

# SHOUT UNION

YOUR VOICE, YOUR UNION, YOUR **FUTURE**

SEPTEMBER 2025

**TOGETHER, WE MAKE  
OUR VOICES HEARD**

**A MESSAGE FROM THE  
UTU PRESIDENT**

**SEN LEADERS TAKE ACTION**

**THE FUTURE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

**STRANMILLIS  
STUDENTS  
GO 'STRANDED'**

Racing Across the  
World for Charity

**AND MUCH MORE!**



# TOGETHER WE MAKE OUR VOICES HEARD - A MESSAGE FROM THE UTU PRESIDENT

**Dear Colleagues,**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the first edition of our newly branded magazine, **Shout Union!** This name reflects our growing confidence as teachers—we must stand up and make our voices heard. We are delighted to feature articles celebrating our members and their talented pupils, along with useful resources and teaching tips. Thank you for your contributions.

In my role as your President, I have had the privilege of witnessing our union officials expertly navigate negotiations on our behalf while maintaining respect among stakeholders and teaching unions. This has been one of the most challenging times for our profession. I commend our headquarters staff for their professionalism in handling the many media storms. Our General Secretary, Jacquie, continues to advocate fearlessly for fair pay and reduced workload. Her calmness and composure, combined with her pride in our profession, keeps the media focus on teachers, advocating for respect, resources and recognition that our professionalism deserves.

As we step into the autumn term, I believe our show of collective strength has led to a renewed sense of hope for our profession. September brings fresh faces to our classrooms, new challenges and new opportunities to inspire. I am proud to be part of a union that listens. Together, we are making our voices heard.

Visiting schools has been a privilege. I've seen firsthand how you are a port in the storm for your pupils—even when Storm Eowyn left holes in your school roof! The dazzling artwork and creative displays in classrooms and corridors are a testament to your dedication. Thank you for your warm hospitality; I look forward to meeting more members in their schools.

I encourage you to take advantage of the support and training UTU offers.

It's never too early to speak with Platinum about financial planning, and our webinars provide valuable practical advice. School Rep training has empowered attendees with knowledge and the chance to network with other reps.

This year's UTU Annual Conference theme, **Caring for Children, Caring for Teachers**, represented the heart of our union. The **Roe Valley Resort** proved to be an excellent venue, witnessing some vibrant and spirited debate—a reflection of the challenging times we face.

Thank you for placing your confidence in me as your President for 2025/26. I appreciate your commitment and passion.

*Janice Mullan*

**Janice Mullan**  
President



Credit: Paul Smyth Photography

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# GENERAL SECRETARY FOREWORD

## Colleagues,

Welcome back to the new academic year which I'm sure you feel is now well underway. I trust you all got some rest and recuperation over the summer and are ready to once again face the challenges of school life. It promises to be a year of change, but change that we hope can be managed in a way which will benefit both you and the children in your care. Work has continued in some key areas over the summer months and you will see the progress beginning to feed through as the weeks unfold. One of these areas – and the one you are probably most interested in – is in relation to the workload commitments made through the last pay deal. There are 26 areas which have been set as priorities with timeframes and some of these will be coming to fruition in the coming weeks. Meetings of key personnel from both trade union and management side have already taken place to continue the work which commenced prior to the end of last term with a view to delivery in schools as soon as possible, as agreed.

Fundamental change to working practice and culture is not an easy thing to achieve at either individual or school level and it will be imperative that we work together, both within UTU, and in conjunction with our colleagues in other unions, to ensure that real change is delivered. Therefore, whilst there will be formal notifications of change and progress coming from the system, it is our intention in UTU to consolidate each step with updates, online engagement sessions, school meetings and any other means necessary to provide the clarification and confidence members may require. I would encourage you to engage fully with the process moving forward so that together we may feel the benefits in our day-to-day working lives.

As part of this engagement, I would draw your attention to the survey which has been issued to teachers from the Independent Panel looking at teacher workload. We have had very valuable and positive engagement with the Panel, both as UTU and through NITC, and you can be assured that they are keen to receive and consider your views. This is a chance within the system to have your voice heard. I would encourage you to take the time and let them know what life is really like in schools currently. We have already met with the Panel again regarding progress with further engagement scheduled.

Of course, there are many other areas coming to the fore this year which will impact on workload; some of them are doing that already. The difficulties with accommodating and supporting the growing numbers of children with SEN in our education system is a very topical and relevant one and we will be expecting much engagement with employers and decision makers from early in the new term in relation to the issues here. This will be an area of focus for UTU this year and we will be coming back to you to draw on your experience and expertise as a basis for providing support and moving key concerns forward.

The Minister's plans regarding the Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, Statutory Assessment and changes to school age, amongst other things, are also on our radar and we will keep you fully informed of developments.



There has already been engagement with employers and politicians around other issues such as the proposed legislation regarding ETI and the legal basis for the sudden changes to the transgender policies and we continue to reflect your views in these areas.

On a positive note, we, in UTU, have been making good progress regarding support for those with disability in the workforce and our programme of work, led by the UTU Disability Champion, Pauline Hurst, has drawn the attention of the employers and already reaped some benefits for teachers and school leaders. I would encourage you to visit the UTU website where you will find a raft of helpful information to support those of you, and your colleagues. The UTU Central Executive Committee are now seeking to extend this work into the area of Special Education Needs and you will hear much more about that in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, I would seek to remind you that our Officials in UTU are always available to respond to any queries and concerns you may have as the year unfolds. We are here to assist you in navigating through what is a challenging system currently, as always in the interests of the children in your care.

We at UTU wish you well for the new school year and can assure you that we will be making this journey together.

Warm regards

*J. E. White*

**JACQUIE WHITE**  
**GENERAL SECRETARY**



We have had another successful year here at the Steve Sinnott Foundation supporting Education for All globally. We are very grateful for the support we receive from the Ulster Teachers' Union, as without your support some of our work could not happen.

Last year we celebrated 15 years of the Foundation and we were delighted that Stephen McCord attended the event at the House of Commons.

You can read more about our work here:

**CLICK HERE** 

Looking back on 2024 and the data is still coming in but some of the achievements are:

- The Prevention of **Gender Based Violence Programme and Positive Periods** has impacted 139,250 students and educators in Cuba, Ghana, Haiti, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone and South Africa.

- **The Learning Resource Centres and Digital Classrooms** are delivering excellent learning and development for educators, students and their wider communities in Haiti, The Gambia, Nepal and Sierra Leone. Each of the LRC's supported learning for over 865 + educators and students.
- **SEN Awareness workshops** for 250 educators in Sierra Leone.
- **Climate Change programme** in Sierra Leone has supported 5143 learners.
- **Kreyol Literacy Programme** supporting 180 adult learners in Haiti.

We also provide **FREE** resources for educators, you can download them here:

**CLICK HERE** 



Looking to 2025, in collaboration with our partners we have put together an essential programme of learning for educators, students and their communities and you can keep abreast of the projects as they happen by visiting our blog:

<https://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/blog>

There are several ways that you as educators and your students can support the Foundation's work.

If you would like to find out more about our work or support with raising awareness and fundraising, please email

[ann.beatty@stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk](mailto:ann.beatty@stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk)



Education For All



The  
STEVE  
SINNOTT  
FOUNDATION

# Positive Periods

[www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/gifts](http://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/gifts)





# GIRLS ARE MISSING OUT ON A QUARTER OF THEIR SCHOOL TIME, WHY?

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Because period products are not affordable every month and girls do not have the facilities to manage their periods.

The Positive Periods programme teaches students about menstrual health and how to make their own reusable period pads.

This enables girls to stay in school.

The period pads are made using locally sourced materials, affordable, sustainable, washable and reusable, long-lasting, comfortable and very importantly eco-friendly.

This is a sustainable approach to the challenge faced by women and girls worldwide. So far we have run this programme in Cuba, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Malawi, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Uganda, impacting over 160,000 girls in 2024.

Educators in each country take ownership of the programme and run it in their unique way, that will have maximum impact in that culture.



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[www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/gifts](http://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/gifts)



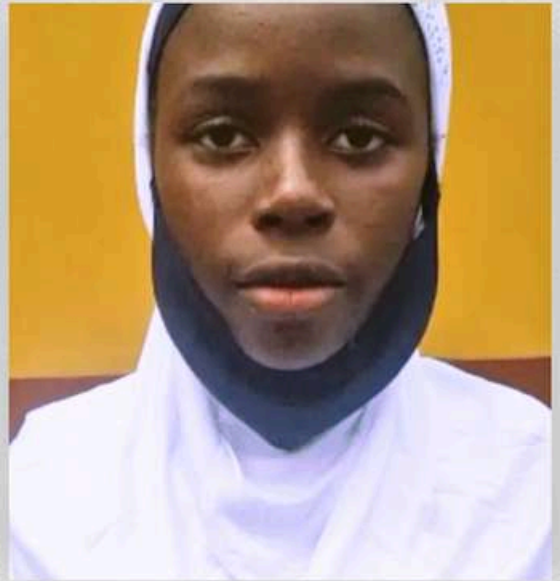
# Positive Periods

A Story by Arana

"One day, when I experienced my period, I decided to use various pieces to stop the blood. Then my mother decided to send me to the market. When I arrived at the market the piece fell down with blood all over it, and many people saw it and told me to take back what I have done. So, I took it and ran back home in shame. When my mother saw me, she asked why are you coming home without the things I sent you for. Then I explained to her what happened in the market.

Since this program has taught me how to take care of myself it has changed my life in so many ways. I am very comfortable knowing how to make my own sanitary pads without the help of anybody, and without having to feel ashamed among my friends when going to school or doing any important thing in my life. So now I collect material to make sanitary pads for myself."

**Arana**



**#PositivePeriods**



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[www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/gifts](http://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/gifts)





The Gift of  
Positive Periods



SCAN ME





# ANNUAL CONFERENCE:

## *CARING FOR TEACHERS, CARING FOR CHILDREN*

The Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU) Annual Conference returned to the Roe Valley Resort in Limavady on 10th and 11th April, gathering over 150 delegates from branches across Northern Ireland. Against a backdrop of mounting pressures on teachers and schools, this year's theme – **"Caring for Teachers, Caring for Children"** – resonated powerfully as delegates debated 32 motions calling for urgent reform across all areas of education. Among the most pressing concerns raised were the chronic underfunding of Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision, teacher recruitment and retention, violence in schools, and an overloaded curriculum. Resolutions called on the Education Authority (EA) and Department of Education (DE) to provide timely SEN interventions, proper staffing in special schools, and protection for teachers from physical harm and verbal abuse. The call for reform was echoed in a wide-ranging and impassioned presidential address by incoming UTU President Janice Mullan. In a speech that blended humour with hard truths, she tackled everything from broken school taps to broken promises, taking aim at Education Minister Paul Givan for his continued absence from the union's conference – a no-show she wittily dubbed "Givanism."

"Perhaps Minister Givan is out there single-handedly implementing his strategy, TransformedED NI," she remarked, "but remember, change must be collaborative and proportional."

Janice highlighted the burdens placed on teachers, from excessive planning and assessment tasks to acting as de facto social workers and medical carers. She reminded attendees that teachers are "nation builders" who deserve professional respect, emotional support, and fair pay. "Workload has turned goodwill into ill will," she declared.

"Teachers' trust in management has become mistrust." Several resolutions focused specifically on the impact of overwork and under-resourcing. Delegates called for better training for Boards of Governors, clarity around time budgets, and urgent reform of the initial teacher education system to prepare new entrants for the realities of the modern classroom.

Workplace safety also featured prominently. Resolutions demanded action on knife crime, improved accountability for violent incidents, and support systems for teachers facing abuse from parents or online. Another major concern was the administration of medication in schools – a duty increasingly falling to untrained teachers – with UTU urging the EA to provide medical personnel instead.

The union also underscored the need to address inequalities in education access and facilities. Delegates decried the crumbling state of school infrastructure and repeated calls for fair investment and support for the arts, which Mullan passionately defended in her speech.

"Tests must not be more important than a child," she said. "We must not be reduced to data collectors. The arts change lives."

Throughout the two-day event, emotional testimony and passionate debate painted a picture of a profession stretched to the limit, yet unwavering in its commitment to pupils and education. From calls for safeguarding legislation to demands for professional autonomy, each motion reflected the lived experience of teachers facing immense pressure.

Former UTU Presidents Audrey Stewart and Lewis Love were installed as Honorary Vice-Presidents, and delegates received fraternal greetings from John MacGabhann, President of the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE).

In closing her presidential address, Janice issued a rallying cry: "We can make a difference. We can change policies. We can change lives. Be bold. Contact your union."

The message from Limavady was loud and clear: teachers are tired of being ignored. They are calling not only for reforms, but for respect – and they're not waiting quietly.





Jon Bleakney speaks at the UTU Annual Conference



Acting UTU President Lynelle Fenton addresses delegates



Mervyn Storey, DUP representative and Causeway Coast and Glens Councillor engaging with the event's agenda and policy discussions.



Bringing music and smiles to the UTU Conference 2025, Alison Steen—Principal of Drumrane Primary and past UTU President—leads the school choir in a joyful performance.



Hitting all the right notes! The Drumrane Primary School choir charms the crowd with a spirited performance at the UTU Conference 2025.



UTU General Secretary Jacquie White addresses delegates at the Ulster Teachers' Union Annual Conference 2025.



UTU Conference 2025 delegates raise their hands—and their voices—as key motions are debated and decided on the conference floor.



Nick Mathison MLA engaging with educators on key issues in Northern Ireland's schools



ETUCE President John MacGabhann offers warm fraternal greetings to delegates at the UTU Annual Conference 2025, reaffirming international solidarity in education.



Pauline Hurst, UTU Central Executive Committee member and Disability Champion, addresses delegates at the 2025 Conference, advocating for inclusion and equality in education.



Grace McCullough, member of UTU's Central Executive Committee, speaks passionately at the 2025 Annual Conference, contributing to key union discussions.



Jennifer Sturgeon, member of UTU's Causeway Branch, addresses the 2025 Conference, adding her voice to key debates shaping the future of education.





Rebekka Gilpin, UTU Field Officer, puts pressing questions to the panel during a lively discussion at the 2025 Annual Conference.



Jill Johnston, member of UTU's Central Executive Committee, speaks in support of a key resolution during the 2025 Annual Conference.



Jill Ravey, member of UTU's Central Executive Committee, asking important questions to the panel during a key session at the 2025 Annual Conference.



Pauline Hurst, UTU Disability Champion, shares insight and experience during a panel discussion at the 2025 Annual Conference.



Panel members Elaine Clarke (Labour Relations Agency), Jacquie White (UTU General Secretary), Pauline Hurst (UTU Disability Champion), and Alden Henderson (Equality Commission) lead a thought-provoking discussion at the UTU Annual Conference 2025.



Gillian Dunlop, UTU Past President, lends her voice to a key resolution during a passionate address at the 2025 Annual Conference.



Stephen McCord, UTU Deputy General Secretary, proposes a key resolution during the 2025 Annual Conference, highlighting the union's commitment to member advocacy.



Joseph Wyglendacz, UTU Organising Officer, seconds a resolution about communicating with the Chair of Board of Governors.



Jillian Jones, CEC member and Chair of FIT Group, proposes a resolution.



June Murphy, member of UTU's Causeway Branch, addresses Conference, contributing her voice to the collective vision for education.



David Thompson MBE takes to the mic to share his thoughts on a resolution.



Heather Wilson, Southern Area representative on UTU's Central Executive Committee, speaks in support of a resolution during the 2025 Annual Conference.





Janice Mullan presents Jon Bleakney with the Vice-President's chain at the UTU Annual Conference 2025, marking the official start of his new role.



David Thompson MBE, UTU Honorary Treasurer, delivers the financial report to delegates, ensuring transparency and accountability in union affairs.



Acting President Lynelle Fenton congratulates Janice Mullan on her appointment as incoming UTU President.



Lindsay Osbourne, UTU Operational Officer, congratulates Jan Snoddy from Orchard County on winning the eprinting.co.uk raffle prize at the 2025 Annual Conference.



Smiles and good conversation—delegates take a break and catch up during the UTU Annual Conference 2025.



A proud moment as UTU General Secretary Jacquie White congratulates past president and long-serving Field Officer Audrey Stewart on her appointment as Honorary Vice-President—celebrating a legacy of dedication and decades of service to the teaching profession.



Cheers all around! Prize winners Jaki Gargan, Aaron Davis, Jennifer Sturgeon, Beverley Esler, and June Murphy celebrate with UTU Operational Officer Lindsay Osbourne



ETUCE President, John MacGabhann shares a few words with delegates ahead of the conference dinner.



Lindsay Osbourne presents a prize to lucky winner Jill Johnston —books, bubbles, and sweet treats included!



Jacquie White congratulates past president and retired Field Officer, Lewis Love on becoming an Honorary Vice-President—honouring a lifetime of dedication and service to education and the union.



Audrey Stewart proudly displays her Honorary Vice-President medal—a tribute to her enduring service and leadership within the UTU.



A proud milestone for Lewis Love as he receives his Honorary Vice-President medal—recognising years of steadfast leadership and his lasting legacy within UTU.





Delegates explore the Learning SPACE exhibition stand at the UTU Conference 2025, showcasing a wide range of educational and sensory resources designed to support inclusive learning.



Delegates enjoy conversation and explore healthcare services on offer at the Kingsbridge Private Hospital exhibition stand.



Delegates chat with representatives at the Lafayette Photography stand, exploring creative school photography and yearbook solutions.



Aaron and Ryan from ePrintingUK.com—thanks to the guys for keeping us all bagged-up and conference-ready!



Honorary Treasurer David Thompson chats with the Signature Leavers team—schoolwear made personal!



Membership Plus showcasing exclusive discounts and offers for UTU members at the exhibition stand.



Jayne and Johnny from Platinum Financial—longstanding supporters of UTU—chat with delegates about the financial advice they offer members, including pension support.



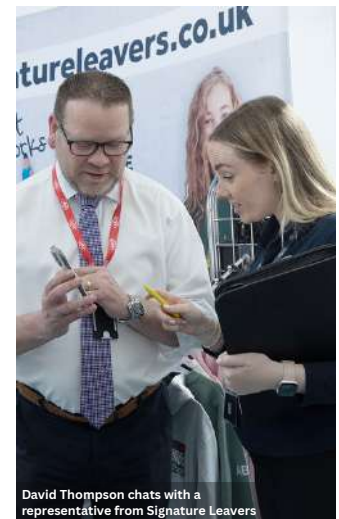
The HSCNI Adoption and Foster Care stand offered delegates the chance to learn more about giving children a brighter future through fostering and adoption.



Delegates stopped by the NexaPro stand to explore custom apps, teamwear, and exclusive discounts for schools, clubs, and businesses.



The Steve Sinnott Foundation stand highlighted their mission of changing lives through education, with resources, fundraising opportunities, and global learning projects on display.



David Thompson chats with a representative from Signature Leavers





# ‘THE HOLIDAY’ SOARS HIGH

AT LIMAVADY HIGH SCHOOL

A homegrown production ‘**The Holiday**’ soared high for all its performances with standing ovations each night. Featuring hit songs from the 70s and 80s and set against the backdrop of a Greek summer holiday where Emily and her friends were letting their hair down after months of revising for exams. Reluctant to let her daughter leave, Mags, still reeling from a family tragedy, found herself dragged into her own summer adventure.

This heartfelt musical explored the complexities of the relationships between parents and their children, delving into themes of love, misunderstanding, and reconciliation. The success of the show was a testament to the skilful direction of Mrs. Hylands, who also wrote it, and Miss Kerr, the musical director, who handled the pupils with aplomb, gaining the best out of every child no matter what role they played.

They were also ably assisted by Miss Kyte with choreography, ensuring that every movement added to the emotional depth of the production. Laughter and tears accompanied each performance, drawing the audience into the heartfelt story, and filled everyone with a warmth that lit up the cold, dark days of winter in the run-up to Christmas. The cast’s dedication and enthusiasm shone through, making the show a truly unforgettable experience.





## TRADE UNIONS JOIN MINISTER FOR THE ECONOMY TO HONOUR WORKERS ON MEMORIAL DAY



On Tuesday 29 April 2025, the Chair of the Northern Ireland Committee ICTU and UTU General Secretary, Jacquie White, was joined by Minister for the Economy, Dr Caoimhe Archibald MLA, at a wreath laying ceremony in the Stormont estate to mark Workers' Memorial Day. The ceremony honoured all those who have lost their lives, been injured or made ill due to work.

Gathering at the tree planted in 2011 in memory of David Leyland—a young GMB member tragically killed at work in a BIFFA landfill site—the attendees reflected on the importance of workplace safety and the human cost of its absence. The tree continues to serve as a poignant symbol, reminding all of the personal stories behind workplace health and safety statistics.

Speaking at the ceremony, Jacquie highlighted the enduring significance of Workers' Memorial Day, observed globally around 28 April, as a solemn day of remembrance and a call to action.

*"Sadly, we continue to see workers die in tragic and preventable circumstances. It is deeply concerning that fatalities under HSENI's remit rose from eight in 2022–23 to 17 in 2023–24," she said. "There were also increases in major workplace accidents and serious incidents. These figures underscore the urgent need for stronger enforcement and a renewed focus on safety."*

The ceremony was attended by trade union officials, MLAs, representatives from HSENI, and trade union safety representatives, all of whom paid tribute not only to those who have died but also to the ongoing work of safety reps in preventing further tragedies.

Dr Caoimhe Archibald, addressing the gathering, reaffirmed her department's commitment to improving worker safety.

*"The safety of workers is a fundamental part of any good job. My Department, in partnership with the Health and Safety Executive, will continue working with trade unions, employers and workers to provide support, enhance enforcement and raise awareness to ensure safer workplaces," she said.*

Jacquie also acknowledged recent debates in the Northern Ireland Assembly on employment rights as a positive signal of political will.

*"A good job is a safe job. By strengthening trade union representation and encouraging constructive dialogue between employers and workers, we can create safer working environments and drive change that saves lives," she added.*

Concluding the ceremony, Jacquie called for a united effort to eliminate workplace deaths.

*"We must work together—government, employers, unions and safety bodies—to make deaths at work a thing of the past. Zero deaths is the only acceptable goal. Today, we honour the memory of those we've lost and recommit ourselves to a safer future for all workers."*



# Dedication to Education: David Thompson Honoured with MBE for Service to Schools and Community

*I am blessed to work in a school where staff work tirelessly to effectively meet the individual needs of the children within their classes. The school continues to flourish, and the diversity that exists within the school is celebrated and highly valued.*



Mr David Thompson has been awarded the prestigious Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in recognition of his exceptional services to education and the wider community in County Tyrone.

A graduate of Stranmillis University College in 1998, Mr Thompson began his teaching career at Londonderry Primary School in Newtownards. He later returned to his hometown of Dungannon to take up a teaching post at Howard Primary School. His career continued at Riverdale Primary School in Lisburn before he was appointed Vice-Principal at Fivemiletown Primary School. In September 2013, he assumed the role of Principal at Dungannon Primary School, where he continues to lead today. Mr Thompson is widely respected for his passion, dedication, and strong leadership.

His commitment to providing a holistic education is reflected in the achievements and progress of his pupils. Under his guidance, Dungannon Primary School has seen substantial growth in enrolment, prompting a £700,000 redevelopment of the school's external grounds and parking area—Phase 1 of a larger, multi-million-pound refurbishment project. The school is among 16 in Northern Ireland to receive part of a £40 million funding package for educational development.

A tireless advocate for education, Mr Thompson actively supports school leaders both locally and across Northern Ireland. He contributes meaningfully to discussions on the pressing challenges faced by teachers and pupils, ensuring that the voices of educators are heard, valued, and supported.

Beyond his educational work, Mr Thompson plays an integral role in his local community. Since 2000, he has served as Organist and Choir Master at St. Anne's Church, Dungannon, having previously held organist roles in Termonmaguirke and Newmills Parish Churches—his first appointment beginning at just 14 years old. He remains deeply involved in Drumglass Parish as a Select Vestry member and Treasurer, and sits on the Diocese of Armagh Board of Religious Education, attending quarterly meetings with the Archbishop of Armagh.

Mr Thompson also founded the youth choir Bella Voce, which thrived for over a decade, performing for diverse audiences and growing to more than 50 members. He is a prominent member of the Dungannon Music and Drama Festival Association and currently serves on its Executive Committee.

In 2024, he helped organise a successful Gala Evening that celebrated young talent in music, song, and drama. Reflecting on the honour of receiving the MBE, Mr Thompson said:

"I was totally shocked and surprised when I was first notified of the recommendation for the MBE. I am blessed to work in a school where staff go above and beyond to meet the needs of every child. Our school continues to flourish, and the diversity within our community is both celebrated and deeply valued. We are all excited about the next phase of our School Development Project and the opportunities it will bring to enhance learning."

He continued with a heartfelt tribute:

"On a personal note, I dedicate this award to my foster parents, Robert-Henry and Betty Sinnamon, who welcomed me into their home at the age of three. They instilled in me the importance of hard work and always giving 100%. They supported me and my twin sister as we travelled across the country singing at various events and participating in music and drama festivals. Their perseverance and dedication helped me reach my goals."

"I also want to thank my wife, Andrea, for her unwavering support and for allowing me the time to do what I love."

Mr Thompson is a devoted husband and father to three children—Nicole, Charlotte, and Alfie.





# VALUING TEACHERS' VOICES: A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR EDUCATION

The Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU) stood in solidarity with anti-poverty campaigners outside the Royal Courts of Justice in Belfast on Friday, 31st January 2025, as a crucial High Court challenge unfolded.

The case, brought through a Judicial Review, challenges the Northern Ireland Executive and the Department of Communities for their legal failure to implement an Anti-Poverty Strategy. The absence of such a strategy has drawn criticism from advocacy groups, highlighting the urgent need for government action to tackle poverty and social inequality in Northern Ireland.

Representatives from the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ), the Public Interest Litigation Support (PILS) Project, Barnardo's NI, UNISON NI, and the UTU gathered to show their support for this legal challenge.

The UTU, committed to advocating for social justice and the well-being of educators and students, recognises the deep impact of poverty on children's education and future opportunities.

In attendance, representing UTU, were Joseph Wyglendacz, Rebekka Gilpin and Stephen McCord. Their presence underscored the Union's dedication to ensuring a fairer, more just society where every child has the opportunity to thrive, free from the constraints of poverty.

This landmark case is a pivotal moment in the fight for systemic change, urging policymakers to fulfill their legal obligations and deliver a comprehensive strategy to combat poverty across Northern Ireland.



## TRAINING COURSES 2025-26

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[www.utu.edu](http://www.utu.edu)



# SHAPING THE FUTURE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: SEN REPRESENTATIVES LEAD THE WAY



A huge thank you to the INTO, NEU and UTU Principals and SENCOs who joined us for our Joint Leadership Seminar focusing on Special Educational Needs at the Tullyglass House Hotel, Ballymena!

We were privileged to hear from Gillian Cuthbert (Interim Assistant Director for SEND Support Services, EANI).

Nicola Byrne, (Assistant Chief Inspector), who presented the ETI evaluations on The Statementing Process & SPIMs (Part 1).

Jill McCanney, Head of Learning Support and Assessment (Middletown Centre for Autism), delivered an insightful presentation on the services available for schools.

Chris Quinn, NI Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY), and Rachel Hogan,

Special Educational Needs Representative (The Children's Law Centre), inspired us with discussions about the rights of the child. The seminar concluded with a thought-provoking session on "What Next?" led by our elected Special Needs Representatives.

The insights, expertise, and collaboration shared throughout the day were invaluable as we continue to work together to create inclusive and supportive learning environments for all children.

It's through gatherings like these that we build stronger schools, deepen understanding, and shape brighter futures. Thank you to all the school leaders and SENCOs who attended! Look out for our next Joint Leadership event.



# A CELEBRATION OF CREATIVITY AND CHRISTMAS SPIRIT



This festive season, the Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU) hosted a delightful Christmas competition to engage students across all educational levels, from Foundation and Special Schools to Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2 and Post-Primary levels. The competition provided an opportunity for students to showcase their creativity and express the joy of Christmas in their own unique ways.

The competition featured different categories based on school stage:

- **Foundation & Special Schools:** Students drew the gifts they wished to receive from Santa.
- **Key Stage 1:** Young learners wrote letters to Santa, sharing their holiday wishes.
- **Key Stage 2:** Students crafted poems or tales beginning with, "When I get up on Christmas Day..."
- **Post-Primary:** Older students created projects on "Why Christmas is so special to me."

## THE WINNERS

We are delighted to announce the winners, chosen for their creativity and festive spirit. Prizes ranged from £20 for first place to £5 for fourth.

Winners:

- **Noah Murphy** – Foundation & Special Schools
- **Jalena** – Key Stage 1
- **Grace Mitchell** – Key Stage 2
- **Evie Martin** – Post-Primary
- **Ethan Allen** – 4th place

## PRIZE PRESENTATIONS

UTU Vice President, Janice Mullan, had the honour of visiting the winning students to present their prizes and celebrate their achievements. It was a heartwarming moment, as each student proudly accepted their reward for their fantastic efforts.

The UTU extends its heartfelt congratulations to all the students who participated in this competition. We were inspired by the creativity, imagination, and joy that each entry showcased. It's clear that the holiday spirit is alive and well in our schools!

## LOOKING AHEAD

As we reflect on this year's competition, the UTU is excited to continue supporting students and fostering creativity in our schools. We look forward to future events that will inspire even more young minds to explore their talents and share their festive cheer.

**WINNERS AND HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS YEARS COMPETITION**



**[CLICK HERE](#)**







# FUTURE IN TEACHING CONFERENCE: A WEEKEND OF GROWTH AND CONNECTION

What an incredible two days at the Future in Teaching (FIT) Conference with our amazing delegates at the Rosspark Hotel! The FIT Conference brought together passionate educators for an inspiring weekend of learning, networking, and professional development. Our delegates actively participated in workshops designed to support their careers and enhance their teaching practices. The sessions covered:

**Application Forms & Interview Skills** – Practical guidance to help teachers present themselves effectively in job applications and interviews. **Classroom Management & Effective Communication** – Strategies for maintaining a positive and productive classroom environment. **Professional Development & Effective Communication** – Insights into continuous growth in the teaching profession and fostering strong communication skills.

One of the key highlights of the event was an important update on our ballot for industrial action, ensuring our members remain informed and engaged in union activities. Additionally, attendees had the privilege of hearing a powerful presentation on Preventing Burnout by John Foster from Inspire Wellbeing. His talk provided invaluable strategies for maintaining mental health and resilience in the teaching profession.

Beyond the workshops and discussions, the event offered fantastic networking opportunities, allowing educators to connect, share ideas, and inspire one another. These interactions reinforced the collective commitment to supporting teachers at all stages of their careers.

We were delighted to have a distinguished group of leaders in attendance, including:

**Jillian Jones** – Welcomed delegates and set the tone for the event.

**Lynelle Fenton** – Acting President

**Janice Mullan** – President Elect

**Jacque White** – General Secretary

**Stephen McCord** – Deputy General Secretary

**Joseph Wyglendacz** – Organising Officer

If you're a student teacher or a recently qualified teacher, we would love for you to join us at future events! Get in touch with us at HQ to learn more about how you can get involved.





## STRANDED: STRANMILLIS STUDENTS RACE ACROSS THE WORLD FOR CHARITY – WITH NO PHONES, NO MONEY, AND NO LIMITS!

How far could you get without your phone, car keys or wallet? Would you simply be 'stranded'? 3 pairs of Stranmillis students faced this very predicament on a cold morning in November 2024 as they arrived at the start line outside Stranmillis House at 6am. They were challenged to get as far away from Stranmillis as possible in 12 hours; however, without the comforts of modern life or any pre-booked transport, all our pairs could rely on was a small percentage of the donations they had received in the preceding 3 weeks. The remaining portion of their donations went to support Simon Community NI who are one of the chosen charities of Stranmillis Students' Union this year.

The journeys took various forms, with one team first travelling to Dublin Airport, another heading for Belfast International and the third team made the short commute to Belfast City Airport. All teams were accompanied by a chaperone from the Students' Union Executive to ensure all rules were followed; however, after some haggling with airline staff and extra in person donations from generous individuals, it wasn't long before all teams were able to take to the air and make great strides in their race away from Stranmillis. Back at the college, students could follow all the action on the Students' Union Instagram (@stranmillis\_su) as their chaperones, who were members of the Students' Union Executive, were capturing content and posting updates throughout the race.

The anticipation was high by the time 6pm came around and the race had finished. An Instagram live event with the Students' Union President (Andrew Irwin) and Charity and Welfare Officer (Cameron McCaw) allowed the teams, and the many eagerly awaiting students, to find out just who had got the furthest from Stranmillis.

In 3rd place were Ben Donaldson and Cara Kennedy who managed a respectable 186 miles and ended their race in Leeds, England. Our runners up were Rebecca Owens and Sarah Maxwell who got 1589 miles away and made it all the way to Marrakech, Morocco. Despite a sterling effort they were pipped to the post by Max Loughery and Rhodri Phillips, accompanied by their chaperone Jessica Martin, who got an impressive 1900 miles away and finished as the first ever 'STRANded' winners in Gran Canaria, Spain.

Thanks to the generosity of so many people, we were able to raise over £3000 for Simon Community NI through 'STRANded' which contributed to our 2024/25 charity total which currently stands at an incredible £20,000+ for our 3 charities; Children in Crossfire, Made for More and Simon Community NI.







## REVAMPED STUDENT SPACES AT STRAN WITH NEW COMMON ROOM AND KITCHEN

One of the first priorities for the 2024/25 Stranmillis Students' Union Executive was to revitalise the common room and social spaces for students on campus. This involved negotiations with the college staff to move the physical location of the SU from Stranmillis House to Central Building to bring student life closer to where students are.

As a result of this, not only is the SU now able to boast of a common room equipped with a pool table, dart board, smart TV, computers, beanbags and other leisure facilities to help students relax between classes, students now also have access to an SU kitchen for the first time which allows students to heat, store and eat their lunch. This makes life more convenient and saves students money that would previously have had to be spent if they wanted a hot meal at lunchtime. We were very grateful to the UTU who supported the important milestones of our new common room and kitchen and who provided pizza on both occasions where the spaces received their official 'grand opening'. It went down a treat with students who appreciated the hospitality!

## STRANMILLIS SU'S NEWEST CLUB AND SOCIETY IS OFF AND RUNNING!

Whilst Stranmillis may be famous for its annual pantomime which is a firm fixture in the college calendar, there is always room for new clubs and societies to make their mark and Stran Run Club has certainly done that! They were founded in 2024 by Hannah Stewart and will soon complete their first full year of activity. Stran Run Club meets twice weekly, for a 'social run' which is about 3km and suitable for all abilities as it involves walking intervals and short breaks - a great way to get started on your running journey! They also have a 5km run but this is very much ran at your individual pace. As well as this, they take part in special running events around the country including the 'Run in the Dark'



which took place at the Stormont Estate. This was also the occasion where members of the club got to show off their new running tops, kindly sponsored by the UTU. Stran Run Club is a very welcoming and supportive environment and has been a brilliant addition to the suite of clubs and societies at Stranmillis!



# Omagh County Primary - Time Travels! 100-Year-Old Grannies & Grandas Take Over for a Day of Fun

Omagh County Nursery took a step back in time this week as young children arrived not in their usual school clothes, but dressed as 100-year-old grannies and grandas for a special themed day. The creative event saw children donning spectacles, shawls, walking sticks, and vintage outfits, fully embracing the fun of pretending to be much older for the day. The nursery was buzzing with excitement as the children took part in a range of activities based around the number 100. From discussing 100 things they like (and some they don't!) to reading 100 Birds and choosing their favorites, the day was filled with

playful learning experiences. Some children even strutted their stuff in a mini fashion show, showing off their imaginative elderly-inspired outfits. Craft and counting activities included an attempt to make 100 raindrops, while the highlight for many was the opportunity to bake sweet treats. The young participants worked together to make chocolate cake and rice krispie buns, which they later enjoyed as part of their celebrations. With music, dancing, and plenty of laughter, the event proved to be a hit, offering a

creative and engaging way for children to explore numbers, storytelling, and imaginative play. Parents and staff praised the initiative, highlighting how much fun the children had while developing valuable social and learning skills.



## UTU and INTO Spreads Christmas Cheer with Team Haven in Heartwarming Charity Appeal

This Christmas, the UTU Central Executive Committee and staff proudly supported Team Haven, a local food bank and homeless charity, to help those in need during the festive season. Their Christmas Appeal received generous support from colleagues at the Irish National Teachers' Organisation NI, reflecting the spirit of unity and generosity among educators. UTU extends heartfelt thanks to INTO for their kindness. Pictured at the donation handover are Geraldine McGowan (INTO Northern Committee Chair), Lindsay Osbourne (UTU Operational Officer), Janice Mullan (UTU Vice-President), and Marty Lavery (INTO Northern Committee). Together, they are making a difference this Christmas.



## Empowering Reps: UTU, INTO and NEU Unite for School Rep Training

School representatives from the Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU), Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), and National Education Union (NEU) recently came together for another successful day of training. These dedicated reps play a vital role in supporting teachers, addressing workplace concerns, and advocating for members' rights. The joint training session provided an opportunity for reps to enhance their knowledge, share experiences, and collaborate on key issues affecting educators. Through interactive discussions and

workshops, they strengthened their ability to provide guidance and support to their colleagues. The training also reinforced the importance of union activism in ensuring fair treatment and better working conditions for teachers across Northern Ireland. UTU, INTO, and NEU continue to work together to empower their members and promote positive change in education. These training sessions highlight the commitment of all three unions to equipping school reps with the skills and knowledge needed to make a real impact.

Pictured at the event are Joseph Wyglendacz (UTU), Kevin Daly (INTO), and Donal Lyons (NEU), who helped lead the training. Their dedication, along with that of all participating reps, ensures that teachers receive the support and representation they deserve.

[CLICK HERE TO SEE MORE EVENTS](#)



# Inspiring the Next Generation of Teachers!

**PGCE Primary students from Ulster University Coleraine Campus recently engaged in an inspiring discussion with Principal members of the Ulster Teachers' Union, exploring the realities of teaching and the vital role of teacher unions.**

We've had fantastic engagement with PGCE Primary students from Ulster University Coleraine Campus, alongside some of our Principal members, discussing the realities of the classroom and the vital role of teacher unions in supporting educators throughout their careers. It was incredible to see such enthusiasm, thoughtful questions, and meaningful discussions as these future teachers gained real insight into the challenges and rewards of life in the classroom. From navigating the first days of teaching to understanding their rights and responsibilities, these conversations highlighted just how important it is to have the right support network from the very beginning.

The Ulster Teachers' Union is here to stand beside you from day one—offering guidance, advocacy, and a strong community to help you thrive in your career.



## UTU Partners with Africare to Transform Lives of Children in Uganda

The Ulster Teachers' Union is proud to support Africare's incredible work in Uganda, where they are providing life-changing treatment and care to children facing serious physical challenges. The clinic focuses on conditions like club feet, cerebral palsy, burns, and broken bones, offering vital medical services that many would otherwise go without.

In just the past year alone, Africare has made a profound impact on the lives of over 1700 children, helping them regain mobility, health, and a brighter future. The dedication of Africare's team is truly inspiring, and the difference they are making in these children's lives is immeasurable.

Pictured is Janice Mullan, UTU Vice President, presenting our donation to Brian Rankin from Africare. This partnership is a testament to the power of community and collective action, as we work together to improve the lives of those who need it most.

We are honored to be part of this incredible journey and are committed to continuing our support for Africare and their life-changing mission in Uganda. Together, we can make a difference.







# STANDING STRONG: SUPPORTING SURVIVORS, EDUCATING YOUTH, AND MARKING 50 YEARS OF WOMEN'S AID

By Belfast Women's Aid

Thanks again to the UTU for their thoughtful donation to our work. Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid has had a busy year with schools and teachers in our local area and a few things still in the calendar before the summer break. With the challenges faced in Northern Ireland over the last year with such high rates of femicide, with most perpetrators being current or former partners of the victims all eyes have been on the issue of violence against women and girls, and in particular intimate partner violence. Alongside that has been the increased awareness and understanding of the impact of domestic abuse on children. The Operation Encompass initiative has generated 23000 phonecalls in it's first operational year and many teachers and schools have reached out to Women's Aid for more input and support for children in their classrooms.

What we notice is that the language of domestic abuse and violence isn't necessarily what young people can relate to when it comes to their experiences of abuse and exploitation and coercion in intimate relationships. Especially when these relationships have a very different form and pattern to those for older age groups. We conducted a survey with nearly 300 young people that highlighted a significant gap between young people's experiences and needs:

“

Our survey found that **70%** of respondents had experienced a type of sexism, homophobia, sexual harrassment, image based abuse at school and **75%** had experienced one of these types online.

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“

**63%** said they had learnt about bodies, relationships and sex via friends and social media but **99%** of them said they would prefer to learn about it in school.

”



Alongside our individual and peer group support that we offer for women and children survivors, we have also been able to develop our teens engagement work with the support of the RTE Toy Appeal fund. This has put us in many post-primary schools and community groups delivering workshops and facilitating discussions exploring gender, relationships, influences and boundaries and emotional and physical safety and wellbeing we have reached 2000+ young people in the last 15 months. We have also invested significant time in creating content for our @wiseupni Instagram account and our very busy @wiseup\_ni tik tok account. The content on these accounts is aimed very much at young people – who fall into the Gen Z and Gen Alpha age groups and have a very distinct way of communicating and relating as digital natives, where many services are being developed and run by people who learnt and evolved in a different world where digital life was only emerging.

Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid marks its 50th year this year – a milestone that is ultimately disappointing in that we still have to be here supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse, challenging myths and victim blaming and speaking out and mourning when another woman loses her life to it. Women and girls have experienced some much change in terms of their rights, laws that protect them and services to meet their needs, but unfortunately for the next generations and our communities right now there is still much to be done. Look out for details of our Anniversary events on our website.



Education For All



# Cycling to School

[www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/gifts](http://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/gifts)





# The Gift of Cycling to School

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Bicycles enable students, particularly those in remote rural areas, to get to school more safely and easily. Ease of travelling to school means less absence as well as more alert pupils in lessons. This in turn impacts performance, as being less tired means pupils are able to study and learn more effectively.

Young people are so keen to get an education, even if it involves walking long distances to get to school. Students in receipt of bicycles have been overjoyed. Having the bicycles benefits them to get far more from their education and also allows some children who have completely missed out on an education to date to enrol in school and stay there.

Educators are delighted to see children arriving safely at school, on time and not too tired to work. They can enjoy teaching and seeing the children thrive.

Why not be part of The Foundation by ensuring access to education for students in remote rural areas – gift a bike!



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# Lamin from Njoren School



#CyclingToSchool

Teachers at Njoren School, in the Upper River Region of The Gambia, noticed that Lamin, one of their students had holes in his shoes, and eventually had to walk bare foot. The teachers were concerned when he explained that his parents could not afford to buy any more shoes, they wore out so quickly, as he lived an hour walk away. He was a very bright boy with the potential to go on to secondary school and do well.

When Marie Antionette, General Secretary of GTU (Gambia Teachers Union), heard this story she discussed ideas with the teachers in the region and decided that many of the children needed bicycles to get to school. She contacted the Steve Sinnott Foundation to see if they could provide funds for them to buy bicycles locally to give to the children who lived far from their schools.

Now Lamin and many other children at his school have bicycles to get to school. They are not tired when they get there, their shoes are not wearing out and they are more able to concentrate at school.



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## The Gift of Cycling to School



SCAN ME





# SWINGING SUCCESS AT ROE VALLEY RESORT

The President's Golf Tournament teed off in style at the picturesque Roe Valley Resort, Limavady, where UTU President Janice Mullan warmly hosted a full day of competition, camaraderie, and sunshine. The stunning backdrop of rolling fairways and clear blue skies provided the perfect setting for members and friends to come together and enjoy a sporting highlight of the year. The men's competition saw Josh Whiteside crowned overall champion, with Gareth Hill putting in an impressive performance to secure the runner-up position. In the ladies' field, Margaret Murphy claimed top honours with consistent play, followed closely by Beverly Weir, who finished a strong second. Adding to the excitement, special awards were presented on the day to Andrew Milligan for his precision in winning "Closest to the Pin," and to Alex McBride, who claimed the prize for the "Longest Drive" with a powerful shot that drew plenty of admiration.

Glorious sunshine, light-hearted rivalry, and good spirits combined to make the tournament a truly memorable event. Beyond the scores, it was also a celebration of friendship and the strong sense of community at the heart of UTU, with participants already looking forward to next year's gathering.







## BALLOT BOXES AND CLASSROOMS: WHY CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION CAN'T BE LEFT BEHIND

Plans to lower the UK voting age to 16 have sparked calls for renewed investment in Citizenship education in Northern Ireland – a subject which teachers say has been allowed to slip into the shadows. According to the Jacqui White, UTU General Secretary, cuts and a system heavily geared toward assessments have left Citizenship classes struggling for recognition, despite their vital role in preparing young people for democratic life. “Citizenship education was launched here 20 years ago at an estimated cost of £25m in the belief of its potential for social transformation,” explained Jacqui. “It was designed to foster a more cohesive and reconciled society. Yet over the years, through no fault of schools and teachers, its profile and status has been side-lined – largely due to the swingeing cuts

education has faced in the last decade.” The result has been patchy provision: teachers reassigned year to year, little continuity, and no formal training requirement for those tasked with delivering the subject. All this, Jacqui warned, is compounded by an education system often dominated by exam performance, pushing Citizenship further down the priority list. “With schools struggling to meet basic needs – some even to provide essentials like toilet roll – difficult choices have been made,” she said. “But the decision to give 16-year-olds the vote must now be the catalyst for serious change. Citizenship classes are essential to ensure young people understand the

political, cultural and historical issues that shape their futures.” The UTU is calling for curriculum realignment, specialised teacher training, and properly resourced professional development – all underpinned by adequate funding. Only then, Jacqui argued, can Citizenship education fulfil its potential, equipping young people to engage confidently with issues such as commemorations, sectarianism, cultural identity, legacy debates and even a potential border poll. “As voting rights are extended,” she concluded, “our young people deserve more than token lessons in democracy. They deserve a system that takes their role in shaping society seriously – and supports teachers to deliver it.”



UTU President, Janice Mullan with CEC member, Steven Savage and INTO Chair, Geraldine McGowan



## BELFAST PRIMARY SCHOOLS' FA TRIUMPH AT SOUTHAMPTON FC ACADEMY TOURNAMENT



The trip began with a sense of excitement and anticipation as the players embarked on their journey to Southampton FC to compete in the Bryson Cup. The squad had a comprehensive stadium tour, offering them a behind-the-scenes look at the iconic St. Mary's Stadium, home of Southampton FC. The tour included visits to the players' dressing rooms, going pitch side, and even the press conference area, providing the young footballers with a glimpse into the life of the professionals.

The highlight of the trip, however, was the mini tournament itself. You could sense the nerves as the boys arrived at Staplewood Training Complex. The Belfast Primary Schools team faced off against Portsmouth Academy in their first match. The game was intense, with both teams displaying remarkable skill and sportsmanship. It was the Belfast boys who made the breakthrough in the second half, and they managed to hold off strong Pompey pressure late in the game to secure the 1-0 victory, setting the stage for a thrilling final against Southampton Academy. The final match was a nail-biting affair, with both teams battling fiercely for the coveted Bryson Cup. Despite numerous attempts on goal, neither team managed to score during regular time, resulting in a tense 0-0 draw. The outcome of the tournament was to be decided by a penalty shootout, a true test of nerves and composure.

In the dramatic shootout, Belfast Primary Schools held their nerve, converting four of their penalties while Southampton Academy missed their final spot kick with a brilliant save from captain Jack Daly.

The final score of 4-3 in the shootout crowned Belfast as the champions of the tournament. The young players celebrated their hard-earned victory with jubilation, their faces beaming with pride and joy as they lifted the Bryson Cup.

Coach Steven Savage praised his team's performance, saying, "The boys showed incredible determination and teamwork throughout the tournament. Their hard work and dedication in the months prior paid off, and I could not be happier. This experience will stay with them for a lifetime. For me, the trip to Southampton was more than just a football tournament; it was an opportunity for the young footballers to bond, learn, and grow together. The memories made both on and off the pitch and the lessons learned will undoubtedly inspire them for many years to come."

As the team returned to Belfast, they were greeted with cheers and applause from their families and friends, celebrating their remarkable achievement. The victory in Southampton is a testament to the talent and potential of Belfast's young footballers, and it serves as a reminder of the importance of providing our kids with these opportunities.

The success of the trip and the tournament would not have been possible without the generous sponsorship from UTU. Their support enabled the players to travel, take part in the tournament, and gain invaluable experiences. The team and their coaches would like to thank UTU for their unwavering support and commitment.





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