

Autumn 2023

utu NEWS

The journal of the Ulster Teachers' Union



A VISION FOR COLLABORATIVE EDUCATION IN IRELAND: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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EMBRACING EUROPEAN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES: A VIBRANT DAY OF LEARNING AT LARNE AND INVER PRIMARY

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MEET THE CEC

Connecting Faces, Forging Futures:
Welcoming UTU's New Central Executive Committee Members.

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EMPOWERING EDUCATION: JENGANA'S IMPACT IN KENYA

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NOTICE OF ELECTION

TO POST OF GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE ULSTER TEACHERS' UNION

The 5 year term of the current General Secretary of the Ulster Teachers' Union, Jacque White, is due to expire on the 31st day of March 2024. The UTU will therefore hold an election for the post of General Secretary to carry on that role for the 5 year period commencing on the 1st April 2024.

Nominations are therefore invited in accordance with the Rules and Constitution of the Ulster Teachers' Union for the role of General Secretary. The period during which nominations can be made will be open from the 6th day of November 2023 to the 4th December 2023 **(no later than 5.00pm)**.

A Nomination Form is available as follows :-

1. Online at: Click [HERE](#)
2. By contacting the UTU Office by telephone on 028 90662216
3. By writing to 94 Malone Road, Belfast BT9 5HP

Duly completed Nomination Forms must be returned to the Independent Scrutineer and received by them no later than 4th December 2023. The Central Executive Committee have appointed Popularis Limited, Nutsey Lane, Totton, Southampton SO40 3LR as independent scrutineer in accordance with their statutory obligations to appoint an independent scrutineer.

Any member who is duly nominated, seconded and supported in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Rules and Constitution of the Ulster Teachers' Union and who fulfils the eligibility requirements set out in the Constitution shall be subject to an election by the members of the Union who are entitled to vote for General Secretary.

Anyone seeking further information regarding the post of General Secretary of the Ulster Teachers' Union may contact the Union by email or otherwise in writing or by telephone to the UTU President, Mrs Lynelle Fenton at 94 Malone Road, Belfast BT9 5HP and a nomination pack will be provided. For the avoidance of doubt completed Forms with the requisite numbers of proposers, seconders and supporters must be received by the independent scrutineer **no later than 5.00pm on the 4th day of December 2023.**

PRESIDENTIAL COMMENT

As I write this I'm sure you are all counting down the days to your half-term holiday. The months of September and October are particularly challenging months as you meet your new classes and mould them to your established routines. Many of you will have carried out parent interviews and celebrated harvest in your school.

Since our last edition of UTU news, our General Secretary and her team have been working hard to keep the issue of fair pay in education at the forefront of our politician's minds. Even with the absence of a functioning executive, she and her colleagues in NITC have been able to make good progress in convincing many of our politicians of the need for adequate financial provision for the education sector as a whole and in particular the need for reasonable remuneration for teaching staff. I firmly believe that these seeds will certainly bear fruit if and when a functioning executive is re-established. However, we as members of UTU, need to augment this case by continuing to adhere to

all of the elements in action short of strike. I appreciate that many of you may feel that this action is falling on deaf ears, but I can assure you that by your continued support, our voices are being heard at the highest levels of government and our fight for fair pay and increased funding for education is now well recognised.

I recommend this edition of UTU news to you and am thankful to those schools who have chosen to share their children's learning experiences with us. I would also like to draw your attention to the notice of election to the position of General Secretary on page 2, which is a statutory obligation and must take place every five years.

I hope you have a restful half-term and wish you all the best as you prepare for your Christmas concerts and shows. I am sure many of these will rival those professional West End productions! The memories that you create for both the children and their families will last a lifetime.



Lynelle Fenton

LYNELLE FENTON
PRESIDENT

utu
ULSTER TEACHERS' UNION

CONTACT DETAILS

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FOLLOW US ON OUR SOCIALS:
  

What are your experiences of integrated STEM in the classroom?

Researchers at Mary Immaculate College (Limerick), Ulster University (Coleraine) and Amber Centre (Trinity College Dublin) are investigating teachers' experiences of integrated approaches to STEM in the primary classroom, in both Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland.



Interested in sharing your experiences?

Visit <https://forms.office.com/e/AaT6MYig3T>

or use the QR code to complete our short survey

Any questions?

Email: Michelle.Fitzpatrick@mic.ul.ie



Colleagues

You will be well aware that the political impasse and the refusal of the Secretary of State to address any issues has led to a complete lack of movement to date regarding teachers' pay.

The statistics comparing the plight of our teachers in Northern Ireland in this regard compared to our counterparts anywhere else on these islands are stark and show clearly that the situation is not only unacceptable but unsustainable if our education system is to have a future to be proud of. This was brought sharply into focus on university recruitment days where students were reporting their intentions to live on one side of the border and work on the other, or to complete their training and seek employment elsewhere. Sadly, in the current economic climate, who can blame them?

It is imperative that we keep these teachers when they qualify. It is also imperative that we retain the teachers we already have in the system. Our teachers are sought after in many countries – but we don't want them to be in many countries; we want to keep the expertise here for the benefit of our children and our society of the future. And to do that we need to ensure that you are paid a salary that reflects not only what you do but how you are valued.

The Action Short of Strike continues. It is understandable, when working in our individual schools, that we may sometimes question the impact that our individual contribution is making to the big picture. I can assure you that it is making a valuable and significant impact. And how do we know that? We know that because the employers keep bringing us regularly to the table even though they are not yet in a position to offer what we need. We know that because the politicians now have education in juxtaposition with health and state clearly that the situation must be addressed.

We must keep the pressure on; we cannot create the space to suggest that teachers have accepted their lot. Because we haven't. All five recognised teaching unions have worked hard to ensure that we stay together and that we, as individual schools, can organise our action to work for us. School leaders and teachers must stand together to state clearly that this marked lack in pay and investment is not working for our profession or the children in our care.

UTU, with our counterparts in INTO, NASUWT, NEU and NAHT, has met with each of the political parties in recent days and restated our case. All five parties have agreed that teachers' pay must be addressed, with further reference being made to areas such as school budgets, special educational needs and support services.

They have heard the message.

In a separate, more wide-ranging meeting, Sir Jeffrey Donaldson cited public sector pay parity as one of his top priorities.

That would do!!

GENERAL SECRETARY FOREWORD



There is conflicting mood music circling currently, some of which suggests that there may be movement in the period between now and Christmas. If there is any likelihood that this will be the case, we must be prepared to stand with our colleagues one more time for what will hopefully be a final push. It is easy as a politician to promise something when you don't have the capacity to do it; what we must ensure is that we, the teachers, are on the agenda when they do. We owe it to ourselves, we owe it to the children and we owe it to those coming after us.

Teach together, stand together, fight for what we deserve - together.

We'll keep you posted!!

J.E. White

JACQUIE WHITE
GENERAL SECRETARY



Edenderry Primary School's Primary 1 Students Thrive in Their First Month

Edenderry Primary School's Primary 1 students flourish in their first month with art, reading, digital learning, and nurturing friendships.



The start of school life is pivotal for children. At [Edenderry Primary School](#) in Portadown, Primary 1 students embark on their academic journey with enthusiasm. Their first month includes diverse activities, nurturing a love for learning and building a strong educational foundation, from painting and crafting to reading and embracing digital learning.

A PALETTE OF CREATIVITY: PAINTING AND CRAFTING

Primary 1 at Edenderry Primary School features creative exploration. Young artists express their imaginations with paintbrushes, showcasing early artistic talent. Crafting sessions develop fine motor skills, yielding impressive creations like paper sculptures and handmade cards.

NURTURING A LOVE FOR READING

Edenderry Primary School instills a passion for reading through cherished storytime sessions. These young minds explore distant worlds, fostering a lifelong love for literature.

EMBRACING DIGITAL LEARNING

In today's digital world, Edenderry Primary School recognizes the importance of early digital literacy. Primary 1 students

eagerly embrace digital tools, exploring educational apps and interactive platforms for engaging learning. These tech-savvy learners adapt quickly, preparing for success in an evolving world.

FOSTERING FRIENDSHIPS AND SOCIAL SKILLS

The first month goes beyond academics, focusing on building friendships and social skills. Young students develop teamwork, communication, and empathy through group activities, collaborative projects, and interactive playtime, forming the basis for lifelong connections.

Edenderry Primary School's Primary 1 journey is marked by excitement, exploration, and growth. From unleashing creativity through painting and crafting to immersing themselves in books and technology, young learners lay the foundation for a promising future.

Educators' dedication and parental support are crucial for their early schooling. As they move forward, we anticipate their continued growth and development, on their path to becoming lifelong learners and responsible citizens.





A DAY OF EUROPEAN LANGUAGE EXPLORATION AT LARNE AND INVER PRIMARY SCHOOL



Larne and Inver Primary School's European Language Day:

Students celebrate culture, language, and camaraderie with Spanish, French, and more.

At Larne and Inver Primary, learning is not just confined to textbooks and traditional lessons. Students at the school recently had an enriching experience celebrating European Language Day, where they embraced the vibrant cultures and languages of Europe. The day was filled with exciting activities that encouraged language learning and cultural awareness, leaving everyone with lasting memories.

DIVING INTO SPANISH

The primary 3 students enthusiastically embraced the day's festivities. Donning an array of European costumes and colours, they embarked on an engaging journey through the Spanish language and culture. The excitement was palpable as they dove into their Spanish lessons.

FARM ANIMAL FUN

One of the highlights of the day was the effort put into mastering the

Spanish names for farm animals. The students worked diligently to remember these names, an activity that not only expanded their vocabulary but also allowed them to appreciate the diversity of languages in Europe. To make the learning experience even more enjoyable, they sang along to a spirited Spanish song, infusing an element of music into their linguistic exploration.

IMPRESSIVE PARTICIPATION

The students' enthusiasm and dedication were commendable. They actively participated and demonstrated their linguistic prowess throughout the day. Both the boys and girls impressed not only their teachers but also their classmates by keeping everyone on the right track. Mrs. H, their teacher, and the entire class were in sync throughout the event.

KETCHUP AUX TOMATES IN P.E.

The celebration extended beyond the classroom as the students embraced the physical aspect of language and

culture. In their Physical Education (P.E.) class, they engaged in a lively French game called 'Ketchup aux Tomates,' reminiscent of the classic 'Duck, Duck, Goose.' This playful integration of language and physical activity added an exciting dimension to the event, fostering a holistic approach to learning.

European Language Day at Larne and Inver Primary was a resounding success, fostering a deep appreciation for the rich tapestry of languages and cultures in Europe. The students of P3 showcased their dedication to learning Spanish, participated actively, and even enjoyed a lively French game in P.E. The day was filled with laughter, excitement, and a sense of camaraderie, leaving the school community with cherished memories and a broader perspective on the world.

As we celebrate these moments of cultural exploration and language learning, we look forward to more such enriching experiences that broaden our horizons and make education a delightful journey for all.

ULSTER TEACHERS' UNION ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT: A DAY OF FUN, FRIENDSHIP, AND COMPETITION

The Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU) Annual Golf Tournament at Rockmount Golf Club was a day filled with golf, friendship, and spirited competition. Hosted at the prestigious Rockmount Golf Club and sponsored by Platinum Financial Planning Ltd and Marks and Spencers, this event brought together educators and golf enthusiasts from the educational sector for a memorable day of camaraderie and sportsmanship.

The event was not just about showcasing golfing skills but also about fostering a strong sense of community among teachers and education professionals. Participants, including UTU members and their friends, came together for a day of laughter and camaraderie.

In the Ladies' Division, **Norma Clyde** claimed the 1st place spot, followed by **Gillian Poole** in 2nd place and **Rosie Shaw** in 3rd place. **Rosie Shaw**

also secured the title for the Longest Drive, while **Alison Chestnutt** and **Jayne Henry** emerged victorious in the Front 9 and Back 9 categories, respectively.

In the Men's Division, **George McVeigh** took home the 1st place trophy, with **Ian Henderson** and **Scott Brown** finishing in 2nd and 3rd places, respectively. **George McVeigh** showcased his golfing prowess by winning the Longest Drive, while **Graham Crown** and **Tom Shields** excelled in the Front 9 and Back 9 categories.

Roy Teggarty demonstrated exceptional precision by winning the Nearest The Pin contest.

The success of the UTU Golf Tournament was made possible by the generous support of Platinum Financial Planning Ltd and Marks and Spencers, highlighting their commitment to education and their recognition of the vital role teachers and educators play in society.



George McVeigh Triumphs in Men's Golf as UTU President Lynelle Fenton Presents the Coveted Cup



Norma Clyde Claims the Ladies Golf Title, Presented with Trophy by UTU President Lynelle Fenton



Showcasing her impressive skills on the green, Rosie Shaw took home 3rd place.



Congratulations to Roy Teggarty, our Nearest to the Pin Winner.



Front Nine Champion Graham Crown receives his well-deserved prize.



Congratulations to Gillian Poole for securing 2nd place in the ladies' golf tournament!



Game on! Alison, Jayne, Gillian and Annie are all set to tee off in style!



Fore! Group all set for a fantastic day on the golf course!



Teeing off with the crew and a future pro in the making!



Final trio to hit the course, Matthew, Graham, and Corey



UTU President, Lynelle Fenton met up with Eileen Patterson, former Principal of Harmony Hill, proudly holds the 1987 trophy won by her husband, former UTU President John Patterson.

In conclusion, the UTU Golf Tournament at Rockmount Golf Club was a testament to the unity and shared passions of educators outside the classroom. It was a day of forging new friendships and reinforcing existing ones. As the sun set on this year's tournament, participants left with smiles on their faces, uplifted spirits, and

strengthened bonds. This event reminded us that educators not only dedicate themselves to their students' growth but also find joy in personal development and enjoyment. We eagerly anticipate next year's event, where UTU members will once again come together to celebrate their love for golf and their profession.



A VISION FOR COLLABORATIVE EDUCATION IN IRELAND: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In a recent discussion on “Planning a new education model for the island of Ireland,” Lexie raised pertinent questions regarding the future of education in Ireland. This article delves into Lexie’s thoughts, emphasising the necessity for collaboration, addressing challenges, and exploring potential solutions for a brighter educational future.

THE CASE FOR COLLABORATION

Lexie questioned the circumstances under which a new education model for the entire island of Ireland should be planned. He emphasised the strong case for greater collaboration in education, regardless of political borders, given Ireland’s small landmass on the edge of Europe and its growing population.

CHALLENGES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Lexie highlighted the challenges facing education in Northern Ireland, notably the deep divisions within the education system that exacerbate social and community divisions. Additionally, he noted that a significant percentage of pupils leave school early with minimal educational achievement in Northern Ireland, a problem more than double the percentage seen in the Republic.

Another major challenge Lexie identified is the issue of underfunding. He referred to a report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies, revealing an 11% cut in real terms school spending in Northern Ireland since 2009. While spending per pupil has somewhat recovered, it still lags behind Scotland’s funding levels.

THE PROSPECT OF A UNITED IRELAND

Lexie questioned how a united Ireland would impact the education system in the north. He acknowledged the limited consideration given to this aspect, partly due to the lack of engagement from the Unionist community. Lexie also pointed out that any transition into a new constitutional settlement would likely face challenges, much like the complexities of Brexit. The fate of schools in Northern Ireland within an all-island education system is uncertain.

LEXIE SCOTT: A LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP – FORMER UTU PRESIDENT AND HONORARY VICE PRESIDENT



CHALLENGES OF A SELECTIVE SYSTEM

Lexie underlined the challenges a selective system would pose in developing a shared model across the island, especially given the potential animosity created by a new constitutional settlement. It seems more plausible that existing school setups would be retained to foster community acceptance of the new arrangements.

THE CASE FOR COLLABORATION AND A POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Lexie concluded on a positive note, emphasising the significant potential for collaboration between the education systems in the North and South of Ireland. He praised initiatives like the Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South, benefiting from funding under the Shared Island initiative. He strongly believed that collaboration between the Education Departments on both sides of the border, both on a macro and school level, could bring substantial benefits, particularly in a situation where the constitutional issue is not a hindrance.

In conclusion, Lexie’s thoughts highlight the importance of collaboration, the challenges faced by education in Northern Ireland, and the need for careful planning and consideration in the event of significant political changes. Despite these challenges, there is hope for a brighter future in education through cooperation and innovation.



FROM LEFT – BACK ROW: HEATHER MILLIGAN, LOUISE BROWN, JANICE MULLAN
FRONT ROW: LYNELLE FENTON, JACQUIE WHITE, LEIGH MCKAY



JACQUIE WHITE, ELECTED TO ICTU COMMITTEE; UTU PRESIDENT LYNELLE FENTON CONGRATULATES

ICTU BIENNIAL CONFERENCE IN KILKENNY: FOCUS ON EDUCATION FUNDING IN NI

The ICTU Biennial Conference in the charming city of Kilkenny from July 4th to 6th, 2023, was a significant gathering of trade union leaders and delegates from across Ireland. Among the standout moments of the conference was the Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU) delegation's active participation and impactful contributions.

The UTU delegation, led by President Lynelle Fenton, arrived at the conference with a clear mission: **to advocate for improved education funding in Northern Ireland.** Their participation was marked by dedication and a deep commitment to addressing the longstanding issues affecting the region's education sector.

Education funding is a pivotal factor in the quality of education, teacher support, and overall educational outcomes. Northern Ireland has grappled with persistent challenges due to insufficient funding, leading

to larger class sizes and limited resources for both educators and students.

UTU's motion received widespread support and recognition at the conference. Delegates acknowledged the urgency of addressing education funding issues and investing in Northern Ireland's educational future. The successful passage of the motion marks a significant stride toward enhancing education in the region.

The election of Jacquie White, General Secretary of UTU, to the ICTU committee marked a significant achievement celebrated by UTU President Lynelle Fenton and other delegates in attendance.

With Jacquie serving on the committee of the Irish Congress, UTU is better positioned than ever to continue advocating for improved education funding in Northern Ireland. The conference was a pivotal moment, signalling a commitment to positive change and a brighter future for the region's education system.



PRESIDENT HIGGINS DELIVERS ADDRESS TO DELEGATES AT ICTU CONFERENCE



LYNELLE FENTON ADDRESSING ICTU CONFERENCE WITH PASSION AND VISION FOR WORKERS' RIGHTS





Engaging with Aspiring Educators of the Future

Ulster Teachers Union's President, Lynelle Fenton, and Organising Officer, Joseph Wyglendacz, actively engage with students at St Mary's University College to discuss the benefits of joining the union. Aspiring teachers have the opportunity to learn about the advantages of UTU membership and how it can empower their future careers.



Rebekka Gilpin meeting and chatting with PGCE students from Queen's University at their Freshers' Fair.



University of Ulster students signing up for membership.



WORKING TOGETHER FOR STUDENTTEACHERS

The Ulster Teachers' Union has recently made strides in recruiting prospective student teachers from Stranmillis University College, in collaboration with INTO and NEU. The association between the three unions, and Stranmillis University College is crucial in preparing the next generation of educators and ensuring a high standard of teaching in Northern Ireland. UTU President Lynelle Fenton engaged in discussions with the Student Union President of Stranmillis University College, Matthew Cupples. Such connections between educational institutions and professional unions are invaluable in ensuring that the next generation of teachers receive the support and guidance they need to excel in their careers, ultimately enhancing the quality of education in the region.



EMPOWERING EDUCATORS TOGETHER: JOINT UNION SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE TRAINING

Joint School Rep Training, held at INTO HQ in Belfast this September, witnessed a collaborative effort from Rebekka Gilpin of the Ulster Teachers' Union, Nuala O'Donnell representing the Irish National Teachers' Organisation NI, and Alastair Donaghy from NEU Northern Ireland as they led the course. Joining them were key participants like Caoimhin MacColaim INTO Northern Chairperson, Lynelle Fenton UTU President, and Joseph Wyglendacz Organising Officer UTU. The training delved into the critical roles and responsibilities of a school representative, providing valuable networking opportunities for the representatives to engage in discussions about pressing issues. This event underscored the unity and commitment of the INTO, NEU and UTU ready to meet and support their members effectively.



Stranmillis University College Centenary Celebrations

On Wednesday, June 14th, Stranmillis University College marked the culmination of a year-long series of centenary celebrations with a special event hosted at the Assembly Buildings Conference Centre in Belfast. Titled 'Times and Seasons,' this event proved to be a poignant musical reflection on Stranmillis's rich and eventful 100-year history. Throughout its existence, music remained a vital thread in the tapestry of the College's life. The evening served as a unique occasion for both current and former students and staff to come together, uniting their diverse experiences and memories in a grand finale to the centennial festivities.

The event represented an invaluable opportunity for attendees to reconnect with old friends and reminisce about

their time at Stranmillis, weaving together treasured memories with the broader history of the College. It also presented a chance to establish new connections with individuals and events that had left their mark on Stranmillis throughout its storied past.

UTU President, Lynelle Fenton, and General Secretary, both former students of Stranmillis, were in attendance and enjoyed the celebrations, sharing in the nostalgic and joyous atmosphere.





Credit: Beechlawn School



Credit: Harryville Primary School and Nursery and Nurture Units



Credit: Spire's Integrated Primary School

UTU SCHOOL COMPETITION SHOWCASES STUDENTS' APPRECIATION FOR THEIR SCHOOLS

In a celebration of students' creativity and their appreciation for their schools, the Ulster Teachers Union (UTU) recently organised a competition with a simple yet profound theme: "What I Like About My School." Students from various age groups, including nursery students, those in special education, foundation, key stage 1, and key stage 2, eagerly embraced the opportunity to express their feelings about their educational institutions.

The competition captured the attention of many and the International Relations and Global Solidarity Committee were particularly impressed by the exceptionally high standard of the entries received. Students poured their thoughts,

emotions, and artistic talents into their submissions, showcasing the deep connection they have with their schools. As a special touch to celebrate this

outpouring of creativity, UTU's President took the time to visit the competition winners. The fortunate students were presented with certificates and a delightful assortment of treats as tokens of appreciation for their outstanding contributions. The competition not only highlighted the boundless affection that students hold for their schools but also emphasized the importance of

nurturing a positive and supportive learning environment.



Credit: Dromara Primary School



EVENTS SCHEDULE

CONTACT US ON
EVENTS@UTU.EDU TO
REGISTER FOR ANY OF THESE
EVENTS

THURSDAY 9TH NOVEMBER

JOINT LEADERSHIP WEBINAR 3.45PM

Agenda:

1. Industrial Action Update:

We will provide an update on the current status of the industrial action, including any recent developments.

2. EA One Feedback – Time Cards and New Initiatives:

We value your input on EA One, especially concerning time cards and any other new initiatives. Your feedback is crucial in fine-tuning these systems to better suit the needs of our school leaders and staff.

3. SEN Issues:

We will update you on SEN issues but very much welcome your feedback on issues that have been arising this academic year.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

2023 - 2024 Webinars

TUESDAY 7TH NOVEMBER

SCHOOL REPS TRAINING 9.30AM -
EQUALITY 3.30PM

Join us for an informative webinar to help combat discrimination at work. Learn to foster inclusive workplaces and empower change.

VENUE: INTO HQ, COLLEGE GARDENS, BELFAST, BT9 6BS

THURSDAY 16TH NOVEMBER

PRE-RETIREMENT 3.45PM
WEBINAR

ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT RETIREMENT?
Teachers' pensions have changed considerably.
Find out what this all means for you.

HOSTED BY: PLATINUM FINANCIAL SERVICES

TUESDAY 21ST NOVEMBER

TIME OFF 4.00PM-
ENTITLEMENTS 5.00PM

Our one hour online webinars are available to all members to inform/update them on important matters relating to their rights and responsibilities and Teachers' Terms and conditions of Employment generally.

HOSTED ON: ZOOM

WEDNESDAY 17TH JANUARY 2024

PRE-RETIREMENT 3.45PM
WEBINAR

ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT RETIREMENT?
Teachers' pensions have changed considerably.
Find out what this all means for you.

HOSTED BY: PLATINUM FINANCIAL SERVICES

WEDNESDAY 24TH JANUARY 2024

School Reps Training: 9.30AM
Foundation Day 2

This training course is suitable for School Representatives who have completed the Induction (Foundation Day One) Training Course.

VENUE: INTO HQ, COLLEGE GARDEN, BELFAST

WEDNESDAY 7TH FEBRUARY 2024

MID-CAREER REVIEW 3.45PM
WEBINAR

This webinar is aimed at teachers mid-career wishing to review their financial position in relation to mortgages, savings, etc and become informed about their pension entitlements at retirement.

HOSTED BY: PLATINUM FINANCIAL SERVICES

Rasharkin Primary School Pupils Step Back in Time as Evacuees to Explore WWII History at NI War Memorial Museum

In a captivating journey back in time, Rasharkin Primary School pupils recently embarked on an educational adventure that transported them to the tumultuous era of World War II. These young learners, inspired by their World Around Us lessons, donned the attire of evacuees to explore the rich history of Northern Ireland during the war, courtesy of a field trip to the NI War Memorial museum in Belfast.



The excursion provided a unique opportunity for the students to deepen their understanding of life in Northern Ireland during WWII. The experience was not merely limited to gazing at static exhibits but rather a full immersion into the past. Students engaged in a hands-on workshop that enabled them to delve into the remarkable stories and artifacts from that period.

Donning authentic period clothing, the pupils looked the part of evacuees as they roamed the museum's exhibits, giving them a tangible sense of what life was like for their counterparts during the wartime period. It's one thing to read about history in textbooks, but quite another to live it.

The engaging workshop further enhanced their appreciation for the era, allowing them to understand the challenges faced by the people of Northern Ireland during the war. Through interactive sessions, the students were exposed to the realities



of rationing, air raid drills, and the sense of community that existed during those trying times.

As these young learners stepped back in time and walked in the shoes of evacuees, they not only gained a deeper understanding of their country's history but also developed a profound sense of appreciation for the sacrifices made during the war.

The field trip to the NI War Memorial museum was a journey through time that will leave a lasting impact on the students of Rasharkin Primary School. By embodying the spirit of evacuees and immersing themselves in the stories of WWII, these pupils have gained a unique perspective on the past and a stronger connection to their country's history. The NI War Memorial's continued dedication to preserving and sharing these stories is a gift to current and future generations, ensuring that the lessons of history are never forgotten.



LISBELLAW SCHOOLS COMBINE FOR HARVEST CONCERT

Choirs from Lisbellaw Primary School and Tattygar Primary School came together to perform at a Harvest concert organised by Lisbellaw Church of Ireland. They performed alongside other artists including the multi-award winning, classically trained Concertio Chamber Choir. Two contrasting pieces were sung. The first being The Lord's my Shepherd by Stuart Townend, taken from Psalm 23 and the second a livelier, upbeat tune entitled The Peanut Vendor composed by Cuban Moises Simons. Views on the parish's Facebook page surpassed 1000 with comments coming from countries right across the world!

Both schools, one controlled and one maintained from the village of Lisbellaw, had been working in partnership for many years however, the covid-19 pandemic made meeting together very difficult. The 'Steps into Sharing Programme' has reignited this partnership and we look forward to many more events being organised this year, including taking part in the Peace Proms at the SSE Arena in Belfast. A very generous donation of £500 was presented to both schools by Reverend Jeffrey, Rector of Lisbellaw Parish, and will undoubtedly go towards enhancing the excellent learning opportunities that both schools have to offer.



Reverend Jeffrey presenting Mr Kilfedder, Principal of Lisbellaw Primary School, with a cheque for £500. Also pictured are choir members Hannah, Emily and Jack.



Reverend Jeffrey presenting Miss Cleary, teacher at Tattygar Primary School, with a cheque for £500. Also pictured are choir members Kayla-Rose, Jakub and Oisín.

INTRODUCING YOUR NEWLY ELECTED CEC REPRESENTATIVES

CEC WELCOMES CARRICK ABBEY LARNE VICE-CHAIR: JILL JOHNSTON

My name is Jill Johnston and I am the Head of Science at Larne High School, where I have worked for 10 years and am currently the school UTU rep. I have been an active member of the Carrick Abbey Larne branch since it was re-established in 2016, having previously held the role of Chairperson, and where I currently hold the role of Vice-Chairperson. I have particularly enjoyed being a part of the branch and area association as it has allowed me to meet teachers from right across the education system in Northern Ireland. I have also enjoyed bringing issues from the staff in my own school and watching the union respond and support them, sometimes even going so far as to become a resolution at conference. Another personal highlight was being asked to participate in a post-primary group of UTU members who worked with CCEA during the pandemic and seeing first hand how they took our concerns and were able to create a workable solution in an extremely difficult situation.

I was therefore delighted to be elected to the CEC in April 2023 to further represent the members in the Northern Area Association. I have really enjoyed getting to know the other members of the CEC, and seeing the different problems that affect members in the primary, post-primary, special school and EOTAS settings. I have also enjoyed getting to know the UTU staff who work at HQ better and hearing about all the ways they support the members of the UTU.



A NEW VOICE ON THE CEC SHARES HER JOURNEY WITH UTU AND THE FUTURE IN TEACHING GROUP: **JILLIAN JONES**

Hello, my name is Jillian Jones and this is my first year sitting on the Central Executive Committee (CEC) as a voting member. I also hold the title of Chair of the Future in Teaching (FIT) group. I am currently the P2/3 teacher in Drumrane Primary School and have been in this school for 3 years now. Here is a little bit about why I joined the UTU and how I became involved in the CEC.

I always knew I was going to become a member of the UTU when I left university after completing alternative placement in the union, shadowing Jacquie and Avril to many meetings. It was here that I realised how important it is to be in a union and how much the UTU does for teachers across the country. Spending time alongside the office staff gave me the reassurance to know that no question is too silly and that they are always at the end of the phone whenever we need them throughout our teaching career. I then attended the FIT conference and found it extremely useful to network with other teachers and principals and get the help I needed to kickstart my teaching journey. Whether that was applying for jobs, completing EPD or simply socialising in a less formal environment!

My interest in the wider aspect of difficulties faced everyday by other teachers and what teachers' rights are, were only enhanced as I got further into my teaching career, which led me to put myself forward for nomination to a position on CEC. Being on CEC means that I can get up to date information on teachers' rights and what the union does behind the scenes for all teachers – it really is very interesting and I would recommend it to anyone!

If there are any newly/recently qualified teachers reading this, get in contact with the union as the FIT group have events coming up. It would be great to see you all there.



EUROS SHOULD 'FOCUS THE MIND AND PUT PE BACK AT CORE OF THE CURRICULUM'

This could be the 'perfect time' for a focus on the importance of young people's health and well-being, according to Northern Ireland teachers.

Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary of the Ulster Teachers' Union, comments as a new report from Youth Sport Trust* reveals a widening gap between the proportion of boys and girls enjoying PE lessons.

Children only get one childhood. Now could be the perfect time to really look at young people's health and wellbeing and the role of sport and physical activity in supporting their engagement in learning."

Unhappy, unhealthy children don't learn and society risks storing up issues which will lead to even greater challenges and cost in the long term. We have now four years until Belfast is set to co-host the Euros. Let that focus the minds of the powers that be so stakeholders give our young people's health the attention – and more importantly the investment – it deserves.

Sadly over the years, as a result of cutbacks, we've seen creative subjects and sports being squeezed more tightly as schools battle to make ends meet. Music and PE are often the first to suffer.

Indeed in many of our schools after-school activities in normal times are being delivered by teachers on a voluntary basis, on top of the overwhelming workload they're already juggling. This is not a sustainable situation and it devalues those subjects which were once at the very core of the curriculum.

PE is fundamental if children are to have healthy bodies and minds. As teachers we're all too aware of the impact too of the lock-down on many of our children whose mental and physical well-being has taken a huge knock. We need to get our children back at the heart of decision-making and the powers that be must have their well-being at the centre of their financial planning for they are where the future lies.

Of course, for all this to happen we need a functioning Stormont Executive where an Education Minister can ensure his or her department receives adequate funding to resource and support teachers as they prepare our children for the world of tomorrow.



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UTU General Secretary and Sister Teaching Unions Address Key Education Issues in Meeting with Political Representatives

Jacquie White, General Secretary of the Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU), joined forces with leaders from sister teaching unions to address vital concerns with elected representatives from all five political parties. This pivotal meeting, which took place recently, provided an invaluable platform for discussing pressing issues in education.

The meeting held significant importance as it enabled the education community to voice its concerns on matters including pay, school funding, Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision, and the essential support that employing authorities offer to schools.

For teachers, pay is not just a matter of remuneration; it is a reflection of the value society places on the education profession. UTU, in collaboration with other teaching unions, used this opportunity to highlight the urgency of addressing pay concerns and ensuring teachers are fairly compensated for their dedication and hard work.

School funding, another topic at the forefront of the discussion, plays a pivotal role in shaping the quality of education students receive. White and her counterparts emphasized the importance of adequately funding schools to provide the resources necessary for effective teaching and learning.

Special Educational Needs provision is an area that requires continuous attention and improvement.

Advocates of education, including the UTU, expressed the need for a comprehensive and inclusive approach to SEN support to ensure that every student has the opportunity to thrive academically.

Lastly, employing authority support for schools was another crucial aspect of the dialogue. The role of employing authorities in maintaining the overall well-being of schools cannot be overstated. The meeting provided a platform to address the ways in which these authorities can better support schools and, in turn, students and teachers.

In a time when education is facing numerous challenges and uncertainties, the collaboration of teaching unions and the engagement with political representatives stand as a testament to the unwavering commitment to providing the best possible education for the students of Northern Ireland. The discussion allowed for the exchange of ideas and perspectives, forging a path toward solutions that benefit the entire education community.

As General Secretary of UTU, Jacquie White continues to be a steadfast advocate for teachers and students alike, working diligently to ensure that their needs and concerns are heard and addressed. This meeting marked yet another step in that ongoing journey, as she and her colleagues strive for a brighter and more equitable future for education in Northern Ireland.

In Ballyclare Secondary School, we embarked on an electric car journey with the Greenpower Educational Trust, a UK-based charity. This organization encourages young people to explore science and engineering by challenging them to design, build, and race electric cars. These cars can be created in schools, colleges, or other locations and raced at various motorsport venues across the UK and internationally, including the USA, China, Poland, India, and Singapore. Older participants can also build cars to Greenpower regulations. The Greenpower challenge leverages the excitement of motorsport to inspire young people in STEM subjects. More than 700 teams in the UK have participated in Greenpower, with over 10,000 students involved annually, spanning from primary school to university.

Our team, named Forget Fossil, has been active for seven years, emphasizing the shift from fossil fuels to electric cars. This year's team faced challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which temporarily halted extracurricular activities. Still, it resumed in November 2021 with two Year 11 students, Callum McConnell and Andrew Coleman, who worked on improving the kitcar. Unfortunately, the Kirkistown All Ireland Regional heat was canceled due to the pandemic, so they couldn't race the car they had helped build. In November 2022, four students—David Craig, Mylo Ardill, Blake Mitchell, and Nathan Palmer—joined the 22/23 team. Like their predecessors, they identified areas for improvement

DRIVING TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: BALLYCLARE SECONDARY SCHOOL'S ELECTRIC CAR ADVENTURE



and focused on the steering system, stub axles, and front nose cone, working tirelessly to prepare for the Kirkistown heat in May 2023.

However, the Kirkistown All Ireland Heat was canceled again, prompting the team to compete in the Northwest of England Regional Qualifier at Aintree Motor Circuit in Liverpool. They worked hard and prepared the car in just one week before the race day. The competition's objective is to race the car as far as possible on a motor racing track in 90 minutes. Design, weight, friction, air resistance, and driver selection are crucial factors. The pupils traveled to Liverpool from Ballyclare and arrived at Aintree Motor Circuit early in the morning. They noticed strong competition and even a former world champion among the other Kit cars.

In Race 1, they finished seventh after an incident led to bent steering arms. They made adjustments to maximize speed and won Race 2, covering a total distance of 31.81 miles in 90 minutes. The team exhibited excellent teamwork and a selfless attitude, working for the team's benefit.

This project is suitable for all school levels, from primary to post-16 groups, and a Greenpower heat is planned for Kirkistown in May 2024. We hope to see you there!



EMPOWERING EDUCATION: JENGANA'S IMPACT IN KENYA

Credit: Pauline Hirst, South West Branch



Belfast schools and UTU members, traveled to Jengana near Kamangu, around 20 miles from Nairobi.

They engaged in various Jengana

projects, including teaching at Kicoshep Primary School in Kiberia slum, where sponsored children attend.

The warm welcome and the enthusiasm of the children left a lasting impression. In Kiberia, the team spent time with students in the Badili program, which prepares high school graduates from the slum for life outside. Conversations between Kenyan and Northern Irish students offered valuable insights. They also met Mary, a college graduate who, thanks to sponsorship, now lives outside Kibera, a success story.

During a visit to Mukuru slum, the Utu Weme School children were excited to see a "mzungu" (white person) in their classrooms. The team visited families in their tiny, corrugated iron homes, witnessing the challenging conditions they cope with. This experience left them humbled and privileged to share these lives, even briefly.

This year, the teams traveled to

the Narok area, about a four-hour drive from Nairobi, to work with the traditional Masai community. They helped at Mara Silalei Academy, a small school with 185 pupils, which urgently needs more classrooms due to increased enrollment. The teams shared lessons, participated in brickwork for new classrooms, and contributed to the construction of Masai huts for two young widows.

In this rural area, despite being near the main road to the Masai Mara game reserve, poverty is rampant. People struggle to grow crops due to wildlife interference, and lack of education and job opportunities leads to a hand-to-mouth existence.

Despite the busyness of their trip, the teams found time to connect with the 19 children in their home. Teachers helped with homework, acknowledging the long school days of these children.

This experience was a stark reminder of the contrast between the resources and opportunities available in Kenyan schools and their own. A good education can empower individuals to change the world, and the support from UTU is instrumental in this mission. If you have questions or want to learn more, please contact us.

“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime” –
Maimonides

Nelson Mandela once said, “Education is the most powerful weapon for changing the world.”

In Kenya, many children can only dream of a quality education due to their inability to afford school fees. Thanks to generous donations, Jengana supports 40 children and young people from primary to university levels. This July, 39 team members, including students from



Artificial Intelligence – How Should We Respond?

In a rapidly evolving world, the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on various sectors is undeniable. As the boundaries of technological advancement continue to expand, it is vital to address the implications of AI in the field of education.

Jacque White, General Secretary and Stephen McCord Deputy General Secretary attended an “Artificial Intelligence – How should we respond?” workshop that was provided by the Union Learning Group (ULG). The conference focused on the key threats and challenges that AI will bring to the workers and what action trade unions must do now. From a teaching union point of view the following would be of concern:

One of the most significant concerns is the potential for AI and automation to replace certain aspects of teaching or administration. AI-driven technologies can automate administrative tasks, create content, and even deliver lessons in some cases. This could lead to concerns about job security for educators, especially if AI systems become proficient at tasks traditionally performed by teachers, although during the covid-19 pandemic the importance of teachers was evident, especially in providing emotional support to our students.

Teachers need to be vigilant about ensuring that their students are not using AI. The use of ChatGP to write coursework will prove a new challenge for teacher. AI is rapidly evolving and in many cases it is our students who can quickly access it, see the potential that it can gain them and of course they rapidly use it. We as teachers must ensure that there is fairness and integrity in the coursework that students provide. In Ireland plans for teachers to assess students in their Leaving Cert exams have been shelved (20 September 2023) because of the risk of cheating posed by artificial intelligence platforms such as ChatGPT.

Teachers may face challenges in adapting to new technologies, especially if they are not provided with adequate training and support. It’s crucial for educators to have access to professional development opportunities that help them understand and integrate AI tools effectively into their teaching practices.



SUNNYLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL COLLECTS OAK AWARD

Forest School is an outdoor education approach to learning that focuses on the holistic development of individuals through regular and repeated experiences in a woodland or natural environment. It often involves activities like nature walks, outdoor games, crafts, and practical skills building. The Autumn period provides

Earlier this term Sunnylands teachers Miss Laura McConkey and Mrs Rebekah Nelson

were very excited to attend the NIFSA celebration event in September to collect the Forest Oak Award!

Miss McConkey, who is now a Level 4 Forest School Leader, (and the first teacher to achieve this award) also gave a presentation on all of the amazing work that Sunnylands Primary



School has been doing on their Forest School journey. The educational value that Forest School brings to the education of young people is outstanding. The mild weather we had in September and October meant that it was pleasant for children to spend extended periods of time outdoors. The Autumn brings with it vibrant colours. This provides a visually rich environment for children to explore and learn about the natural world. Trees shed leaves, acorns, and other natural materials during the autumn season. These items can be used for various activities such as crafts, building, and sensory exploration.

Although weather conditions in autumn can be variable, including rain, wind, and cooler temperatures, engaging with the outdoors during this time helps children learn how to dress appropriately, adapt to changing conditions, and build resilience.

Many cultures have seasonal traditions associated with autumn, such as harvest festivals and nature-based celebrations. Engaging in Forest School activities during this time can help children connect with these cultural practices.

Children developing a Love for Nature through Forest School and experience the beauty and wonders of autumn in the natural environment can foster a deep appreciation and love for nature that can last a lifetime. Overall, autumn provides a rich and dynamic setting for Forest School activities, allowing children to connect with nature, learn about seasonal changes, and develop a range of skills in an engaging and enjoyable way.





All staff and pupils at Donard School, Banbridge took part in a Colour Run recently and it was a resounding success. Meeting at the front of the school pupils and staff were treated to music and a fun warm up routine to get them ready for a few laps around the school.

The decision was made to have one colour station where pupils and staff were doused head to toe, or head to wheels in brightly coloured powder; this allowed pupils to avoid the colour part if they didn't wish to take part. Classes teamed up to walk laps of the school and enjoyed music, dancing and bubbles along the route.

The atmosphere was electric for all pupils and those who enjoyed feeling the powder soon mastered the art of throwing it at fellow pupils and staff.

The brainchild of our Physical Education Coordinator, helped by Healthy Kidz, the Colour Run reminded everyone that, with a little creativity and a lot of heart, meaningful whole school events are possible even when space is limited. The first Donard School Colour Run will no doubt leave staff and pupils with memories they will cherish for a long time to come.

COLOURFUL MEMORIES: DONARD SCHOOL, BANBRIDGE'S FIRST-EVER COLOUR RUN BRINGS JOY AND UNITY TO STAFF AND PUPILS



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