke specifically in his role as chair of the Education Committee – reflecting on the priorities of the committee and the needs of the wider educational landscape.

64. Acting President, Lynelle Fenton gave thanks to Mr Matheson for his address and asked the General Secretary to address conference.

65. General Secretary, Jacquie White, addressed Conference. She gave thanks to the Vice-President and Mr Matheson for their address. Thanks were also given to the wider membership, the CEC and sister Teaching Unions for their support and the joint-up and consistent approach to industrial action. The General Secretary touched on many issues including SEN, governance, equalities, workload and assessment. She implored the Education Minister to involve Unions, and utilise Unions, in the delivery of the agreed objectives in tackling the issues affecting the teaching workforce.

66. The General Secretary introduced John MacGabhann, President of The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), to give the fraternal greetings to Conference.

67. John MacGabhann, ETUCE, gave fraternal greetings to Conference and provided delegates with an outline of the current work of the ETUCE.

68. The Acting President thanked John MacGabhann for his fraternal greetings and closed the session for lunch at 13:05pm.

69. The General Secretary postponed the installation of two new Honorary Vice Presidents – Audrey Stewart & Lewis Love – to the evening dinner.

SESSION 5 – FRIDAY 11TH APRIL, 14:00 – PUBLIC SESSION

70. The Acting President, Lynelle Fenton, welcomed back delegates and opened session 4 at 14:20pm.



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RESOLUTIONS

71. RESOLUTION 11: **TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

Proposed by *Jon Bleakney*, Vice-President Elect, CEC & Belfast Branch
Seconded by *Pauline Hurst*, CEC & South-West Branch

Conference calls on the Department of Education and Managing Authorities to significantly expand opportunities for Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) and to support teachers at all career stages. Conference notes with grave concern the long-standing lack of investment in Continuing Professional Development (CPD), which has limited access to high-quality training for beginning teachers, middle leaders, and principals.

Conference urges the Department of Education to implement a comprehensive and well-funded TPL strategy that addresses the professional learning needs of educators, ensuring they have access to relevant, high-quality training that enhances their practice and leadership capabilities.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

72. RESOLUTION 12: **WORKLOAD OF POST-PRIMARY TEACHERS**

Proposed by *Grace McCullough*, CEC & Lisburn/Ballynahinch Branch
Seconded by *Jill Johnston*, CEC & Carrick Abbey & Larne Branch

Conference calls on the Department of Education to acknowledge and address the increasing workload of post-primary teachers, particularly in relation to the teacher assessed components of GCSE, A-Level, BTEC and other qualifications.

Conference notes with concern that growing accountability pressures have led to excessive duplication of work, with teachers required to repeatedly record, track, and justify assessments. Furthermore, in many subject areas, workload is intensified at key points in the academic year due to significant demands but intense and short timeframes on marking class assessments, recording results, and reporting to parents.

Conference urges the Department to implement measures that reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, streamline assessment processes, and ensure that teachers have the time and capacity to focus on high-quality teaching and learning.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

73. The Acting President thanks speakers to the resolutions and moved to the Disability Panel section of the session

DISABILITY PANEL – FRIDAY 15TH MARCH, 14:40 – PUBLIC SESSION

74. The General Secretary, took the chair for the disability panel and introduced the panel members: Pauline Hurst; UTU Disability Champion, Aiden Henderson; Equality Commission, and Elaine Clark; LRA.

75. Pauline Hurst updated delegates with the work the UTU have been successful in implementing over the past year and gave thanks to Officials.

76. Elaine Clark, LRA, addressed conference gave an overview of her role and work related to disability within the Labour Relations Agency. She gave an update on what constitutes as a reasonable adjustment (following analysis of recent tribunal cases) and what the expectation is on employers to deliver them.

77. Aiden Henderson, Director of Advice & Compliance - Equality Commission, outlined the legislation surrounding disability and other equality strands. He spoke encapsulated the legislation within the context of legislation and incorporated the requirement for reasonable adjustments.

78. Questions were taken from the floor with comprehensive responses given by the panel.

79. Jackie White, General Secretary gave a case study where the Union has seen battles in attempting to achieve reasonable adjustments for a member, to illustrate the context members are working in. She then passed over to Pauline Hurst to summarise the discussions.

80. Pauline Hurst, UTU Disability Champion, summarised the discussions and called upon all members and organisation to be more cognisant of the legislation discussed and implement the strategies outlined.

81. Jackie White, General Secretary, thanked the panel and delegates for their questions and closed the Disability Panel section of session 4. She passed back to the Acting President to move to resolutions.

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SESSION 6 – FRIDAY 11TH APRIL, 15:30PM – PUBLIC SESSION

RESOLUTIONS

82. RESOLUTION 13: ADDRESSING KNIFE CRIME IN SCHOOLS

Proposed by *Jill Johnston*, CEC & Carrick Abbey & Larne Branch
Seconded by *Stephen McCord*, Deputy General Secretary

Conference notes that knife crime is a serious offence, including the possession, purchase, or use of a knife as a weapon. It is illegal to carry a knife in a public place or to threaten someone with a knife. Police have the power to stop and search individuals if they suspect possession of a weapon.

Conference is alarmed at the increasing reports of pupils bringing knives into school settings. This poses a significant threat to the safety of staff and pupils and undermines the learning environment.

Conference calls for urgent action to protect all members of the school community from the dangers of knife-related incidents. We urge the Department of Education to work with education stakeholders to implement a robust, clear, and enforceable policy that supports School Leaders and Boards of Governors in dealing effectively with any pupil found in possession of a knife.

Conference further calls for comprehensive preventative measures, including enhanced safeguarding training for staff, clear reporting mechanisms, and strengthened partnerships with local police and community organisations to address the root causes of knife crime.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

83. Resolution 14: INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION AND EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Proposed by *Pauline Hurst*, CEC & South-West Branch
Seconded by *Jon Bleakney*, Vice-President Elect, CEC & Belfast Branch

Conference calls on the Stormont Executive, Education Minister and Department of Education to commit to increased investment across all levels of education to ensure that every child, regardless of background or educational pathway, has access to the

same high-quality opportunities.

Conference notes with concern the growing inequalities within the education system, where access to resources, support, and learning experiences can vary significantly. Every learner deserves equitable provision to reach their full potential. Conference urges the Department to take decisive action to address these disparities by providing sustained and fair funding that supports all school settings in delivering an inclusive and high-quality education for every child.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

84. Resolution 15: SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND MAINTENANCE - CAUSEWAY BRANCH

Proposed by *June Murphy*, Causeway Branch
Seconded by *Louise Creelman*, Causeway Branch

Speaker to resolution: *Jill Ravey*, CEC & Orchard County Branch
Speaker to resolution: *Jennifer Sturgeon*, Causeway Branch

Conference calls on the Department of Education to provide increased and sustained funding for school buildings and maintenance to ensure that all students and staff can learn and work in a safe, comfortable, and well-maintained environment.

Conference notes with concern that many schools are facing ongoing issues such as leaking roofs, peeling paint, draughty windows, and general disrepair. A high-quality learning environment is not a luxury but a basic necessity, and no student or teacher should have to contend with substandard conditions.

Conference urges the Department to commit to a long-term investment plan that prioritises school maintenance and refurbishment, ensuring that every school building is fit for purpose and conducive to effective teaching and learning.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

85. Acting President, Lynelle Fenton, closed the session at 15:55pm.

SESSION 7 – FRIDAY 11TH APRIL, 16:15PM – PUBLIC SESSION

86. Acting President, Lynelle Fenton, opened the session at 16:15pm.



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87. RESOLUTION 16: **TRAINING FOR BOARD OF GOVERNORS - CAUSEWAY BRANCH**

Proposed by *Louise Creelman*, Causeway Branch
Seconded by *Jacquie White*, General Secretary

Speaker to resolution: *Gillian Dunlop*, Lisburn/Ballynahinch Branch

Conference calls on the Managing Authorities to ensure that members of Boards of Governors receive adequate training in human resources, equality legislation, and in Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC) policies and procedures to ensure they fulfil their role as employers in a professional and informed manner.

Conference notes with concern that many Board members, while committed to their schools, may not have the necessary expertise to navigate complex employment matters. A lack of appropriate training can lead to inconsistencies in decision-making, potential breaches of employment rights, and unnecessary conflict within schools.

Conference urges the Managing Authorities to implement a structured and mandatory training programme for all Governors, ensuring they have the knowledge and confidence to uphold fair and effective employment practices in their schools.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

88. Resolution 17: **COMMUNICATION WITH CHAIRS OF BOARDS OF GOVERNORS**

Proposed by *Stephen McCord*, Deputy General Secretary
Seconded by *Joseph Wyglendacz*, UTU Organising Officer

Conference calls on the Department of Education to establish a dedicated email address for the Chair of the Board of Governors in every school to ensure secure and professional communication regarding school matters.

Conference notes with concern that the current lack of an official contact method raises serious questions about confidentiality, GDPR compliance, and the secure handling of sensitive information. Without a designated email system, important

communications risk being delayed, misdirected, or accessed inappropriately. Conference urges the Department to take immediate steps to address this issue by providing every Chair of the Board of Governors with a secure, school-linked email address, ensuring clear, confidential, and compliant communication in all governance matters.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

89. RESOLUTION 18: **ACCOUNTABILITY OF GOVERNORS**

Proposed by *Jacquie White*, General Secretary
Seconded by *Stephen McCord*, Deputy General Secretary

Conference notes that the sole process by which a complaint can be raised against a member of a Board of Governors is by the employment of TNC 2011/4 Annex III of TNC 2009/11 Policy and Procedure to Combat Bullying and Harassment of Teachers including Principals and Vice-Principals.

Conference further has grave concerns that the employment of Annex III is generally an inappropriate and ineffective tool to address complaints raised.

Conference calls on the Central Executive Committee to work through the appropriate negotiating machinery to develop and establish a procedure which can be used by teachers and school leaders when raising legitimate complaints against Governors which do not constitute bullying and harassment.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

90. RESOLUTION 19: **CLASS SIZES AND WORKLOAD IMPACT**

Proposed by *Pauline Hurst*, CEC & South-West Branch
Seconded by *Jillian Jones*, CEC & Mid-Antrim Branch

Given the significant variation in pupil abilities and needs within classrooms, and the fact that some pupils with statements of special educational needs are classified as supernumerary, it is essential that the Department of Education examines mechanisms to ensure that teacher workload is not disproportionately impacted and there is effective and safe learning environment for all pupils and staff.

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Conference calls on the Department of Education to undertake a comprehensive review of existing circulars governing pupil numbers and class sizes, in both the primary and post primary sector including practical subjects.

Conference demands call on the Department of Education to develop a system that accounts for the additional demands placed on teachers when supporting pupils with exceptional needs, ensuring that workload remains manageable and that all pupils receive the highest quality of education.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

91. Resolution 20: **RECOGNITION OF TEACHING TIME AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

Proposed by *Jaki Gargan*, CEC & Belfast Branch
Seconded by *Janice Mullan*, Vice-President & Foyle Branch

Speaker to resolution: *Jennifer Sturgeon*, Causeway Branch
Question to resolution: *June Murphy*, Causeway Branch
Clarification to question raised: *Stephen McCord*, Deputy General Secretary

Conference calls on the managing authorities to acknowledge that a teachers' core and primary responsibility is the teaching and education of the pupils in their classes. While extra-curricular activities play a valuable role in providing opportunities for young people and supporting their holistic development, they should not be included in a teacher's time budget or directed time.

Conference demands that teachers who voluntarily participate in extra-curricular activities should receive appropriate recognition, either through financial remuneration or time in lieu, to ensure fairness and maintain a sustainable workload.

The resolution was carried.

92. RESOLUTION 21: **CURRICULUM REVIEW AND FUTURE-PROOFING EDUCATION**

Proposed by *Janice Mullan*, Vice-President & Foyle Branch
Seconded by *Stephen McCord*, Deputy General Secretary

Conference reaffirms the necessity of a balanced curriculum in which literacy and numeracy are central, alongside the sciences, creative arts, and modern languages as core and essential components. These subjects must remain accessible to all students in all schools to ensure a well-rounded education that meets diverse learning needs and aspirations.

Conference acknowledges that the nature of work is evolving, with rapid advancements in technology shaping future employment opportunities. As part of the curriculum review.

Conference calls on the Education Minister to ensure that schools are equipped to keep pace with emerging technologies and evolving subject areas, preparing students for the challenges and opportunities of the future workforce.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

93. RESOLUTION 22: **GRIEF EDUCATION AND BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT**

Proposed by *Jacquie White*, General Secretary
Seconded by *Pauline Hurst*, CEC & South-West Branch

Speaker to resolution: *Matthew Robinson*, N'ards & N.Down Branch
Speaker to resolution: *Janice Mullan*, Vice-President & Foyle Branch

Conference recognises the excellent work carried out by Marie Curie in developing training and resources for schools to address Grief Education and Bereavement Support, and in raising the profile of the work done with decision makers including the Minister for Education.

Conference is keenly aware of the importance of emotional well-being for learning and welcomes this programme which addresses an area which will touch the majority of children during their school career in a range of ways.

Conference welcomes the Minister's endorsement of this work and calls on him now to further recognise the importance of the programme by seeking to source the appropriate funding to allow schools to access the training and develop policies and culture to prepare and support our children and young people in this very important area.



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The resolution was carried unanimously.

94. RESOLUTION 23: **ETI**

Proposed by *David Thompson*, Honorary Treasurer & Mid-Ulster Branch

Seconded by *Heather Wilson*, CEC & Mid- Ulster

Speaker to resolution: *Jacquie White*, General Secretary

Speaker to resolution: *Jill Johnston*, CEC & Carrick Abbey & Larne Branch

Conference commends the ETI for their work in developing an inspection process which provides the necessary accountability without the excessive workload and negative impact on schools which had been experienced previously. Conference further wishes to commend the ETI for their continuing engagement and consultation with the teaching unions on this process.

Conference, however, has grave concerns about the messaging of the system in regard to the new developments.

Conference calls on the employing authorities to ensure that those giving advice to schools around the inspection process work alongside ETI to ensure that their understanding of the new process is clear and that unnecessary workload and stress is not being created by outdated and inaccurate information.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

95. The following resolutions will be brought back for CEC business, due to time.

96. RESOLUTION 24: **ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Since 2020, 25 women have been murdered in Northern Ireland.

In the two weeks 20th December 2024 to 2nd January 2025, 1,288 domestic abuse calls were received by the PSNI.

There were 32,763 domestic abuse incidents recorded in 2023/24, the third highest level recorded since the data series began in 2004/05. This latest figure is more than one and a half times higher than the level of 20,959 recorded at the start of the data series in 2004/05.

Acts of domestic abuse in Northern Ireland are reported to the police every 16 minutes and sexual offences are reported every two hours (BBC, 2024). Two victims in three are women. Compared to the rest of the UK, women are twice as likely to be murdered as a result of domestic violence (Belfast Telegraph, 2024).

Addressing Violence against Women and Girls is cited as a priority on the Draft Programme for Government.

Conference reiterates the policy of UTU which recognises the part schools can play in addressing the scourge of violence against women and girls in NI.

Conference renews its call to the Minister to ensure by whatever means possible that the key tenets of RSE which promote respect and clarify appropriate behaviour are mainstreamed in every school.

97. Resolution 25: **INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION**

The landscape of the school pupil population has changed exponentially in recent years.

The aftermath of Covid, growing levels of poverty and the increasing numbers of children presenting with Special Educational Needs are among a raft of issues which have resulted in the teaching workforce requiring a much wider and more diverse skill set in order to provide an appropriate and dynamic classroom setting to enable children to achieve.

Conference is concerned that our newly-qualified teachers are entering the workforce woefully under-prepared for the current classroom and fear that this is a contributory factor in the high levels of stress experienced and the difficulties in retention.

Conference calls on the Department of Education to engage with the Department for the Economy, the Department of Health and the relevant colleges to ensure that the ITE courses equip our beginning teachers with the fundamental skills necessary for the school of today.

98. RESOLUTION 26: **TEACHER COMPETENCIES**

Conference recognises the recent significant changes in the pupil profile of the

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school population in recent years.

Conference further believes that the nature of the skill set now required by teachers to address the needs of those children has broadened considerably and is no longer adequately reflected in the competencies against which teachers and school leaders are assessed.

Whilst the on-going issues in regard to the GTCNI are recognised, Conference nonetheless believes strongly that the competencies need to be revisited and revised, and calls on DE, in the absence of a functioning GTCNI, to address the void which has been created and move towards a resolution of the current situation to ensure the core needs of the profession are properly addressed.

99. RESOLUTION 27: **EQUALITY FOR THE EDUCATION WORKFORCE**

Conference recognises the first steps towards equality in employment for teachers and school leaders and welcomes the removal of Article 71 (FETO) and the initial work of the Disability Employment Support Service (DESS).

It cannot be disputed, however, that the education system in Northern Ireland lags far behind both education systems in other jurisdictions and other public sector services in NI itself in terms of the addressing of employment issues involving equality grounds.

It remains the case that, despite relevant and appropriate advice from the employing authorities, many Governors do not understand their legal obligations as related to Section 75 and, so, fail to put in place strategies and processes to protect employees in the workplace. It is the experience of UTU that some Governors are actively discriminatory on these grounds.

Conference calls on the Minister for Education to ensure by whatever means necessary that processes are put in place to ensure that employers at all levels are held to account for the means through which employment equality issues are addressed in schools.

100. RESOLUTION 28: **PRIMARY SCHOOL PLANNING**

Due in great part to the demands of a previous ETI regime, written planning for primary schools has moved far beyond what is necessary for teachers to fulfil their professional duties.

It is the contention of UTU that the practices now in place for many primary teachers takes time away unnecessarily from fundamental teaching, learning and meaningful assessment.

Conference believes that bureaucracy such as this can be readily addressed through work arising from the Workforce Reviews.

Conference calls on the TNC to:

(a) Inform the system that personal planning will be represented by a working document which best serves the professional needs of the individual and avoids any requirement for unnecessary imposed bureaucracy

(b) Facilitate the co-design of uniform formats to contain only the key and central information required to enable the teacher to map progression throughout the half-term/year.

101. RESOLUTION 29: **PUPIL OBSERVATION IN NURSERY, FOUNDATION STAGE AND SPECIAL SETTINGS**

Conference believes that the practices of recording pupil progress currently being employed at nursery and foundation stage have moved well beyond what is required to assess the achievement of individual children.

Conference further believes that such practices are impacting significantly on time which teachers could be directing towards core teaching and learning.

Conference calls on TNC to facilitate the establishment of consistent and standardised expectations for the frequency and recording of pupil observations in the early years.

102. RESOLUTION 30: **REBUILDING TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM - CAUSEWAY BRANCH**

Conference recalls a time when the professionalism of teachers was recognised, valued, and trusted.

Conference calls on the Education Minister to continue supporting the entire education sector and to publicly acknowledge and applaud the dedication and



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professionalism of teachers and school leaders. Conference further calls on managing authorities to implement a structured programme of support for teachers. This programme must include immediate and meaningful measures to address excessive workload, ensuring that teachers have the time and resources to focus on high-quality teaching and learning.

Additionally, Conference urges managing authorities to take decisive action to support teachers facing abuse on social media. This includes working with social media platforms to combat online harassment, providing clear reporting mechanisms, and ensuring that teachers subjected to such attacks receive the necessary legal, professional, and emotional support.

103. Resolution 31: **WORKFORCE REVIEWS**

Recent events have clearly illustrated the importance of addressing workload within the teaching profession.

Conference despairs at the fact that even initial agreed areas within the Workforce Review project, such as the workload impact assessment of new initiatives, have yet to be actioned.

Conference calls on the employers to deliver as a matter of urgency on the commitments made in the 2020 Pay and Workload Agreement as a starting point for the rebalancing of the profession with a view to making it once again an attractive and sought after choice for graduates.

104. Resolution 32: **MOBILE PHONES**

Conference is alarmed at the increasing number of young children having free access to a mobile phone. Conference calls on the Department to lobby the NI Government to urgently introduce legislation which safeguards children and young people from online content which is detrimental to their development, health and well-being.

105. The sponsors and exhibitors' Prize draws took place with the following results:

Platinum Financial Planning: Jennifer Sturgeon, Beverley Ester, Jaki Gargan, Aaron Davis, Marie O'Shea, June Murphy

Membership Plus:
Steve Sinnott Foundation:
Lafayette Photography:
E-learning:
UTU:

Michelle Cheshire
 Jill Johnston
 Carney Cumper
 Jan Snoddy
 June Murphy, Stephen Cumper

106. The Acting President thanked everyone for their attendance and declared 106th Conference closed at 5.27pm.



SPONSORS AND EXHIBITORS

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- STEVE SINNOTT FOUNDATION
- MEMBERSHIP PLUS (CLUB MARKETING)
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- EPRINTING
- PLATINUM FINANCIAL
- SPORTS CITY
- CORNMARKEt INSURANCE
- CORE KIDS
- CREATIVE ACTIVITY
- SENSORY KIDS
- PAUL SMYTH PHOTOGRAPHY
- MIDDLETOWN AUTISM
- HSCNI ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE
- HARPER COLLINS
- PURE FILTRATION



CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

All delegates must register initially at the UTU Conference desk and then at the hotel reception.

It is important that resident delegates and guests wear their Conference lanyards, particularly in the dining room.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Roe Valley Resort
LIMAVADY
Co Londonderry
BT49 9FB
T: +44 (0) 28777 22222

Free car parking is available on site.

Please register with the UTU reception which is located beside the main Conference hall.

Hotel Check-In Times: Check in 3.00pm / Check out 11.00am

Photography and Filming will be taking place. These will be used in UTU publications and social media (UTU Website, Facebook, X, Instagram, Threads, Bluesky and YouTube).

Delegates and guests who do not wish to have their image used should inform office@utu.edu before **Wednesday 18th March 2026**.

COMPLAINTS

All complaints regarding the hotel should be made to Lindsay Osborne, Operational Officer.



Ulster Teachers' Union
94 Malone Road
Belfast
BT9 5HP

Telephone: 02890 662216

Email: office@utu.edu

WWW.UTU.EDU

CONFERENCE HANDBOOK