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EARLY YEARS
The UTU has grave concerns about the inequity experienced by Nursery schools and nursery-age children. The UTU is demanding that all children of nursery age are taught by qualified teachers, that children of nursery age have access to the same level of psychological, behavioural and special needs support as children in other phases of education, and that Principals of Nursery schools are granted the funding for Principal release time in line with Primary schools.
The UTU is calling on the Minister for Education to review and increase the funding available to Nursery Schools and units and Foundation classes in order to lower the teacher/pupil ratio in Nursery and Foundation classes.

SHARED EDUCATION
The UTU believes that the competitive nature and ‘fear factor’ means that collaboration and support between schools is not being utilised in the best interests of leadership, teachers and pupils. The UTU urges that the ELBs, CCMS and NICIE begin a process of fostering collaboration and support between schools in a non-threatening manner.
The UTU supports the Shared Education Report presented last year. The UTU believes that the Department of Education must ensure that Shared Education is promoted more widely and demands that it be adequately financed.

CCEA
The UTU has expressed severe reservations about the huge increase in CCEA staffing. The UTU is calling on the Department of Education to review its relationship with CCEA as a matter of urgency.

ASSESSMENT
The UTU deplores the excessive pressure placed on teachers and schools under the present system of assessment both in terms of workload and distortion of the curriculum. The UTU is demanding that efforts be made to ensure that a meaningful, workable and relevant system of assessment is put in place as a matter of urgency to allow teachers to focus on their key priority – effective teaching and learning.

BT/EPD
The UTU is urging the Department of Education to provide increased opportunities for Beginning Teachers and those in their Early Professional Development to attend training courses away from school in areas such as Special Educational Needs and Behaviour Management.

SIGNATURE PROJECT
The UTU welcomes the employment of teachers in the Signature Project. However, the UTU has raised concerns as to how the success of the project will be measured.

SEN
The UTU is demanding that adequate resources are made available with immediate effect to meet the needs of the growing number of children with speech and language difficulties. The UTU welcomes the identification of SEN in the nursery sector and the up-skilling of some SENCOs in the nursery, primary and secondary sectors. However, the UTU is demanding that added resources are provided to maintain momentum in these areas and that strong working links are developed with the Health Sector.

CLASSROOM ASSISTANT (CA) SUPPORT
The UTU celebrates the efforts that teachers have made to ensure that the Northern Ireland Curriculum and the inclusion of children with a range of SEN in mainstream classrooms have been a success for our children. It was also recognised and understood, however, that integral to the successful working of these systems was the support of appropriately trained Classroom Assistants. The UTU is concerned that dwindling budgets have seen schools having to reduce levels of CA support which has left teachers struggling to cope with a range of practical issues which are having an impact on their ability to deliver the curriculum as effectively and efficiently as they would like. The UTU is calling on the DE to recognise the key role of CAs in schools and respond appropriately and with urgency.

PUPIL SUPPORT
The UTU believes that the postcode lottery of identifying pupils from areas of social deprivation has begun. Education, support measures and intervention are the right of all pupils in need and the UTU is calling on the Department of Education to address this situation immediately.

INSPECTIONS
The UTU despairs that, despite the emphasis put on the development of the whole child by the Department of Education, the ETI continues to maintain a very narrow focus in their consideration of schools’ achievement. The UTU is demanding that efforts are made to ensure that school inspections no longer conflict with the basic beliefs, values and ethos of schools.

AREA PLANNING
The UTU has become increasingly aware that some schools are often subjected to serious pressures by the media picking up announcements before any information pertaining to their future has been shared with the school community. This causes undue stresses and strains on the school principal, teachers, pupils and parents. The UTU is calling on the Employing Authorities to ensure that any announcements are made only after prior notice and full facts have been given to the Board of Governors of a school.

CYBERBULLYING
The UTU has grave concerns about the increasing need to protect teachers and principals from bullying and harassment experienced through technology such as mobile phones and social networking sites. The UTU is calling on the Employing Authorities to ensure that a robust and effective system of dealing with such abuse is introduced as a matter of urgency and that awareness is raised amongst members of the public that such an approach to issues is wholly inappropriate and will not be tolerated.

THE LANGUAGE OF BULLYING
The UTU is calling on the Minister for Education to send a clear and unambiguous message that the language of bullying related to any and all of the equality grounds is unacceptable in all schools, regardless of ethos.

MEDIA
The UTU notes that journalists investigate and report stories of public interest and are entitled to free speech and freedom of expression. However, the UTU is concerned at the increasing number of stories appearing in the press involving teachers, principals and schools that are being sensationalised often before any due process has taken place. The UTU will advise all members to refrain from speaking to the media at any stage during investigative proceedings that may damage the reputation of the school. The UTU has further raised this matter with the Northern Ireland Teachers’ Council and with the Joint Working Party so that teachers are aware of the issues and sensitivities around this area.

DOMESTIC ABUSE
The UTU notes that the problem of domestic abuse can impact on all those in the Education workforce, both male and female.

The UTU is calling on the Department of Education and the Employing Authorities:

(a) to ensure that adequate procedures are put in place to ensure that there is support for members of the education workforce who are victims of domestic abuse;

(b) to review existing policies and procedures for teachers to safeguard their salaries, terms and conditions. The UTU is further calling on the Department of Education to actively highlight the issue and encourage victims who are teachers to seek assistance.

SMALL SCHOOLS FACTOR
The UTU remains concerned that the Department of Education is insisting on the closure of primary schools by the ‘back door’ through the removal of the small schools factor. The removal of this from the budget would have a crippling and detrimental effect on these schools. The UTU calls on the Education Minister to retain this small schools factor in the budget.

SCHOOL BUDGETS
The UTU has grave concerns about the potential impact on schools of the proposals to change the Common Funding Formula.

ULSTER TEACHERS’ UNION
94 Malone Road, Belfast, BT9 5HP

Tel: 028 9066 2216 Fax: 028 9068 3296
E-mail: office@utu.edu Web: www.utu.edu