

WINTER 2022

utu NEWS

The journal of the Ulster Teachers' Union



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AND MUCH MORE!

PRESIDENTIAL COMMENT | Louise Creelman



Approaching The End of 2022

As I write this, you are all counting down the days to the Christmas holidays. Many of you will by now have carried out parent interviews, maybe the first time face-to-face in a few years and are busy preparing for the Christmas Productions. I would like to take this opportunity as your President to wish you all the best for a successful and fulfilling school year, one that we hope will be much more normal than the previous three.

I hope you all had a restful, well deserved break over the summer and that you got to do things with family and friends that we haven't been able to in recent years. We had some lovely weather, with sunshine and higher than normal temperatures which made it even better. Although the Summer seems so far away now, it is like a distant memory, as Autumn has quickly come upon us, the darker mornings and the darker evenings with trees starting to get bare and crisp orange, golden and brown leaves crunching below our feet. Many of you have probably also celebrated harvest in your schools as we have given thanks for the provision our crops will give us over the next few months. Winter is fast approaching and the forecast is showing a drop in temperature with snow forecast in the near future.

I commenced my role as President on 1st April 2022. I can't believe over 8 months have passed already. In our last UTU News, I made reference to our MLAs being in purdah, elections looming and many pay campaigns taking place. Unfortunately, not much has changed – our politicians still haven't joined to make our Assembly, the deadline has passed now for setting another election, we wait with bated breath as the Secretary of State threatens to cut MLA wages to see what is going to happen next. If things don't start to move forward we will potentially be looking at an election situation in Spring 2023. The Prime Minister stayed in post a short time before her resignation. Rishi Sunak took up position as Prime Minister in October. Things for our country are difficult

and are very uncertain.

I can reassure you though that talks about pay are still ongoing with the employers, there are various options on the table but until we have a government to help with financial decisions nothing can move forward. Unfortunately, inflation is now over 10% and everyone is feeling the pinch of rising living costs and decreasing wages in real terms. We have watched council strikes and postal strikes recently.

We as a union had decided to ballot you the members, as in the education sector teachers have been undervalued, considering how we worked day and night to ensure our children still had the education they deserved over the past three years. For the first time ever UTU not only got the mandate of action short of strike but also the mandate for strike action. This shows the feeling amongst our members out there that they really have had enough. I would like to personally thank you all for everything you do for Education in Northern Ireland, our communities and society. Be reassured though that Management Side are still meeting with us and discussing pay, so the talks are still ongoing. Now more than ever we have all stuck together as we have been through one of the toughest times education has ever seen in Northern Ireland.

At the moment the days are so uncertain and we still don't know when or if and who our next Education minister will be. But what I am certain of, is as we step forward together as a profession that the children are at the centre of what we do.

So as we all look forward to the rest of the Christmas festivities with the opportunity of doing some more normal things in school, I would like to wish you all a brighter academic year.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Here's to the end of 2022 and a happy, healthy 2023.

Louise Creelman

LOUISE CREELMAN
UTU PRESIDENT



GENERAL SECRETARY FOREWORD

Colleagues

PAY AND INDUSTRIAL ACTION

Our ballot closed in early October and we have joined our colleagues in the other teaching unions in the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) – and, indeed, many of our colleagues across the public sector – in commencing industrial action.

UTU commends our members for making their voices heard and for standing firm behind the Action Short of Strike as it plays out in schools.

As you will be well aware, Phase 1 of the ASOS commenced on 17th October, with Phase 2 following on 1st November. We are currently preparing to inform employers with regard to Phase 3 which is due to begin on 1st January.

Details will be made available to you following the Christmas break.

A greater awareness of the role and structure of Directed Time Budgets has arisen from the ASOS. UTU recognises that, in the current climate, this is an extremely difficult task for School Leaders but appreciates the efforts they have made; thanks must also be given to the UTU Officials who have invested time in offering support to teachers and School Leaders in this area. Help continues to be available at HQ for those who need it.

Tribute must also be paid to those School Leaders who are making great efforts to streamline the ASOS across different teaching unions represented in their schools. Whilst the NITC unions have worked hard at keeping the ASOS as uniform as possible, some differences still remain and we have heard very positive reports of School Leaders and staff working together to maintain unity in their

school setting. You can be assured that this is noticed and greatly appreciated.

On the pay front, NITC continues to engage with the employers to seek a way forward. This is difficult in the absence of an Executive but negotiations continue with a view to reaching common ground in advance of a resolution of the wider issues.

BUDGET STATEMENT

On 24th November, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland set a Northern Ireland Budget for 2022/23 and will bring forward legislation for this Budget in a Budget Bill in due course.

The Budget Statement contained the following in relation to education.

For Education, this Budget provides £2.6bn in funding, which is an additional £286m on top of last year's spending (after excluding accounting for one-off COVID support in 2021-22). This will protect spending for programmes such as Free School Meals, Home to School Transport, the Extended Schools and Sure Start programmes, all of which support those who need it most. However, even this level of increase will require significant

reductions in current spending trajectory levels to live within budgetary control totals.

This will affect funding for high spend areas such as the Education Authority's Block Grant and the Aggregated Schools Budget. As some costs are demand driven, this will have impacts. However, these are unavoidable given the scale of the overspend risk facing the department. The required action to curtail expenditure must be taken by all Education spending areas in order to live within budget.

Following on from this statement, EA called a meeting with the teaching and non-teaching education unions on Monday 5th December. In that meeting we were informed that there was a projected shortfall of £100m and that EA had been tasked to deliver a savings plan to DE by 21st December to outline how it would address this gap in funding by March 31st, the end of the financial year.

School Leaders received a letter on the same day to outline the impact on school budgets.

How such a shortfall can be addressed from a system which is sorely in need of more funding rather than less is anybody's guess – and speculation at this point will not help.

UTU will work with NITC, the wider education unions, and the employing authorities where appropriate, to mitigate and protect our members and, importantly, the children in our care. We will keep you informed of developments.

Colleagues, it is important that we stand together, with our own members, with those in our schools from other teaching unions, with our support staff. We are facing a huge crisis in our education system and we must support each other in withstanding the impact. Teachers demand better, our children deserve better. Let's work together to deliver.

JACQUIE WHITE
GENERAL SECRETARY

Annual Conference is due to take place on Friday 31st March 2023. Branch and Area Association meetings are currently taking place to nominate delegates and Officers.

If you have missed your Branch meeting and had intended to put yourself forward as a delegate, please contact your Branch Secretary as a matter of priority. You can do so directly or through HQ at office@utu.edu. Nominations must be submitted by **31st December**.

Annual Conference cannot take place this year at the Slieve Donard, Newcastle as, due to renovation work, the hotel is unable to offer the necessary accommodation.

As a result, we are holding Annual Conference at the Roe Valley Hotel, Limavady. We look forward to seeing you there.



CONTACT DETAILS

ULSTER TEACHERS' UNION
94 MALONE ROAD
BELFAST, BT9 5HP

T: 028 9066 2216
E: OFFICE@UTU.EDU
W: WWW.UTU.EDU

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LEARNING LESSONS IN FINLAND AND ESTONIA

UTU members from across Northern Ireland joined with many other Senior School leaders as part of the Controlled School's Support Council Erasmus Mobility Project to Finland and Estonia.

Finland has long been considered a high-performing education system as evidenced by students' performance in international surveys. Schools in Finland enjoy much autonomy and there is a focus on equality. Responsibility for the quality of education is left to the education providers at local and city level. There are no national assessments until the end of general upper secondary education and no inspectorate. Estonia is also deemed to have an exceptionally high-performing education system with students from Estonia ranking among the best in the world and at the top of Europe in international surveys for mathematics, science and reading. Estonia is one of the most digitalised countries in the world and digitalisation is also advanced in schools.

During the visit school leaders had the opportunity to visit an extensive range of schools and educational institutions to learn about the education system in both countries.

Throughout the project, leaders toured schools, met with school leaders, and heard how education is valued and seen as a pivotal part of building up the economy of each country. During the trip leaders had the opportunity to explore the investment and role of Robotics within the curriculum and the high value placed on the teaching of language at all levels including university and vocational school. During visits to Post-primary placements discussions took place about semester based timetable structures and different ways of delivering the curriculum at different ages and stages. The physical school environment and classroom set-up in Finland brought new and innovative ideas for leaders to consider the set-up and structure of classrooms in Northern Ireland and how different young people learn in different ways. In both



countries the team approach to learning, with schools availing of their own Educational Psychology and in some areas health personnel including nurses, occupational and speech therapists on the school premises or shared between neighbourhood school reflected how the school is at the heart of the community and professionals work together on a daily basis to cater for the wide range of pupil needs. By organising the trip, CSSC brought about opportunities for Northern Ireland leaders to develop their own professional skills and knowledge whilst supporting leaders to embed rigorous self-evaluation processes to bring about continued school improvement. Throughout the trip opportunities arose for collaboration between various sectors within controlled schools and the cultivating of professional relationships with educationalists throughout Finland and Estonia for future collaboration and professional learning opportunities on an international basis. The trip also allowed educators to celebrate and appreciate the many strengths of our own schools in Northern Ireland and emphasised the passion and commitment of the staff teams within the Controlled School's Sector throughout Northern Ireland.



Workers Demand Better - Biennial Delegate Conference

The NIC/ICTU Biennial Delegate Conference took place in Enniskillen on the 22/23 November 2022. The BDC allows UTU representatives to consider a wider perspective on the local workforce. Unions which represent the colleagues with whom we work in schools such as Classroom Assistants, Building Supervisors, bus drivers, etc, put forward motions for debate, plus we hear the views and concerns of our colleagues across the wider public and private sectors such as in health, civil service, finance and retail.

UTU was represented by the President, Louise Creelman, the Vice-President, Lynelle Fenton, and the Ex-President, Alison Steen, plus the General Secretary and other members from CEC – Emma Loughridge, Eileen McKee and Heather Milligan. This was the first time for most of the representatives and offered a great opportunity to learn about the pressures faced by workers outside of teaching. Lexie Scott, former President of the UTU on two occasions and current Honorary Vice-President, also attended the conference on behalf of Ballymena Trades Council.

UTU submitted a motion on Domestic Abuse and RSE as below:

UTU MOTION TO BDC

Domestic Violence and Abuse has long been a scourge on Northern Irish society, with statistics showing that the impact of the pandemic has served only to exacerbate the issue. Congress acknowledges fully the severe negative impact caused by Domestic Violence and Abuse on the adult

survivors in our society but also recognises that responsibility must be taken to address this issue in terms of the effect it has on our children and young people, both now and into the future. Congress welcomes the introduction of Operation Encompass but recognises that this is a reactive measure. It is in the interests of our children and young people to support this initiative with a robust and preventative approach.



Congress, therefore, calls upon the ICTU to campaign for:

- (i) Minimum agreed age-appropriate content for Relationships and Sexuality Education which addresses the issues of domestic abuse and healthy relationships.
- (ii) Specialist training and support for teachers that enables and equips them to deliver a Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum which addresses the needs of this society and empowers our young people to make informed choices and effect change in their own lives.

The motion was proposed by the President and seconded by the Ex-President, and has proved to be particularly pertinent at this time in light of the release of the most recent statistics on the reporting of coercive control.

The President also spoke to a motion regarding the cost of living crisis brought by Unison, with the Vice-President speaking to a motion brought by NIPSA on collective bargaining and the importance of working together.

UTU congratulates all for their contributions and affirms its support to all affiliates and colleagues as they strive for better pay and conditions for their members in the current climate.





Constructive leisure activities and educational visit to a historical site



The focus over the last 12 months has been aimed at, Ukraine, India Philippines, Uganda, Nigeria, Myanmar, Ethiopia and Nepal with Senegal being considered as an additional recipient in 2023.

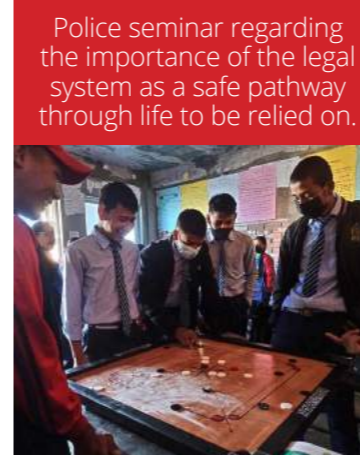


Union supports A Ray of Hope UNESCO projects during times of World strife.

Our sincere thanks to the Ulster Teachers' Union for its continued support over many years and could we offer to the union's members our grateful appreciation for their invaluable generosity. We have had three years of tribulations caused not by the support given to us, but the consequences of COVID, natural disasters, political turmoil, civil unrest and even the hacking of financial institutions preventing the transfer of currencies when the projects were completed. Thankfully our dedicated teams have managed to use windows of opportunities to complete their initiatives when it was appropriate to their personal safety whilst adhering to their countries laws and regulations. 95% of 2022's intended projects have

been completed, i.e. 36, with those few remaining planned for completion over the next few months. The focus over the last 12 months has been aimed at, Ukraine, India Philippines, Uganda, Nigeria, Myanmar, Ethiopia and Nepal with Senegal being considered as an additional recipient in 2023. In India a myriad of activities were based loosely around our network of Henny Penny Libraries of which there are 53 – an increase in the number of libraries was halted by local enforcements to prevent the spread of the pandemic. Uganda and Nigeria provided us with the opportunities to supply new school furnishings, free skills' acquisition sessions, which included self reliance, confidence building, fashion, domestic science workshops and demonstrations.

In Myanmar and Ukraine we contributed to in-house education and necessitous supplies, needs brought about by the conflicts. The refurbishment of various school buildings was our main focus in Philippines, coupled with several food pantries used for the distribution of foods and supplies to needy families. In Nepal a plethora of demonstrations, workshops, educational visits and performances with a multitude of themes including cultural awareness and appreciation, environmental and conservation issues, meditation exercises, positive mindfulness, health and hygiene, Nepalese art and design, positive and constructive personal regimes, computer equipment and community safety sessions delivered by the local police force. We hope for a less challenging 2023.



Police seminar regarding the importance of the legal system as a safe pathway through life to be relied on.





LOST VOICES

Bereavement support for Teachers



Teachers were offered bereavement training in a pilot scheme at the end of August. There were teachers from almost 100 schools in Northern Ireland received this bereavement support training to help pupils in their care cope with losing a loved one.

The pilot initiative was led by the charities Marie Curie and Cruse Bereavement Support and the aim of the programme was to tackle the impact and suffering that a loss can have on the mental health and wellbeing of our children. The current support across Northern Ireland does not meet the demand of young people currently needing support. Through the scheme, bereavement counsellors provided training for almost 120 teachers at six separate training days.

Sessions included looking at the effects of grief on young people, how children grieve, difficult questions and appropriate language. The teachers also left with practical tools to use in their own schools.

There is a taboo around death and there is demand in our province for bereavement support for both pupils and teachers.

The course covered many issues but the main focus was to help teaching staff understand bereavement grief, the different ages and stages and how children and young people react to the loss of a loved one.

The teachers also discussed and looked at difficult questions that children have around what happens to people when they die and where do they go.

They looked at anticipatory grief - the loss and grief a person can feel before that loved one dies and gives them time to prepare. The professionals found out how much children need them in these circumstances and how school can be a second home to children.

The aim was that offering training and support for teachers would allow there to be much needed support in schools for children and staff when needed. It is because death is such a taboo subject that dying and bereavement is a huge stumbling block to people receiving the support they need.

Just being there and saying, 'I'm sorry to hear about your loved one' can be the arm of support that is needed for a child who is finding it difficult to talk to others.

One of the NI statistics surrounding bereavement that was shared at the course was that in every classroom, there will be at least one child who has been bereaved of a parent or a significant adult in their life. This seems like a huge statistic but for that child they can feel so isolated.

The teachers who attended the training just wanted to know how they can help if this situation arises in their classroom, how to support a young person so that they manage their grief and they can continue to become resilient and survive, to get through school.

A key feature of the course was of what teachers can do for a grieving child and that is to address their loss, ask how they are feeling and signpost them to help if required.

It is important for teachers to be upskilling themselves, so that they feel that they are able to deal with these issues, when they arise.

In these challenging and difficult circumstances, no one knows who the child is going to turn to or open up to, therefore it is so important to ensure that anyone working with pupils don't feel embarrassed about dealing with the after effects of bereavement and that instead they feel equipped to offer help.

I as President of the Ulster Teachers' Union attended the session in Antrim and although it was a heart breaking, heavy course, as a professional I totally see the value in having this training. I would recommend to any teachers out there if offered this training to avail of it. It is a training much needed for us to enable us to support the children in our care if such an event occurs.

TEACHERS & MENTAL HEALTH



In our profession today, the job description is ever evolving to include more duties and responsibilities than ever before, including building emotionally strong and healthy pupils in a Post-Covid world.

However, society never discusses or addresses the mental health and well-being of teachers themselves. This situation has led to two major issues – teacher burn-out and a lack of skilled teachers available. Teachers are choosing to leave the profession or move to other places where pay and working conditions for teachers are better.

Given their expanded duties, growing numbers of teachers are struggling to cope with the changing demands that their profession is putting on them, teachers are often physically and emotionally exhausted at the end of the day.

The reason most teachers would feel like leaving the profession is feeling overworked and exhausted, without proper training or professional development.

One way to curb teachers leaving and keep our nation's best teachers in the classroom is to ensure they have the personal support and

development they need to stay healthy and happy in both their personal and professional lives.

Think about what helps lift your mood and gets you through stress – whether it is playing with your children, going for a walk, talking to your friends, taking care of your plants, reading a book or cooking a new recipe. Keep some space to relax. These activities are as important as your working hours. It's about allowing yourself to feel energised.

If you're a teacher who is stressed or worried about anything you can call us on 028 9066 2216 or email using office@utu.edu.

Supporting The Mental Health Of Teachers

Many teachers may think that seeking counselling signals weakness or an inability to handle their workload.

The reality is that the majority of high-performing teachers struggle with the demands of their jobs. This struggle causes many of them to burn out in the early years of their career. We at UTU would therefore encourage our teachers to seek the help they need so they can be happier and more effective

in their roles.

To provide our teachers with the support they need, mental health resources like specialised counselling, reintroducing teacher professional development training opportunities and community efforts focussed on wellness should be prioritised.

By making mental health care more easily accessible to the teachers, we can help them move forward as professionals and individuals while making strides to eliminate the stigma often associated with seeking mental health treatment.

1. Make it a mental health priority

First and foremost, mental health and wellness must be incorporated into training programs early in teacher education.

2. Seek out or develop resources, programs, and policies

The Education Authority also have a role to play in establishing mental health and wellness cultures in schools across the province. As a second step, schools need to invest in the mental, physical, and social health of their most valuable asset—their teachers. By recognising and rewarding teachers for all that they do (even the 'little' things), encouraging the use of small groups and counselling, and prioritising mental health and well-being, this can have a dramatic, positive impact on the lives of teachers.

3. Frame 'mental health' in your own mind in a healthy way

Don't call it 'mental health' if a phrase like 'well-being' makes more sense.

4. Grow a healthy PLN

A strong professional learning network—both inside and outside of the school building.

5. Be in the right place

A place of work that they feel comfortable with—i.e., the 'right' fit for the teacher in terms of position, class, school policies, etc. Not every job is a fit for everyone.

6. Set boundaries

As much as possible, try to have clear boundaries between school and home life.

7. Avoid toxicity

Avoidance of things, people, committees or events, etc.—that are 'toxic'.

8. Emphasise your purpose

Remind yourself of your purpose as a teacher—why you became a teacher.

9. Develop a growth mindset as a teacher

Growth mindsets matter for our pupils and they matter for us as teachers, too.

10. Teach with gratitude

Teach with gratefulness as much as possible.

11. If you're able, start small

Focus on the good things and try to have more good things every day than bad.

12. Take care of your body, too

Take care of yourself physically: exercise, meditate, take time out, get enough sleep, etc. Whatever it takes for your body to feel good.

13. If you need help, get help

Don't be a hero. If you need formal mental health support (in the form of therapy or medication), there's no reason to hesitate. Get it.

14. Have a life outside of teaching

Have a life outside of your place of work—one full of creativity, hope, people and possibility.

15. Don't feel stuck

If possible, never get 'stuck' where you feel like you 'have to' teach or 'can't quit.' There's always a way forward. Anytime anyone feels 'stuck,' it can convince you your situation is worse than it really is.

Teachers are working each day to build emotionally strong and healthy children, moulding the next generation of leaders. As the responsibilities of teachers continue to grow very quickly, we must do all we can to support their mental health and well-being. We must support the 'whole teacher.'

By providing the emotional support our teachers so desperately need and deserve, we can help them grow professionally and live happier lives all while keeping our teachers here in our province for the good of our country.



NEW NOVEL 'CATCHING BUTTERFLIES' BY LYNN FLEMING

In January 2020, with lockdown imminent, I began to write my first children's novel 'Catching Butterflies.' It was a story which had been in my head a long time, but which I had never had time to write. I had wanted, for a long time, to draw upon my memories as a child growing up in the 1980's in Castlederg.

That was a troubled time, as many people will remember. Many children were aware of the dangers, usually centred around the town. We knew of people being killed and we knew about bombs. My grandmother's house, though only a few miles away from the town itself, seemed a world away. It was, to me, a rural paradise where I could play happily, with my cousins, without fear or worry, away from all the 'bad things' that we knew were happening.

My grandmother's name was Matilda Sproule, but everyone knew her as 'Birdie.' She was an amazing woman who was the 'heart and soul' of our family. She was hard-working, funny and often blunt when it came to giving advice. She was a wonderful baker and was always making delicious things like scones, buns and lemon meringues. She was always busy and lively, always on the go. She loved her family dearly and she loved her little house on the Kilclean Road where she had lived most of her life since she'd married my grandfather William Sproule.

It was a very special place, my grandmother's house and it was where we all gathered religiously on Sunday evenings. Everyone piled into the small living room, which opened straight onto the small front garden. You sat wherever there was space - on the sofa if you were lucky - on the arms of the sofas and chairs, on stools brought in from the scullery, or just on the floor. There was always plenty of tea, sandwiches and good things to eat. It was a house filled with laughter and stories.

When my grandmother died in 2010 from cancer, it was devastating. What we had thought was a bad chest infection, was quickly diagnosed as lung cancer. She had been unwell over the Christmas of 2009 and into the New Year. On the 19th of February, she died. She had been such a massive part of our lives. She had lost



My novel is suitable for ages 9-12 year olds and it's for girls and boys. I've written it as a book which could be used in the classroom as well as read individually for enjoyment.

my grandfather ten years previously and had had to reinvent her life from that time onwards. This had been difficult for her, but she had kept herself busy with her family and with her church and social groups. She'd found meaning again where it had been taken away.

My novel 'Catching Butterflies' is a tribute to her, a thank you in a way for all the amazing memories she gave us. It's a story set around her garden, told from the perspective of a cat called Perdu. The real cat was actually called Tinker, but I changed the name as 'Perdu' is French for lost and the cat is completely lost at the beginning of the story, before he finds a home with my grandmother.

There's lots of adventures in this story. Life isn't easy for Perdu as he's treated badly by his first owners, before being abandoned by the side of the road. He has

to learn to be strong and to persevere. It's a story about the importance of family and friendship and about being resilient in the face of adversity and danger. It conjures up a world long gone, where children played outside from morning until night. Where you had to make your own fun by building huts or treehouses, going on walks, playing card games or tag, or hide and seek.

My novel is suitable for ages 9-12 year olds and it's for girls and boys. I've written it as a book which could be used in the classroom as well as read individually for enjoyment. I hope that my novel will encourage children and

young people to read and keep reading. In an age of devices, it's more important than ever for children to pick up a book and immerse themselves in it. I've called it 'Catching Butterflies' as it's taken from a simile I really liked in the novel - 'thinking of what to do next was like trying to catch a butterfly which is flying beyond your reach.' I think everyone's been in this situation before, wanting to take action of some sort, but not knowing what to do for the best. I earnestly hope that many children enjoy this book. There's a lot of love, time and energy that has gone into it.

'Catching Butterflies' is available to order from 'Amazon' as well as 'Waterstones' and 'WH Smith' online from 28th April at the price of £6.99. Also available locally from 'Whites' in Omagh, as well as 'Book Guild' Publishing with a special 30% off for schools with the code **'BUTTERFLIES30.'**



Drumhillery staff and pupils up to date with ICT know-how

DRUMHILLERY Primary School might not be very big in terms of its pupil numbers. They total 65. But this little seat of learning in Middletown has just been recognised as one of Northern Ireland's leading primary schools in the now all-important field of digital technology.

With only 87 of NI's 796 primary schools having achieved this prestigious, nationally recognised award, staff, pupils and parents alike are understandably delighted at this success.

The Digital Schools Awards is a national scheme used to promote, recognise and encourage a whole-school approach to the use of digital technology. A three-step programme, it helps schools assess progress, with the award itself recognising excellence in the use of digital technology at nursery, primary, special education and secondary level.

Above all, the aim is to provide practical support and encouragement. And Drumhillery has it nailed.

In preparation for the award, the locals produced a short video, demonstrating how digital technology forms an integral part of teaching and learning within the school. This can now be viewed on the school website.

Expressing his delight that the school's hard work in this field has now been officially recognised, the Principal, Mr Keith Campbell, said "The range of ICT experiences available to pupils in Drumhillery is fantastic and we're so pleased to receive this award.

"I'd like to thank our ICT co-ordinator, Mrs Lorraine Johnston, and all the staff for their commitment to the development of digital teaching and learning here in Drumhillery Primary School."

Explaining what the process en route to this recognition entailed, Mrs Johnson said, "Basically we had to sit down and go through an audit of everything we do with the children in terms of digital technology – different ICT tasks right through to everyday use for general purposes – their AR reading, Easimaths, Studyladder and things like that. "We've been doing these things for years, so to have been given recognition for that is great.

"Having got through the audit we then had to submit our policies. We passed that, too, so then we had a validation interview which was mainly a discussion and questions."

Mrs Johnson continued, "We also showed them a video of the children at work and the different uses of the technology within the school."

Remarkably, these skills and this ICT knowledge is not confined to the more senior pupils. On the contrary, it starts as early as P1.

"We do tasks every year from P1 right through to P7," Mrs Johnson confirmed. "Each class has three tasks – one per term – designed to help them specialise in various aspects of ICT. This year, for example, the topics were presenting, managing data and working with images.

"The P4s created pictures for the Armagh Show and the P5s made short movies about the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

"But even the P1s are able to create drawings using the box and interactive whiteboard, so from the word go we try to integrate as much ICT as possible into what the pupils are doing."

She pointed out, "When they come into P1 and see a computer or whiteboard, they're excited to learn using those things. They really can't wait to get started, and

when that's the way they feel about earning it's easy to cater for them.

"Every year, for the next three, we'll do something different each term, so because they're learning new skills all the time they continue to be interested.

"And, of course, these are skills they were able to use during the Covid lockdown, because when everything went online they had sufficient know-how to enable them to continue learning at home."

Stressing the bigger-picture benefits she added, "Internet and ICT skills are part and parcel of everyday life now, so it's about trying to ensure the children are equipped for the future."

As well as lauding the children, she also hailed the attitude of her teaching colleagues at Drumhillery, saying, "When you ask for new technology and you get that, the staff take it on board and get cracking with it.

"We all work together as a team. Each year we review our tasks and plan for what comes next. So everybody here – staff and pupils alike – just works hard.

"It's ever-changing," she added. "Every year new software and new programmes come out, so you just have to work with the technology that's available to you and provide as much experience as possible for the pupils.

"We were classed as a satellite school, so let's just say that our internet hasn't been great! But thankfully we're now waiting for our fibre connection to come in, so that should improve things and make them a whole lot easier when it happens.

"Meanwhile we'll do what we've always done – just try to make the most of what we have and get on with it." And clearly they have done so to great effect.

» FRESHER FAIRS 2022



UTU Official Rebekka Gilpin, with some recently signed up students.



UTU President, Louise Creelman with General Secretary, Jacquie White at Coleraine Campus Freshers Fair.



UTU Organising Officer, Joseph Wyglendacz with

Lots of busy afternoons for Rebekka Gilpin and Joseph Wyglendacz at the Freshers' Fairs throughout Northern Ireland.

Working alongside our colleagues in Irish National Teachers' Organisation NI and NEU Northern Ireland it was great to meet so many students starting their teacher training course. Hundreds of students ranging from first to fourth year

have signed up for student UTU membership which provides support and encourages them to get involved with union events through the Future in Teaching Group. The UTU provides **FREE** membership to students taking any route to qualified teacher status for the full duration of their training. If you are currently undertaking or are about to start your initial teacher training, it is vital that you join a teachers'

trade union. You can join the UTU online by visiting www.utu.edu. Mentoring and serving students is at the heart of the UTUs mission. We are dedicated to the development of lifelong learning beginning at the student level and continuing through professional employment. We enthusiastically welcome students to become part of a community of friends and colleagues who all seek the same goal: **excellence in teaching.**





The delegates at FIT conference with Jacquie White (General Secretary), Louise Creelman (President) and Sarah, Keith and Niamh from ADDNI.

FUTURE IN TEACHING CONFERENCE 2022



The Ulster Teachers' Union Future in Teaching group got together again for the first time post Covid on Saturday 25th June 2022. Fun was had by all as they splashed and climbed through the course at the Lake in Kilrea. This was followed by a delicious 4-course lunch at The Brown Trout. Thanks to all who attended.



The Future in Teaching Conference was held at Dunsilly Hotel, Antrim from 14th - 15th October. This was the first FIT Conference since January 2020 and there was a great buzz about the event. It started at 5pm with introductions to UTU and FIT, followed by an informative session and questions and answers by the ETI. Caroline Friel then led a session on Induction and EPD. The Friday evening then finished with a lovely 4 course meal and some mixing and socialising. Following breakfast on the Saturday morning we were delighted to welcome Sarah Salters, Keith and Niamh from ADDNI. Sarah led a training on ADHD, what

it is, the symptoms and how to support children in our classrooms. Keith and Niamh then shared their experiences of growing up and coming through school with ADHD. Followed by a question and answer session. Again this was very informative and resources were shared to help teachers with strategies in their classrooms. Thanks to everyone who attended and for filling in the survey following the event. Further details at: <https://addni.org> If you are a beginning teacher or a recently qualified teacher and would like further information on our programme of events for FIT 2022/2023 get in touch via UTU HQ.



A perfect day for the annual UTU Golf Tournament at Castlereagh Hills Golf Course



Winners Ladies:
1st = Alison Chestnutt
2nd = Karen Bain
3rd = Joan Reid

Longest Drive = Jayne Henry
Nearest The Pin = Alison Chestnutt

Winner Mens:
1st = Mark Milligan
2nd = Eddie Adair
3rd = Glen Brown Senior

Longest Drive = James Roulston
Nearest The Pin = Matthew McFerran

Beautiful summer weather and surroundings at the Castlereagh Hills Golf Club set the scene for the first battle for the President's Cup since 2019. Members and friends were able to enjoy the day in full sunshine rather than in the rain, competing to win one of the many prizes available. The change of venue to Castlereagh attracted long standing competitors as well as a few new faces to the event, and the course in combination with the sun did certainly not disappoint. The golf tournament was followed by a lovely 3-course meal in the club house. Thanks to all who attended and congratulations to all the winners. Feedback from competitors was excellent. We look forward to seeing you next year!



UTU members deliver historic vote for strike action in fight for fair pay

UTU members will shortly commence on a coordinated campaign of industrial action short of strike alongside their fellow trade unionists from the other teaching unions. The action will be phased, in the hope that the employing bodies and the Department of Education [DE] will take a common-sense approach and avail of the opportunity to bring forward a realistic pay offer that recognises the worth and value of teachers and takes account of the dire cost of living crisis all working people are experiencing (more details below).

UTU's General Secretary, Jacquie White, advises: "We are sending a message to the Department of Education and indeed to Westminster, that teachers have got to the point where they need to be valued, they need to be recognised and they need to be appreciated as a profession."

We have now notified the education employers of the outcome of our industrial action ballot (Action short of Strike Ballot).

Our industrial action will be coordinated with our colleagues in the other unions that make up the NITC.

We have already advised the employing authorities that our joint industrial action will be 'phased' with Phase One up until mid-term, Phase Two up to Christmas break, and Phase Three in the New Year.

SUPPORT FAIR PAY IN EDUCATION

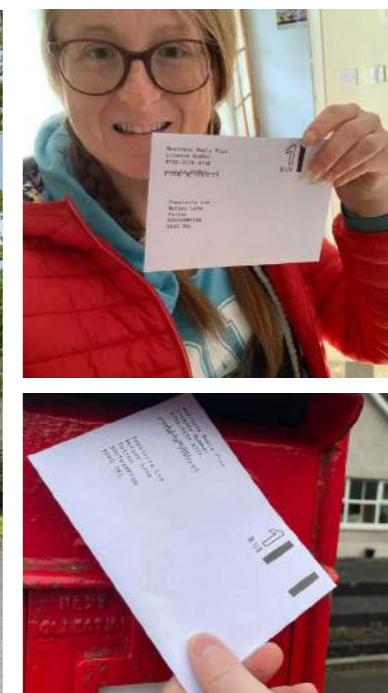
#SupportFairPayInEducation

Our action is in response to:

- Failure to protect teachers from the devaluation of their profession
- Failure to protect teachers from cost-of-living increases
- Failure to protect teachers' professional integrity



UTU President, Louise Creelman submitting her ballot in support of industrial action.



Members sent us lots of pictures to show their support for the ballot and industrial action.

On the road with UTU's Organising Officer



Joseph visiting schools to discuss the ballot and a mandate for industrial action.

UTU's newest recruit, Organising Officer, Joseph Wyglendacz has hit the ground running recruiting and visiting members in schools.

Hailing from Cornwall, a qualified teacher and former District Secretary of NEU for over 6 years coordinating thousands of members across England. Since starting work with us in September 1st Joseph's hit the ground running. Starting with a massive involvement in the ballot for industrial action, helping to achieve the unprecedented mandate for strike action. He continues to work alongside the Central Executive Committee (CEC) with their membership engagement strategy and is always creatively looking to develop further involvement with the wider membership. Building on his previous experience and knowledge of employment law, he has also taken on significant pieces of casework supporting both individuals and collective groups solve issues in the workplace.

You might have seen Joseph speaking at all-members zooms, leading on information webinars (maternity rights, paternity rights and retirement planning) or at the University recruitment events. He now represents the UTU on numerous groups: Equality Coalition, ICTU Education Trade Union Group, ICTU Global Solidarity Committee and many more, involving attending several conferences.

Enhancing our political lobbying, Joseph has convened meetings with key political groups, meeting in Stormont and elsewhere, to ensure that our vision of education is communicated right to the top with MLAs & MPs.

Joseph has visited member groups in schools across the whole of Northern Ireland from Belleek to Bangor, to answer questions and listen to views. He is always looking to get into more schools and meet the wider membership, so if you're interested in a school meeting get in contact!

Actions Short of Strike 2023

Members will rigorously comply with the 'Jordanstown Agreement'

Members will rigorously comply with the 'Jordanstown Agreement' to include:

- **Limit** total hours worked to 32.4 per week.
- **Limit** teaching to 25 hours (Primary & Special) and 23.5 (Post Primary) (or pro-rata if Part-Time)
- Outside of teaching hours, complete non-contact Directed Time (outside of the school's normal pupil learning day) at a time and place of their choosing.
- **Do not** provide cover (including composite classes) outside the 1987/88 Regulations. (Morning and School bus duties should be seen as Health and Safety issues and are therefore exempt from action). (See at Note 2 below)
- **Refuse** to accept direction to attend more than one formal school meeting (of no more than one hour duration) per calendar month.
- **Refuse** to meet with or report to parents on an ad-hoc basis in person, online or by telephone, outside pupil sessions except when fulfilling a teacher's contractual obligation, or in exceptional circumstances pertaining to legitimate safeguarding and child protection issues.
- **Refuse** to attend meetings/events held outside of the school's normal Pupil learning day. (Including open, prize and parents' evenings) - unless a local arrangement agreed with unions in the school has been reached prior to 1 January 2023.
- **Refuse** to be directed to undertake unremunerated (new or existing) school duties or activities
- **Refuse** to be directed to undertake unremunerated (new or existing) extra-curricular voluntary activities (See Note 3 below)
- **Do not** participate in training or implementing, any work relating to Phase 2 of SEND Implementation and PLPs (until such time as feedback has been published with regard to the workload associated with this area from Phase 1 schools).
- **Boycott**, or continue to boycott Key-Stage, cross curricular Assessment arrangements.
- **Do not** submit planners or lessons plans.
- **Do not** conduct requisition of materials or teaching supplies unless specifically allocated appropriate time within the Directed Time Budget.
- **Do not** engage in tasks other than those set out in the Directed Time Budget.
- **Do not** engage in new initiatives
- **Do not** engage with classroom observation outside of PRSD or EPD.
- **Refuse** to conduct routine administrative or clerical tasks
- **Do not** complete any part of the School Development Plan
- **Do not** co-operate with Governors' meetings after 5:00pm
- **Do not** provide lunchtime supervision (without a separate/secondary remunerated contract)
- **Do not** engage with ETI Inspections
- **Do not** engage in planning or delivering remote learning, unless included in their Directed Time-Budget
- **Do not** cooperate with 'book-scoops'
- **Refuse** to respond to emails, texts, messages, calls etc. outside working hours. Set your own professional limits!
- **Do not** engage in scribing activities.
- **Do not** attend employer-led training (except in respect of legitimate safeguarding)
- **Do not** attend Area Learning Community (ALC) or Pathways into Partnership meetings or activities
- **Boycott** Consultations (responses or meetings)

Note 1 In general, members should, at both system and school level, take due cognisance of any educational or care plan for the young persons in their charge who have special educational needs and ensure they are not negatively impacted as a consequence of this industrial action.

Note 2 The term 'cover' refers to any occasion where the Teacher normally responsible for teaching the class is absent and a teaching colleague is required to teach the class. Cover therefore is included within the teaching limit of 25 hours in any week in a primary school or special school and 23.5 hours in any week in a secondary school, as specified under the 1987 Regulations (Schedule 3, Regulation 5, Paragraph 9).

Note 3 Unremunerated and voluntary/extra-curricular activities

- "Unremunerated" duties include any duty which you undertake for which you are not paid the 'going rate'. This includes duties that do, should or used to, attract remuneration by way of a Teaching Allowance.
- "Voluntary" activities include extra-curricular work with school teams, music/drama productions and clubs. These voluntary activities have always been 'voluntary' but in some cases (and within particular school cultures) are often presented as obligatory. Where any activities have been imposed on a member, then the Action (short of strike action) instructions enable members to withdraw with adequate notice from these activities. The withdrawal of voluntary engagement in activities outside of school sessions has always been the prerogative of the volunteering teacher. Members are free to relinquish these duties or activities and any time (preferably with adequate notice). Where members have made a professional judgement and have volunteered freely to provide extra support for certain pupils outside school sessions, these can continue.

Principals' Actions: Principal members

- **Boycott** data provision (outside Annual census or monthly returns).
- **Do not** write Annual Board of Governor Reports.
- **Do not** engage with or enact any process associated with redundancy procedures within schools that are as a direct consequence of budgetary constraints, other than category one redundancies.
- **Do not** forward Governors Minutes to employers.
- **Limit** financial plans to one per year only.
- **Do not** facilitate any school visits by School Development Services (SDS), except for legitimate safeguarding issues or Formal Intervention.
- **Boycott** engagement with School Improvement Professionals (SIPs).
- **Refuse** to provide information to employers re: staff participating in lawful industrial action.

Principal members should, at both system and school level, take due cognisance of any educational or care plan for the young persons in their charge who have special educational needs and ensure they are not negatively impacted as a consequence of this industrial action.

Join us

What's on

TRAINING COURSES

2023



JAN 24TH
TUESDAY

PRE-RETIREMENT

Are you 50 or over and thinking about retirement?
Want to find out when you can retire and what benefits you can expect? Teachers' pensions have changed considerably. Find out what your teacher's pension means for you.

FEB 7TH
TUESDAY

PHASED RETIREMENT

If you are 55 or over and considering part-time working or retirement but are still not ready to fully retire, phased retirement may be an option for you. This webinar will provide you with the information you require to inform that choice.

FEB 22ND
WEDNESDAY

PRE-RETIREMENT

Are you 50 or over and thinking about retirement?
Want to find out when you can retire and what benefits you can expect? Teachers' pensions have changed considerably. Find out what your teacher's pension means for you.

FEB 28TH
TUESDAY

SAFEGUARDING

Our one hour 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.

MAR 15TH
WEDNESDAY

PRE-RETIREMENT

Are you 50 or over and thinking about retirement?
Want to find out when you can retire and what benefits you can expect? Teachers' pensions have changed considerably. Find out what your teacher's pension means for you.

SIGN UP TO ANY OF THESE COURSES BY CONTACTING US ON
EVENTS@UTU.EDU WITH YOUR NAME, TR NUMBER AND SCHOOL

LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM AT BUSHVALLEY

On Thursday 6th October, Bushvalley Primary School held the official opening of their Outdoor Classroom Area. They were delighted to welcome along members of the Board of Governors and EA Representatives; Helen Crossan, Alastair McCallion and TA McTaggart.

The Outdoor Classroom was officially opened by the Rev K Crowe (Chairperson of The Board of Governors). As an expression of thanks to the Education Authority, Clarke (P1) and Eva (P7) presented gifts as the youngest and eldest pupils.



THE BARNYARD BISTRO



OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK!

OPENING TIMES

MONDAY	-	8:30AM TO 7:00PM
TUESDAY	-	8:30AM TO 7:00PM
WEDNESDAY	-	8:30AM TO 7:00PM
THURSDAY	-	8:30AM TO 9:00PM
FRIDAY	-	8:30AM TO 9:00PM
SATURDAY	-	8:30AM TO 9:00PM
SUNDAY	-	8:30AM TO 7:00PM

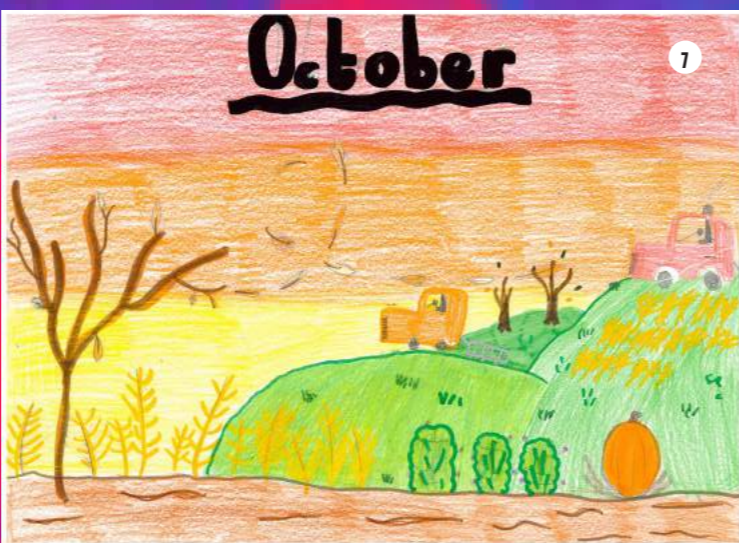
13 High Street, Ballymoney, BT13 6AH

CONTACT US :

thebarnyardballymoney@outlook.com



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & GLOBAL SOLIDARITY
COMPETITION 2022



In November, UTU asked students across Northern Ireland to create a seasonal scene for a calendar. The submissions we received back were absolutely outstanding.

Congratulations to all the winners.

- 1 FOYLE COLLEGE**
Brooke, Cameron, Cormac, Grace Mc, Rachel, Grace H, Alex, Megan, Ross and Gracie
- 2 ACADEMY PRIMARY SCHOOL**
Jessie Stevenson
- 3 WINDMILL INTEGRATED PRIMARY SCHOOL**
Maja L, Maguire R, Tom W, Imogen M, Joshua L, James McF, Darragh McK and Brody S
- 4 EDENDERRY PRIMARY**
Grace Neill
- 5 BRAIDSIDE INTEGRATED PRIMARY SCHOOL**
Odhran O'Boyle
- 6 DRUMRANE PRIMARY SCHOOL**
Charley McAleese
- 7 EDENDERRY PRIMARY SCHOOL**
Heidi Logan
- 8 DRUMRANE PRIMARY SCHOOL**
James McConnell
- 9 AUGHNACLOY PRIMARY SCHOOL**
Rebecca Bloomer
- 10 DRUMRANE PRIMARY SCHOOL**
Sarah Irons
- 11 ACADEMY PRIMARY SCHOOL**
Hannah J
- 12 EDENDERRY PRIMARY SCHOOL**
Connor Taylor
- 13 CLARE PRIMARY SCHOOL**
Isla Reid
- 14 ACADEMY PRIMARY SCHOOL**
Hannah Lyttle



Flower Festival Visit

Garvagh Primary School in the Heart of the Community

On 7th October, pupils, staff and parents from Garvagh Primary School had the privilege of attending the opening of the Flower Festival at Saint Paul's Parish Church in Garvagh. The theme of the festival as *'Old but beautiful - but still bearing fruit'*. At the flower festival, the children were able to view a range of beautiful arrangements, each with their own specific stylings and colour schemes which were impressively displayed and tastefully selected. As the Rev Carmen Hayes addressed the children,

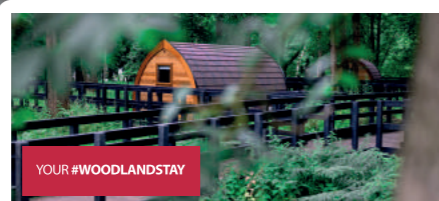
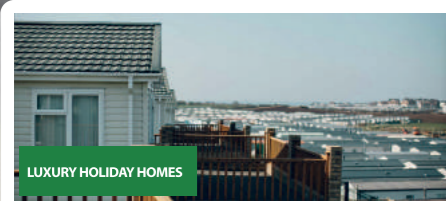
it soon became clear that there was a greater significance than the eye-catching combinations of flowers. Each floral display represented specific yet well-known episodes from the Bible.

The children, who filled most of the church building, filled the room with their voices as they performed a variety of songs as part of the opening events. The very unique event was enjoyed by all. Special congratulations to all involved in the organisation and participation in the event.



BOOK YOUR HAPPY STAY FOR 2023

We are delighted to announce that we are now taking bookings for 2023! So if you are wanting to get your Easter holiday booked, or your summer family staycay sorted, or how about a half term holiday, or a romantic break away- we've got you covered!



Contact Us For More Information.
📞 028 7082 3537

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