



TEACHERS CALL FOR PARENTS' MOVEMENT AS TOILET ROLLS RUN DONE

Toilet rolls and textbooks... just some of the basic necessities Northern Ireland schools are struggling to pay for, according to teachers.

“Our schools are facing a crisis – the most serious funding shortage in a generation and we need parents to appreciate just how dire the situation is,” says Avril Hall Callaghan, General Secretary of the Ulster Teachers’ Union.

“Every night we see stories about health care cuts in our hospitals but in terms of the seriousness of the funding situation and the prognosis for our education system, the story is just as bleak.

“We need a parents’ movement to get behind us as we call for the support our pupils so desperately need.

“Schools are quite literally counting every last penny and principals have to make the toughest decisions in terms of what to retain for their children and what to lose in order to simply stay afloat.

“The situation at Stormont makes it even more difficult as without a signed-off budget principals can’t possibly know how to allocate funding or even how much funding they will receive. The situation is impossible.

“And who will suffer as a result? The children. That is why we really need parents to get behind our calls to sort out this situation and to give our children’s education the priority it deserves if Northern Ireland is to look to its long term future, especially in the uncertainty around Brexit.

“A healthy future for our children is in all our interests, as today’s primary school pupils will be tomorrow’s teachers, tradesmen, doctors, retailers, solicitors.

“A school in England hit the headlines recently by asking parents to donate toilet rolls for its use rather than money for charity. Maybe it was a publicity stunt to highlight the straits facing schools but the truth is it’s happening day and daily.

“For too long now schools here have been operating on the good will of teachers – not just in going the extra mile with teaching and nurturing but in the very practical side of supplying their pupils with basic materials too – stationery, books, tissues, little treats for achievement and even at times, toilet rolls!

“Even a glance at their children’s well-used textbooks, often held together with only sticky tape and hope, will show parents just how hard schools have to work to get as long as possible from every copy, for instance.

“We all want the best for our children but if they are to take their place in the world then they need the very best possible start in life. We have an invaluable resource in our teachers but they in turn need the resources to deliver the education our children deserve.

“We must ensure parents appreciate what’s at stake if those resources aren’t forthcoming.”

Editor’s Notes

St John's Primary, in Sussex, recently held a non-school uniform day but instead of donating to charity, pupils were asked to bring in essential items. The chair of the Crowborough school's governors, said it wanted to highlight the "massive financial crisis" all schools face under budget cuts.

Ends

For more information please contact UTU Gen Sec, Avril Hall Callaghan on 02890 662216 or 07808 363702 or her deputy Jacquie White on 07764 899288 or Mandi Millar on 077 1966 4642