

SHARED EDUCATION

UTU is supportive of the measures, including funding, being put in place to encourage shared education. UTU is, however, concerned about the measures being used to assess the outcomes of the Shared Education Programme. Conference calls on the Minister to review the assessment measures used, particularly those related to levels, and put in place a more effective system.

LACK OF PARENTAL SUPPORT

UTU appreciates the positive input the vast majority of parents make in supporting the education of their children. UTU acknowledges, however, that there are a number of parents who do not provide an adequate level of support and indeed sometimes hinder the work of the school. UTU calls on the Minister to continue efforts to raise awareness among parents of the importance of positive support for the work of schools

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FOR STUDENTS AND
NEWLY-QUALIFIED TEACHERS

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

UTU believes in equality of educational opportunity for every child. UTU therefore despairs at the ever-dwindling pot of resources in real terms which are made available to address the issues of the children in our schools with SEN. In the interests of all children, and the health and wellbeing of teachers, UTU urges the Minister for Education to recognise the necessity of proper resourcing to enable children with SEN to access the curriculum effectively, and to provide appropriate funding and support to teachers in mainstream classrooms, learning support classrooms and special schools in line with the particular requirements of the individual children in their care.

UTU condemns the recent announcement made by the EA that they intend to reduce the school day for pre-school children in special schools from 5 hours to 2.5 hours. UTU further welcomes the intervention of the Minister which requires EA to review this decision. UTU urges EA to reconsider carefully the need for such a change to be made and calls on EA to involve representatives of teachers in this review process.

EARLY INTERVENTION

UTU is concerned about the lack of resources provided to ensure that children with SEN are identified as early as possible. UTU reiterates its commitment to children being educated in Nursery Schools with qualified teachers who are trained and experienced in identifying special needs. Conference further calls on the Education Authority to ensure that support measures for such teachers are strengthened.

EAL

During the past 10 to 15 years schools are dealing with an increasing number of Newcomer children, many of whom present with little or no understanding of the English language. Some children present with difficulties when mastering their native language needs. Therefore children are not accurately assessed for their progress that is made. UTU demands that the Education Minister urgently reviews the assessment procedures currently in place to ensure pupil progress is accurately measured.

MODERN LANGUAGES

Since Spring 2015 children in mainstream primary education have been disadvantaged in relation to opportunities for further developing knowledge of another language. This allowed our children to acquire the necessary skills and initial command of a variety of European languages, all of which are necessary for post primary education and adult working life. UTU demands a reintroduction of the languages programme in primary education once again.

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

UTU has grave concerns about the future of CPD for teachers and the increasing move towards privatisation in what is a key element in the development of skills and professionalism within a public service. UTU calls on the Minister for Education to ensure that the opportunities for CPD are not only maintained but extended, and that CPD is not 'bought in' but rather is provided and delivered within the education sector by practitioners with practical and meaningful experience in their field.

GTC

Conference notes that GTC is currently revising the teacher competencies with a view to making them part of professional development recognition for teachers. UTU calls on the GTC to consult fully with teachers before these are implemented.

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE AREAS OF CAREERS GUIDANCE

UTU calls on the Minister for Education and the Education Authority to provide Careers teachers with an opportunity to gain a relevant, up-to-date accredited professional qualification to ensure high quality careers advice and information is given to our young people.

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS OF PUPILS WITH ADD/ADHD.

There is a significant increase in the number of children within our classrooms presenting with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and attention deficit disorder (ADD).

Many teachers feel that it has become a minefield as ADD/ADHD manifests itself as a comorbidity condition with many children displaying traits and symptoms of ASD, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Sensory Processing Disorder, Anxiety Disorder or learning difficulties, to name a few.

Taking this into consideration, UTU calls for continued CPD in the area of ADHD/ADD to gain the knowledge and understanding of the condition, medication and the effects on the child. This will enable teachers to provide modification and adaptation within planning and delivery of lessons taking into account varied learning styles and preferences to ensure that we are meeting the holistic needs of our pupils with ADHD/ADD.

WORKLOAD

UTU has serious and on-going concerns about the amount of paperwork required from teachers which has no immediate impact on the teaching and learning in the classroom. UTU urges the DE to raise the awareness and understanding of the Workload Agreement with all parties who contribute to this unnecessary increase in bureaucracy and to show recognition in a practical way that such pressure serves only to increase stress levels of teachers and does not actually improve the academic performance of our children.

WORKLOAD TRAINING FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAMS

School leaders play an important role in managing the workload of their staff. Conference calls on the Education Minister and the Education Authority to provide adequate training in this area. It further calls on EA to support our school leaders in ensuring the health and well-being of all staff is handled in a sensitive and caring manner.

MATERNITY, PATERNITY, ADOPTION, ASSISTED PREGNANCY

UTU notes with concern that the current Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Assisted Pregnancy Schemes are the poorest in the public sector. UTU calls on the Employing Authorities to enter into meaningful negotiation (if necessary beyond the current pay remit limitations) to ensure that teachers are treated fairly in terms of the Public Sector when availing of these schemes.

EDUCATION AUTHORITY

UTU has no confidence in an Education Authority which to date has been financially profligate, organisationally ineffective and which fails to have placed learning and teaching at its very core. UTU calls on the Minister to reconsider the current administrative arrangements and their delivery in consultation with the teachers' unions.

SOCIAL MEDIA

UTU is aware that, while a sub-group was set up to consider the issue of guidance on social media, Management Side of the JWP has not engaged in recent months. UTU calls on the Employing Authority to prioritise engagement with the teachers' unions as a matter of urgency.

LGBT

UTU is aware that LGBT issues may impact on school policies. UTU calls on the Education Authority to set up consultative committees in each region, to include representatives of teachers, to discuss what policies need to be put in place to ensure that schools are compliant with best practice in terms of equality.

AREA PLANNING

UTU notes that while the Education Authority consults with the teacher unions regarding changes to schools estate, they are not fully involving the representatives of teachers in the planning process. UTU calls on the Education Authority to have meaningful discussions at an early stage with the teacher unions regarding any further proposals they may have to change the profile of a region

NEGOTIATING MECHANISMS

UTU is concerned about the lack of progress on legitimate claims made by NITC to the teacher's negotiating forum, the TNC. UTU calls on the representatives of Employing Authorities to engage more productively in real negotiations, particularly at a time when the reduction in school budgets is putting pressure on teachers to raise standards despite the reducing resources. UTU demands that the Employing Authorities give due consideration to the pressure these unrealistic demands put on the health and wellbeing of teachers for whom they have a duty of care.

SALARIES

UTU is shocked at the derisory 1% offer made to teachers recently through the TNC. UTU notes that in order to receive this cost of living increase teachers were to accept a contractual change which would mean they would give up the right to automatic incremental progression. UTU calls on the Management Side of the TNC to make an improved offer, with no strings attached, to accurately reflect the increased demands on teachers due to reduced staffing in schools and as part of a process to restore the value of teachers' salaries which have dropped by approximately 13% in real terms over recent years.

ETI

UTU notes with concern that the NITC meetings with the ETI have to date not been productive. Conference regrets that the full implementation of the Education Committee's recommendations, as a result of their enquiry, has not taken place. UTU has grave concerns regarding the strategic direction of the ETI and the effects its policies are having on schools. UTU calls on the Minister to reconsider the recommendations of the Education Committee, to immediately address the workload issues surrounding inspections and to immediately implement an Independent Appeals mechanism outside the ETI, and to review the current Complaints Procedure.