

A background image showing a group of diverse students in a classroom setting, wearing school uniforms and working together at a desk. The image is dimmed to allow text to be overlaid.

CONFERENCE HANDBOOK

2025



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WELCOME

We are delighted to welcome you to this year's annual UTU Conference, a key event for 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, innovation, 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 this important event—your voice and participation help shape the path ahead.

Caring for Teachers, Caring for Children.



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PRESIDENT-ELECT FOREWORD



Dear Colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all delegates and guests to our 106th 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 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.

The theme of this year's UTU Annual Conference is 'Caring for Children, Caring for Teachers'. This is the heart of our union and represents the vital need to care and be cared for. Having had the honour of visiting members from all sectors of our education fraternity, I realise the need for our members to be supported and cared for as you nurture so much creativity and talent in our schools by constantly caring for and supporting our young

people. This has been one of the most challenging times for the teaching profession. When we, as members, understand that getting help isn't a sign of weakness but a sign of strength, it's then that we will get the right advice and counsel.

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. The overwhelming rejection by members of the pay offer on the grounds of workload was a huge shock to management side. I have complete faith in UTU to hold management to account because our Union does care about us, the members. Caring for teachers is caring for education.

As educators, we have been starved of vital opportunities to meet in person, leaving many feeling isolated. This was so apparent during the series of in-

person consultation events with members, which took place last month.

And so, over the next two days, enjoy chatting about your experiences, support each other by sharing ideas, take time to renew past acquaintances and form new ones in these beautiful surroundings. I am looking forward to vibrant, lively and spirited debates, both formal and informal, reflecting the head-spinning times we teachers find ourselves in.

I wish to thank you, again, for placing your confidence in me by electing me to be your President for 2025/26. Despite the challenges, you have continued to inspire, educate and nurture the minds of our future generations.

Thank you for your continued commitment and passion. Together we will continue to advocate for our profession.

Janice Mullan
President Elect

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

THURSDAY 10TH APRIL

5:00PM | Registration, Exhibition Viewing and Coffee

5:30PM | **Session 1:** Opening of Conference and Resolutions - Public Session

6:45PM | **Session 2:** Private Session for UTU Delegates

7:30PM | Close of Session

8.00PM | **Dinner:** Roe Park Suite

10:00PM | **Jamming Session:** O'Cahans Bar

FRIDAY 11TH APRIL

09:00AM | Registration for Guests

09:15AM | **Session 3:** Resolutions - Public Session

10:15AM | Presentation

10:30AM | Exhibition Viewing and Coffee

11:00AM | **Musical interlude** - Drumrane Primary School Choir

11:15AM | **Session 4:**
Vice-President's Address: Janice Mullan
General Secretary's Address: Jacquie White
Fraternal Greetings: John MacGabhann, ETUCE President
Installation of Honorary Vice-Presidents: Audrey Stewart and Lewis Love

12:45PM | **President's Lunch:** Courtyard Restaurant

2:00PM | **Session 5:** Resolutions - Public Session

2:30PM | **Presentation:** Our Profession and Disability - Chaired by Jacquie White

3:15PM | **Session 6:** Resolutions - Public Session

4:00PM | Exhibition Viewing and Coffee

4.15PM | **Session 7:** Resolutions - Public Session
 Prize Draws for Competitions

5:30PM | Close

7.00PM | Drinks Reception - Danny Boy Suite

7.30PM | Conference Dinner - Roe Park Suite
 Installation of President & 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-25-PG 7) 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-25-4). 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 2025:-

"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 ALLOCATIONS

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	63
BELFAST	568	568
CARRICK/ABBHEY/LARNE	400	100
CAUSEWAY	298	99
FOYLE	270	45
LISBURN/B'NAHINCH	313	39
MID-ANTRIM	403	134
MID-ULSTER	189	95
NEWRY & MOURNE	203	41
N'ARDS/N.DOWN	563	282
ORCHARD COUNTY	586	586
SOUTH-WEST	348	70

CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

1. SOUTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION – EDUCATION AUTHORITY SUPPORT

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.

2. SOUTH-WEST BRANCH - SEN SUPPORT

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.

3. SOUTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION - SPECIAL SCHOOL SUPPORT

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.

4. CARRICKABBEY AND LARNE BRANCH - SEN SECTOR

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.

5. SOUTH-WEST BRANCH - ADMINISTERING MEDICATION

Given the increasing responsibilities on teachers and the risks involved in 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.

6. WESTERN AREA ASSOCIATION - EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY PROVISION IN SCHOOLS

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

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

7. FUNDING FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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.

8. CARRICKABBEY AND LARNE BRANCH - RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

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.

CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

9. TREATMENT OF SCHOOL STAFF BY PARENTS

Conference is increasingly concerned at the impact of abuse, verbally, physically, face to face and via social media, directed 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 robust procedures up to and including legislation introduced to protect and safeguard school staff.

10. ENGAGEMENT WITH THE EDUCATION MINISTER

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 high level decisions have a voice in shaping them.

11. TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

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.

12. WORKLOAD OF POST-PRIMARY TEACHERS

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.

13. ADDRESSING KNIFE CRIME IN SCHOOLS

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. Conference urges 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.

14. INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION AND EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

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.

15. CAUSEWAY BRANCH - SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND MAINTENANCE

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.

CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

16. CAUSEWAY BRANCH - TRAINING FOR BOARDS OF GOVERNORS

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.

17. COMMUNICATION WITH CHAIRS OF BOARDS OF GOVERNORS

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.

18. ACCOUNTABILITY OF GOVERNORS

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.

19. CLASS SIZES AND WORKLOAD IMPACT

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 an effective and safe learning environment for all pupils and staff.

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 that the Department of Education develops 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.

20. RECOGNITION OF TEACHING TIME AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

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.

21. CURRICULUM REVIEW AND FUTURE-PROOFING EDUCATION

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 the world of work is evolving, with rapid advancements in technology shaping future employment opportunities and this should be considered 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.

22. GRIEF EDUCATION AND BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

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.

CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

23. ETI

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.

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.

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.

26. TEACHER COMPETENCIES

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

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.

CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

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.

29. PUPIL OBSERVATION IN NURSERY, FOUNDATION STAGE AND SPECIAL SETTINGS

Conference believes that the practices of recording pupil progress currently being employed at nursery, foundation stage and within special education 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 and beyond.

30. CAUSEWAY BRANCH - REBUILDING TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

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 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 and the PSNI to combat online harassment, providing clear reporting mechanisms, and ensuring that teachers subjected to such attacks receive the necessary legal, professional, and emotional support.

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.

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.

PRIVATE SESSION

1. THE UNION

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."

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.

2. CHANGE OF TERM FOR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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.

CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

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.

3. CONFERENCE

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.

4. INCREMENTAL QUALIFYING PERIOD ADDITIONAL RULE 65.1.6

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).

MEMBERS TO CONFERENCE

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 OFFICERS OF THE UNION

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.

7. HIS MAJESTY

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;

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT *[Until October 2024]*

Leigh McKay, BA (Hons), PGCE, DASE, Ballyclare Secondary School

ACTING PRESIDENT *[From October 2024]*

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

VICE-PRESIDENT

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

GENERAL SECRETARY

Jacquie White, BEd (Hons), PQHNI, UTU Headquarters

DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY

Stephen McCord, BMedSc (Hons), MEd, PGCE

HONORARY TREASURER

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

BELFAST AREA ASSOCIATION

Jaki Gargan, BEd (Hons), Glastry College
Jon Bleakney, BEd (Hons), Lakewood Special School
Naomi Billington, BEd (Hons), Carrowdore Primary School

SOUTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Aaron Davis, BEd (Hons), MEd, Knockevin Special School
Heather Milligan, BEd, DASE, PQHNI, Dromara Primary School
Grace McCullough, BEd (Hons), MEd, Regent House School

NORTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Jill Johnston, BSc (Hons), PGCE, Larne High School
Emma Loughridge, BEd (Hons), Eden Primary School
Jillian Jones, BEd (Hons), Drumrane Primary School
David Gault, BEd, MEd, Larne High School

SOUTHERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Heather Wilson, BA (Hons), Dungannon Primary School
Jill Ravey, BEd (Hons), Riverside Special School
Steven Savage, BEd (Hons), Cairnshill Primary School
Aaron Davidson, BEd (Hons), Moyallon Primary School

WESTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Audrey Dempsey, BEd (Hons), PQHNI, Omagh County Primary School
Joy Carrothers, BEd (Hons), MEd, Cooley Primary School
Pauline Hurst, BEd (Hons), PQHNI Enniskillen Model Primary School

OFFICIAL DELEGATES

BANBRIDGE AND DROMORE BRANCH

Jill Finn, Edenderry Primary School
Gillian Ward, Supply Teacher
Nicola McGregor, Edenderry Primary School

BELFAST BRANCH

David Majury, St Columbanus College

CARRICK/ABBEY/LARNE BRANCH

Caroline Phelan, Carnmoney Primary School
Estelle McCord, Larne High School
Paul Smith, Earlview Primary School
Llenore Coles, Larne High School

CAUSEWAY BRANCH

David Kearney, Culcrow Primary School
June Murphy, Ballymoney Model Primary School
Alex Tannahill, Garryduff Primary School
Jennifer Sturgeon, Supply Teacher
Caroline Friel, Irish Society Primary School
Louise Creelman, Lislagan Primary School
Michelle Cheshire, Lislagan Primary School

FOYLE BRANCH

Zoe Rodgers, Blackmountain Primary School
Alison Steen, Drumrane Primary School
Julie Brown, Irish Society's Primary School
Lara Connor, Donemana Primary School
Julie McClelland, Rossmar Special School
Charlene Trolan, Rossmar Special School

LISBURN/BALLYNAHINCH BRANCH

Colin Irwin, Cregagh Primary School
Gillian Dunlop, Largymore Primary School
Hannah English, Elmgrove Primary School
Jennifer McCann, Newcastle Primary School
Andrew Armstrong, Dromara Primary School
Eileen McKee, Harmony Hill Primary School
Carney Cumper, Killyleagh Integrated Primary School
Stephen Cumper, Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School

MID-ANTRIM BRANCH

Lynn Robinson, Ballymena Primary School
Corey McKendry, St Mary's Grammar School
Beverley Esler, Ballykeel Primary School

MID-ULSTER BRANCH

Andrea Sawyers, Augh Central Primary School
Alison Wilson, Coagh Primary School

NEWRY AND MOURNE BRANCH

Austin Kincaid, Kilkeel High School
Janelle Kincaid, Newcastle Primary School
Sandra Henderson, Kilkeel Primary School
Gillian Stevenson, Annalong Primary School
Diane Haugh-Graham, EA Support Service

N'ARDS/N.DOWN BRANCH

Matthew Robinson, St Columbanus' College
Elaine Davidson, Springhill Primary School

ORCHARD COUNTY

Jan Snoddy, Dromore Central Primary

SOUTH-WEST BRANCH

Karen Atchison, Temporary Teacher
Helen Morton, Fivemiletown Primary School
Emma Daley, Fivemiletown Primary School
Kerry McGarry, Enniskillen Model Primary School
Nicola Heenan, Fivemiletown Primary School

BRANCH GUESTS/OBSERVERS

CARRICKABBEY/LARNE BRANCH

Debbie Wallace, Greenwood House Special School

CAUSEWAY BRANCH

Callum Hannigan, Millstrand Integrated Primary School

FOYLE BRANCH

Diane Keys, Coleraine College
Jennifer Mullan, Retired Teacher

MID ULSTER

Yvonne Little

FUTURE IN TEACHING

Rosemary Mack, Supply Teacher
John Crown, Supply Teacher

FRATERNAL DELEGATES & GUESTS

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SCOTLAND

Paula McEwan, Ex-President

ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY TEACHERS IN IRELAND

Kieran Christie, General Secretary
Donal Cremin, President

NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION

Pauline Buchanan, Joint Regional Secretary
Pamela Cosgrove, NI President

SCOTTISH SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Seamus Searson, General Secretary
Catherine Nicol, Past President

IRISH NATIONAL TEACHERS' ORGANISATION

Mark McTaggart, Northern Secretary
Marie O'Shea, Assistant Northern Secretary
Carmel Browne, INTO President
Marie O'Shea, Assistant Northern Secretary
Geraldine McGowan, Northern Chair
Nuala O'Donnell, Senior Official
Paul Groggan, Senior Official

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLMASTERS UNION OF WOMEN TEACHERS

Wayne Broom, Senior Vice-President
Fergal McGukin, NI Junior Vice-President

COUNCIL FOR CATHOLIC MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

Eve Bremner, Chief Executive

TEACHERS' UNION OF IRELAND

Michael Gillespie, General Secretary
David Waters, President

IRISH FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

Frank Jones, General Secretary

EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION

John MacGabhann, ETUCE President

IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS

Gerry Murphy, Assistant General Secretary
Justin McCamphill, President

EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Mervyn Storey, Chairperson
Donna Allen, Interim Director of Operations and Estates
Declan Marlow, TNC Management Side Support Officer
Aileen Donnelly, Head of Equality & Human Rights

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE

Faustina Graham, Chief Inspector
Barry O'Rourke, Assistant Chief Inspector

NI CERTIFICATION OFFICE

Tom Evans, Certification Officer

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HEAD TEACHERS

Graham Gault, Northern Official
Jackie Bartley, Regional President

SHEAN DICKSON MERRICK

Owen Williamson, Director
Jennifer Connolly, Head of Litigation

CHILDRENS LAW SOCIETY

Paul Hamilton, Training and Engagement

LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY

Elaine Clarke, Director of Employment Relations Services

CONTROLLED SCHOOLS' SUPPORT COUNCIL

Mark Baker, Chief Executive

EQUALITY COMMISSION

Aiden Henderson, Director, Advice & Compliance

COUNCIL FOR THE CURRICULUM, EXAMINATIONS & ASSESSMENT

Michael McAuley, Business Manager

TRANSFEROR REPRESENTATIVES' COUNCIL

Dr Peter Hamill, Secretary to the TRC

RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Iris Clarke, President

PAST PRESIDENTS

Lewis Love
Audrey Stewart
Sally McKee
Rosemary Barton

HONORARY VICE-PRESIDENTS

Arlene Allen
John Carr
Alistair Orr

STRANMILLIS STUDENT UNION

Andrew Irwin, Student President, Stranmillis
Jessica Martin, Deputy Student President, Stranmillis

CONFERENCE INFORMATION

HEADQUARTERS STAFF

General Secretary
Deputy General Secretary
Field Officer
Field Officer
Organising Officer
Executive Officer
Financial Executive Officer
Database Administrator
Support Officer
Operational Officer/PA to Gen Sec
Communications Officer/PA to Deputy Gen Sec

Jacquie White
Stephen McCord
Leigh Cooper
Rebekka Gilpin
Joseph Wyglendacz
Karen Taylor
Heather Arrell
Denise Allely
Meriel Segal
Lindsay Osborne
Tony McCabe

CONFERENCE SUB-COMMITTEE

Lynelle Fenton, Acting President
Janice Mullan, President Elect
Jacquie White, General Secretary
Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary
David Thompson, Honorary Treasurer
Karen Taylor, Executive Officer
Lindsay Osborne, Operational Officer
Jon Bleakney
Jill Ravey
Heather Milligan
Jillian Jones
Pauline Hurst

Convener: Lynelle Fenton, Acting President

MINUTES OF THE 105TH CONFERENCE

1. The 105th Annual Conference of the Ulster Teachers' Union was held in the Roe Park Resort Hotel, Limavady, Co. Londonderry from Thursday 14th March to Saturday 16th March 2024.

2. Representatives were present from the major teachers' unions within UK and Ireland including the National Education Union, the Educational Institute of Scotland, the Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, the National Association of Head Teachers, the National Association of Schoolmasters and Women Teachers, the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland, the Teachers' Union of Ireland, the University and College Union and the Irish Federation of University Teachers.

3. Representatives were also present from the Transferor Representatives' Council, the Retired Teachers' Association, the Department of Education, the Education Authority, the Education and Training Inspectorate, the Controlled Schools' Support Council, the Labour Relations Agency, the Certification Office, Millar Grattan Media and CCEA.

SESSION 1 – THURSDAY 14TH MARCH, 5:30 PM – PUBLIC SESSION

4. The President, Lynelle Fenton, welcomed guests and declared the 105th 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 Louise Creelman, Past President, seconded by Leigh McKay, 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.

9. RESOLUTION 1: SAFEGUARDING: MID-ANTRIM BRANCH

Proposed by *Jillian Jones*, Mid-Antrim Branch
 Seconded by *Lynelle Fenton*, President
 Speaker to resolution: *Stephen McCord*, Deputy General Secretary
 Speaker to resolution: *David Thompson*, Mid-Ulster Branch & CEC
 Speaker to resolution: *Leigh McKay*, Vice President

Conference calls on the Department of Education to carry out a survey enabling information to be gathered that will recognise the role and amount of workload placed on the safeguarding teams in schools. Conference calls on funding to be made available to support those schools which require extra finance and resourcing to ensure that staff are given the adequate time to manage the unique situations that arise in a moment's notice regarding safeguarding. This will ensure that the safeguarding role can be carried out effectively and that other pupils are not missing out on their educational needs or detrimentally suffering due to staff being drawn away from their normal duties.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

10. RESOLUTION 2: SUPPORT STAFF TEMPORARY AVAILABILITY - CAUSEWAY

Proposed by *Louise Creelman*, Ex-President
 Seconded by *Mark Creelman*, Causeway Branch & CEC

Conference calls on EA to prioritise putting in place a temporary list for all support staff that schools can avail of that is fit for purpose.

10.1. Amendment 2.1 SUPPORT STAFF TEMPORARY AVAILABILITY

Proposed by *Stephen McCord*, Deputy General Secretary
 Seconded by *Jill Johnston*, CarrickAbbey & Larne Branch & CEC
 To add in wording after 'all': "...suitably qualified and vetted..."

The amendment was carried with one abstention.

Speaker to amended resolution: *Aaron Davidson*, Orchard County Branch & CEC
 Speaker to amended resolution: *Jacquie White*, General Secretary

The amended resolution was carried unanimously.

11. RESOLUTION 3: MOBILE PHONES - SOUTH-WEST BRANCH

Proposed by *Carol Elliott*, South-West Branch
 Seconded by *Pamela Brown*, South-West Branch

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

With a UNESCO survey saying that there are over 6 billion mobile phone subscriptions worldwide and that they bring both positive and negative effects to today's classrooms.

MINUTES OF THE 105TH CONFERENCE

Conference calls on the Education Authority to urgently give clear and concise guidance that can be implemented by all schools on the use and misuse of mobile phone technology in schools.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

12. RESOLUTION 4: SOCIAL MEDIA - SOUTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Proposed by *Stephen Cumper*, N'ards & North-Down Branch
Seconded by *Aaron Davis*, South-Eastern AA & CEC

Speaker to resolution: *Janice Mullan*, Foyle Branch & CEC
Speaker to resolution: *Jacquie White*, General Secretary

Conference notes that it has now been over 13 years since TNC2011/2 – Policy Statement on Tackling Violence and Abusive Behaviour Against Teachers was introduced. During that time the amount of social media platform communication in society has dramatically increased. Therefore, Conference requests that a clear and enforceable procedure should be provided to all school stakeholders by the Department of Education to address the issue of On Line Bullying of School Staff by both children and adults

The resolution was carried unanimously.

13. RESOLUTION 5: MANAGEMENT OF CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS - FOYLE BRANCH

Proposed by *Lorna Wilson*, Foyle Branch
Seconded by *Alison Steen*, Foyle Branch

Conference deplores the lack of training for teachers and school leaders in the effective deployment of classroom assistants. Conference calls for EA to put in place proper policies and procedures to help support the classroom assistants in their role within an increasingly diverse classroom environment

The resolution was carried. Six abstentions.

14. RESOLUTION 6: LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR DEPENDENTS OF ANY AGE - CAUSEWAY

Proposed by *Mark Creelman*, Causeway Branch & CEC
Seconded by *Jennifer Sturgeon*, Causeway Branch
Speaker to resolution: *Rebekka Gilpin*, Field Officer
Speaker to resolution: *Jacquie White*, General Secretary

In the context of rising pension age, our ageing society and the resultant need for caring, Conference calls on DE to extend leave of absence to cover absence for dependents of any age.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

15. The President declared Session 1 closed at 6:45pm and thanks fraternal delegates for their presence at Session 1.

SESSION 2 – THURSDAY 14TH MARCH, 6.50PM – PRIVATE SESSION

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

16. The President asked to adopt the minutes of Conference 2023.

Proposed by *David Thompson*, CEC
Seconded by *Janice Mullan*, CEC

The minutes of the 104th Annual Conference were carried unanimously.

CEC REPORT

17. The General Secretary, Jacquie White, reflected on the progress made by UTU and NITC in standing up for the rights of their profession, highlighting increased participation, unity, and the strengthening of relationships with sister unions. The report details the actions taken on pay issues, including strike coordination, negotiations, and collaboration with management and external bodies (including 197 meetings, resulting from the Pay and Workload Agreement 2020). The General Secretary praised the efforts of both NITC colleagues and management, acknowledging the challenging circumstances they faced, such as disappearing services and funding.

18. The General Secretary spoke of solidarity from other unions and fostering the important relationships within NITC & ICTU, as well as the strengthening ties with non-teaching staff through ETUG. The General Secretary thanked union members for their dedication and expressed gratitude for the support received from UTU during tough times, including challenges related to ASOS, SEN, and external pressures.

19. The General Secretary outlined progress on previous resolutions and the continuation of work in industrial relations. She commended the efforts of the team

MINUTES OF THE 105TH CONFERENCE

behind the union's work and invited questions and comments, of which none were received.

20. The General Secretary proposed the adoption of the CEC report, which was seconded by Lynelle Fenton, President. The CEC Report was carried unanimously.

21. The President thanked all UTU officials and staff for their work on behalf of the membership.

FINANCIAL REPORT

22. The President invited the Honorary treasurer, David Thompson, to present the Annual Financial report for the year ending December 2023 to Conference.

23. The Honorary Treasurer explained this had been provided to delegates before the meeting. However, he stated additional information would be presented if missed from the report. He spoke to the report, outlining perceived threats and opportunities in depth. He stated the auditors, SLMD Ltd Chartered Accountants, confirmed it as a fair, true & accurate statement. Thanks were given to the auditors, with special mention to Heather Arrell, Financial Executive Officer, for her continued contribution. He also thanked the General Secretary and staff for their efforts to reduce costs.

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

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

26. The financial Report was proposed by the Honorary Treasurer, David Thompson and seconded by Leigh McKay, Vice-President. The Financial Report was carried unanimously

27. The Honorary treasurer proposed that SLMD Ltd Chartered Accountants be retained as auditors for 2024. This was seconded by Heather Milligan, CEC and unanimously agreed.

28. The President, Lynelle Fenton, postponed the decision on dates and venue for the next UTU Conference to an emergency private session, the following day at 1:45pm, due to more offers having to be considered.

ACTION ON PREVIOUS RESOLUTION

29. Jacquie White, gave a short presentation surrounding the resolution from Mid-Antrim Branch in 2022. Branches and Area Associations were encouraged

to discuss the protocols for Area Associations regarding electing members to the CEC and to question how the representation of relevant branches and sectors were ascertained.

30. The General Secretary gave a brief plenary of the session and encouraged discussions to be taken back to branch and area association meetings to continue.

31. The President closed the session at 7:38pm.

SESSION 3 – FRIDAY 15TH MARCH, 9.30AM – PUBLIC SESSION

32. The 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.

33. RESOLUTION 7: SEND TRANSFORMATION AND BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT

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

Conference has grave concerns with regard to the proposed changes to the structure, availability and delivery of the EA support services. In order to meet the needs of all pupils, it is vital that the new system delivers a clear pathway for referral, is sufficiently staffed and that those employed in the services receive adequate training and notice with regard to any changes to their current contractual duties. Conference notes with concern the timeline for implementing those significant changes and urges the employers to shift their focus from budget pressures to the schools, the pupils and the staff involved in the services.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

34. RESOLUTION 8: DISABILITY

Proposed by *Pauline Hurst*, South-West Branch
Seconded by *Lynelle Fenton*, President

Speaker to resolution: *Jacquie White*, General Secretary
Speaker to resolution: *Amy McMullan*, CarrickAbbey & Larne Branch
Speaker to resolution: *Stephen McCord*, Deputy General Secretary

It is the contention of Conference that the legislation in NI around rights of workers with a disability and the responsibilities of employers has been well defined and well established for a considerable number of years.

MINUTES OF THE 105TH CONFERENCE

Conference, therefore, has grave concerns about the marked lack of knowledge, process and procedure in relation to dealing with teachers' disability within both the school context and, indeed, the wider education system.

Conference calls on the employing authorities to ensure that all employers are fully aware of their responsibilities in this area under the legislation and that clear processes and appropriate funding is in place, both at school and system level, to ensure that reasonable adjustments can be provided where needed to allow teachers with a disability to remain in employment with the support and dignity which they deserve – and to which they are entitled.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

35. The President, Lynelle Fenton, introduced the presenters from 'Learning Me' to address Conference.

36. Conference heard a presentation by Nicole O'Connor & Bernard Noble from Learning Me, an educational tech company who specialise in a learning app for schools. The presentation focused on the rise and implementation of AI within a school setting and conference were asked to participate in a wider discussion surrounding their perceptions on the upsurge of AI.

37. The President thanked both Nicole O'Connor & Bernard Noble from Learning Me and introduced the next speaker (Janet Burke (South-West Branch), Principal of Denamona Primary School) to address conference.

38. Tracy is a teacher in foundation stage and P5 who was diagnosed with Leukaemia. The Conference heard about the campaign to raise awareness for a stem cell donor register and blood donation

39. The President, Lynelle Fenton, closed session 3 at 10:31am.

SESSION 4 – FRIDAY 15TH MARCH, 11AM – PUBLIC SESSION

40. The Vice President, Leigh McKay, opened session 4 at 11:10am and welcomed everyone back to the Conference Hall. She introduced the choir of Braidside Integrated PS, who performed musical pieces, with the President, Lynelle Fenton on Piano.

41. Leigh McKay, Vice President, thanked the choir for their fantastic performance and gave the teachers and all children a token of appreciation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

42. Lynelle Fenton, President, announced the re-election of Jacquie White as General Secretary of the UTU and congratulates Jacquie White on her appointment.

43. Jacquie White, General Secretary, reported the obituaries. Conference marked their respect to Annette Morrow, who sadly passed away in July 2023.

44. The General Secretary announced the new Vice-President of the UTU, Janice Mullan.

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

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

Belfast Area Association (3 candidates for 3 seats):

Jaki Gargan
Jon Bleakney
Naomi Bilington

North-Eastern Area Association (7 candidates for 4 seats):

Emma Loughridge
Jill Johnson
David Gault
Jillian Jones

South-Eastern Area Association (3 candidates for 3 seats):

Grace McCullough
Heather Milligan
Aaron Davis

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
Joy Carruthers
Pauline Hurst

MINUTES OF THE 105TH CONFERENCE

47. The General Secretary thanked all outgoing CEC members for their service.

48. Louise Creelman called on Matthew McDermott, Assistant Director of HR Services, EA, to chair the next session.

49. Matthew McDermott addressed Conference. He then introduced the President, Lynelle Fenton, to address Conference.

50. The President, Lynelle Fenton, delivered her Presidential Address to Conference to great acclaim.

51. The Chair, Matthew McDermott, responded to the Presidential Speech and thanked the UTU for the invitation. He focused on the following points: fair pay, the absence of an Executive, the work of the UTU officials and their sister unions, the challenging work ahead, and systematic underinvestment in the EA. He gave his assurance to work with Unions going forward, and to seek their input in ensuring that funding received is spent in the best possible way.

52. Lynelle Fenton, President, thanked the Chair for chairing the session and handed him a token of thanks.

53. The President invited Jacquie White, General Secretary, to give her address to Conference.

54. Jacquie White, General Secretary, delivered her Address to Conference. She reported the significant change in UTU's approach to industrial action and the new reputation the Union has attained. She stated that the UTU has empowered members driven by injustice in education to fight for their entitlements. She thanked colleagues from sister unions and their membership for their support and the joined-up, consistent approach to industrial action.

55. The President thanked the General Secretary for her address and introduced Gerry Murphy, Assistant General Secretary of ICTU, to address Conference.

56. The President thanked Gerry Murphy for his address and handed him a present.

57. The President closed the session for lunch at 12:34pm.

EMERGENCY PRIVATE SESSION – FRIDAY 15TH MARCH, 1:45PM – PRIVATE SESSION

58. Lynelle Fenton, President, recapped the previous discussions and delegates discussed dates and venues for next year's Conference. Lynelle Fenton, President,

closed this discussion at 2:03pm and it was decided to postpone the decision to a further Emergency Private Session at 5:30pm.

PRESENTATION – DISABILITY PANEL – FRIDAY 15TH MARCH, 2:00PM – PUBLIC SESSION

59. Lynelle Fenton, President, welcomed Conference delegates back at 2:05pm. She introduced the members on the Disability Panel, Matthew McDermott; Assistant Director of Human Resources and Corporate Services EANI, Vivienne Murphy; Disability Employment Support Service, EANI and Stephen McCrystal; EANI Equality & Diversity Officer.

60. Pauline Hurst, Foyle Branch, opened the session as Chair. She thanked the UTU Officers and Officials, as well as the CEC, for their guidance and advice to the wider membership.

61. Several questions from the floor were taken and discussions took place.

62. The President thanked the panel and handed over gifts. She then announced two competition winners before closing the session at 3:10pm.

Winner of Eprinting Sign In System: *Aaron Davis*
Winner of Cornmarket Competition: *Stephanie Moore*

SESSION 5 – FRIDAY 15TH MARCH, 3:10PM – PUBLIC SESSION

63. RESOLUTION 9: REVIEWS

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

Conference welcomes the work which was put into the Workload Reviews by representatives of both the employers and the teaching unions over an 18-month period following the Pay and Workload Agreement of 2020.

Conference calls on the Minister to access funding and resources which will now allow the recommendations of these reviews to come to fruition in the interests of the teachers – and the children – in the schools.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

MINUTES OF THE 105TH CONFERENCE

64. **RESOLUTION 10:** INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF EDUCATION

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

Speaker to resolution: Lynelle Fenton, President

Conference recognises the pressures our education system is under and the need for transformation in the interests of a more effective service.

On this basis, Conference welcomed the commissioning of the Independent Review of Education and sees merit in a number of the recommendations – but not all.

Conference calls on the Minister to ensure that the teaching unions are fully involved in consultation regarding the potential impact of the recommendations on the schools and system and to work together with NITC to ascertain the best out-workings of the Report for all.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

65. **RESOLUTION 11:** GOVERNANCE

Proposed by *Jacquie White*, General Secretary
Seconded by *Rebekka Gilpin*, Field Officer

Conference has grave concerns around the lack of accountability which pertains to the governing bodies of schools.

This is particularly pertinent in cases where Governors fail to take appropriate advice from the employing authorities, fail to act on advice from the employing authorities and/or seek to circumvent agreed procedures pertaining to Teachers' Terms and Conditions.

Further, unlike in other areas of work, there is no effective and defined process in place to raise a complaint against an individual school governor as an employer in cases of unacceptable behaviour.

Conference calls on the Department of Education to revisit the links and relationships between the employing authorities and school governors and work with NITC to ensure that accountability lies where it should and that the appropriate procedures are in place should action be required.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

66. **RESOLUTION 12:** BEHAVIOUR AND TEAM TEACH SUPPORT SEN AND MAINSTREAM

Proposed by *Jon Bleakney*, Belfast Branch & CEC
Seconded by *Aaron Davis*, South-Eastern AA & CEC
Speaker to resolution: *David Thompson*, CEC

Conference acknowledges DE's draft guidance on the reduction and management of Restrictive Practices. However, Conference calls upon DE to ensure all schools and education settings are appropriately funded and resourced to prevent, support and manage crisis situations.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

67. **RESOLUTION 13:** INCREASED FUNDING FOR THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF TEACHING STAFF - CARRICKABBEY AND LARNE BRANCH

Proposed by *Ashley Knox*, CarrickAbbey & Larne Branch
Seconded by *Jill Johnson*, CarrickAbbey & Larne Branch & CEC

Conference recognises the pivotal role played by teaching staff in the education system in contributing significantly to the development and health and well-being of pupils.

Conference recognises that the demands on teaching staff have increased over the past number of years, and especially as a result of the aftermath of Covid-19, resulting in heightened stress levels, burnout, and adverse effects on the physical and mental health of our teaching workforce.

Conference highlights and commends those schools who are leading the way in innovative and collaborative staff wellbeing initiatives.

Conference demands that the Education Authority includes and promotes a range of strategies to address health and wellbeing as part of continuing professional development opportunities for teaching staff to be included in Staff Development Days. Conference demands that the Department of Education increases funding to all schools to ensure that these opportunities can be utilised and sustained into the future.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

MINUTES OF THE 105TH CONFERENCE

68. RESOLUTION 14: EA TRAINING FOR STAFF

Proposed by *Grace McCullough*, South-Easter AA & CEC
Seconded by *Joy Carrothers*, South-West Branch & CEC

Conference recognises the importance of Teacher Professional Learning.

Conference calls on EA to ensure that such opportunities are made available at the appropriate times and with the appropriate resources which allow teachers to access them within their contracted time.

68.1. AMENDMENT 14.1: SUPPORT STAFF TEMPORARY AVAILABILITY

Proposed by *Llenore Coles*, CarrickAbbey & Larne Branch
Seconded by *Jill Johnston*, CarrickAbbey & Larne Branch & CEC

To add in wording after 'all':
"...suitably qualified and vetted..."

The amendment was carried unanimously.

Speaker to amended resolution *Heather Milligan*, South-Eastern AA & CEC

The amended resolution was carried unanimously.

69. The President thanked all contributors for the session and reminded delegates that this was their last chance to enter the exhibitor competitions.

She closed the session at 3:55pm.

SESSION 6 – FRIDAY 15TH MARCH, 4:30PM – PUBLIC SESSION

70. RESOLUTION 15: STANDARDISED ASSESSMENTS - SOUTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Proposed by *Hannah English*, Lisburn/Ballynahinch Branch
Seconded by *Colin Irwin*, Lisburn/Ballynahinch Branch

Conference calls on DE/EA to urgently review current provision for standardised testing in the primary (and post-primary) sector of Northern Ireland. Currently schools are forced to use private, English based testing much of which is not in line with the Northern Ireland curriculum. This places undue stress on young people and their teachers. It also places a significant financial burden on school budgets.

GL assessment holds a monopoly on standardised assessment in schools. Conference is concerned that DE is failing in its statutory duties to provide age-appropriate testing based on the Northern Ireland curriculum.

Conference calls on:

- (i) An urgent review of current assessment practices in primary schools
- (ii) A survey to schools on use of testing and data
- (iii) An urgent review on how data is used by ETI as a summative assessment tool to make a judgement on the quality of teaching and learning in our schools

70.1. Amendment to 15: STANDARDISED ASSESSMENTS - SOUTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Amendment to the resolution: Proposed by Stephen McCord, DGS
Seconded by Aaron Davidson, CEC,
Orchard County Branch

Conference calls on DE/EA to partake the review of Statutory Assessment at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 as set out in TNC2020/1 urgently review current provision for standardised testing in the primary (and post-primary) sector of Northern Ireland.

Currently schools are forced to use private, English based testing much of which is not in line with the Northern Ireland curriculum. This places undue stress on young people and their teachers. It also places a significant financial burden on school budgets.

GL assessment holds a monopoly on standardised assessment in schools. Conference is concerned that DE is failing in its statutory duties to provide age-appropriate testing based on the Northern Ireland curriculum.

Conference calls on:

- (i) DE to carry out an urgent review of current assessment practices in primary schools
- (ii) And UTU to survey to schools on use of testing and data
- (iii) An urgent review on how data is used by ETI as a summative assessment tool to make a judgement on the quality of teaching and learning in our schools

The amendment was carried unanimously.

The amended resolution was carried unanimously.

MINUTES OF THE 105TH CONFERENCE

71. **RESOLUTION 16:** EARLY CAREER TEACHERS - SOUTH-WEST BRANCH

Proposed by *Audrey Dempsey*, South-West Branch & CEC
Seconded by *David Kearney*, South-West Branch

Speaker to resolution: *Matthew Robinson*, FIT

Conference calls on the employers to look at ways to improve the support, funding and training available to help provide the professional foundations for Early Career Teachers.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

72. **RESOLUTION 17:** CAUSEWAY – EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS

Proposed by Louise Creelman, Ex-President
Seconded by Caroline Phelan, CarrickAbbey & Larne Branch

Conference despairs at the lack of hours allocated to schools for educational psychologists, and the fact that teachers themselves are required to prioritise their children in order of need.

Conference is further concerned that EA is prepared to accept private assessments in some areas as a basis for school support.

Conference calls on EA to revisit this decision and determine which professional voices will be taken into account to ensure the appropriate placement and support for individual children.

Conference further calls on the Minister for Education to access funding for the support of children with SEN as a matter of priority.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

73. **RESOLUTION 18:** INCREASED INVESTMENT IN PUPIL SUPPORT SERVICES - CARRICKABBEY AND LARNE BRANCH

Proposed by *Ashley Knox*, CarrickAbbey & Larne Branch
Seconded by *Leigh McKay*, Vice-President & CarrickAbbey & Larne Branch

The current state of investment in pupil support services for pupils with a range of special needs, medical needs, trauma, or for those requiring counselling falls short of adequately addressing the unique challenges faced by these pupils.

Conference demands that the Department of Education substantially increases the funding for Pupil Support Services.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

74. **RESOLUTION 19:** EA TRANSPORT

Proposed by *Pauline Hurst*, South-West Branch
Seconded by *Jill Johnson*, CarrickAbbey & Larne Branch & CEC

Every child has the right to access a full balanced educational experience and the lack of transport should never impact on the child arriving late or having to leave school early.

Conference demands that the needs of the child are put first and adequate resources are available to ensure that their education is not impacted.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

75. **RESOLUTION 20:** TRAINED FULLY QUALIFIED SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

Proposed by *Jill Johnson*, CarrickAbbey & Larne Branch & CEC
Seconded by *Janice Mullan*, Western AA & CEC

Conference deplores the lack of specialist subject teachers available for either short term or long-term teaching. DE needs to undertake an effective audit of teaching vacancies in subjects and key stages and inform and support teacher training colleges and other appropriate institutions to address the shortfall in these areas.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

76. **RESOLUTION 21:** ATTENDANCE / EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE

Proposed by *Janice Mullan*, Western AA & CEC
Seconded by *Leigh McKay*, Vice-President & CarrickAbbey & Larne Branch

Conference deplores the abysmal lack of funding made available to tackle the significant fall in pupil attendance. Attendance is linked directly to attainment.

The Educational Welfare Service is seriously under staffed. Conference calls on DE to invest in this vital service.

MINUTES OF THE 105TH CONFERENCE

The resolution was carried unanimously.

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

78. **RESOLUTION 22:** ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Technological advancements in education continue to shape the learning environment for our pupils and educational staff. The explosion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the past 18 months will bring both challenges and benefits to the classroom. Teachers must prepare for the impact as educators as AI will challenge their professional role, teaching methodology and pupil / class interactions.

Conference calls on the Employing Authorities to establish a forum to engage with all stakeholders to inform them about the latest developments in AI but also to debate, discuss and address concerns for the implications that may have potential negative consequences to the teaching workforce.

79. **RESOLUTION 23:** EDUCATION INFORMATION SOLUTIONS (EDIS) PROGRAMME

Conference remains concerned regarding the delivery of a single School Management System that have been outlined by the Education Authority. Conference demands that the Education Authority continue to update and engage with school leaders and teachers around the timescales and the critical planning and support that will be offered to schools to ensure an effective and smooth transition can be delivered.

80. **RESOLUTION 24:** LEADERSHIP WORKLOAD REVIEW - CAUSEWAY

Conference calls on DE to put in place the means to implement the recommendations from the Leadership Workload Review.

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

Membership Plus: Audrey McKee & Karen Atkinson

Cornmarket: Stephanie Moore

Steve Sinnot Foundation: Caoimhín Mac Colaim

Email Me: Lynn Robinson

Platinum Financial: Karen Atkinson, Carole Elliot, Pamela Brown, Caoimhín Mac Colaim, Philomena Donaldson, Stephanie Moore

Collins: Amy McMullan

E Printing: Aaron Davis

Signature Works: Aaron Davis

UTU: Leigh McKay, Louise Creelman, Lara Connor

82. The President thanked everyone for their attendance and declared 105th Conference closed at 5.30pm.

EMERGENCY PRIVATE SESSION – FRIDAY 15TH MARCH, 5:30PM – PRIVATE SESSION

83. In deciding the conference venue, Conference called upon the Union to move around the province in the future and that the UTU should prioritise themselves over other conferences in setting conference dates.

84. After much discussion two proposals were received from the floor:

The 10th and 11th April 2025 at Roe Park Resort (within a three-year deal).

Proposed by *Steven Cumper*
Seconded by *David Thompson*

The 3rd & 4th of April at La Mon
Proposed by *Stephanie Moore*
Seconded by *Colin Irwin*

85. A vote was taken by a show-of-hands – no card vote was required as there was a clear majority. The UTU Conference voted to hold their 106th Annual Conference on 10th and 11th April 2025 at the Roe Park Resort.

SPONSORS & EXHIBITORS

- Integrated Education Fund
- Children's Books Ireland
- Platinum Financial Planning
- Cornmarket Insurance Services
- Membership Plus
- Creative Activity
- Steve Sinnott Foundation
- Learning SPACE
- Inspire
- Poetry Book (*on behalf of Air Ambulance*)
- ePrintingUK.com
- HSCNI Adoption and Foster Care
- The Signature Works
- Paul Smyth Photography
- Kingsbridge Health Care Group
- Lafayette Photography
- Nexa Pro Ltd

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 Friday 4th April 2025.

COMPLAINTS

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



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