



POLICY 2024

WWW.UTU.EDU

**ULSTER TEACHERS'
UNION**



SAFEGUARDING

Conference calls on the Department of Education to carry out a survey enabling information to be gathered that will recognise the role and amount of workload placed on the safeguarding teams in schools. Conference calls on funding to be made available to support those schools which require extra finance and resourcing to ensure that staff are given the adequate time to manage the unique situations that arise in a moment's notice regarding safeguarding. This will ensure that the safeguarding role can be carried out effectively and that other pupils are not missing out on their educational needs or detrimentally suffering due to staff being drawn away from their normal duties.

SUPPORT STAFF TEMPORARY AVAILABILITY

Conference calls on EA to prioritise putting in place a list of all temporary suitably qualified and vetted support staff that schools can avail of that is fit for purpose.

MOBILE PHONES

With a UNESCO survey saying that there are over 6 billion mobile phone subscriptions worldwide and that they bring both positive and negative effects to today's classrooms. Conference calls on the Education Authority to urgently give clear and concise guidance that can be implemented by all schools on the use and misuse of mobile phone technology in schools.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Conference notes that it has now been over 13 years since TNC2011/2 – Policy Statement on Tackling Violence and Abusive Behaviour Against Teachers was introduced. During that time the amount of social media platform communication in society has dramatically increased. Therefore, Conference requests that a clear and enforceable procedure should be provided to all school stakeholders by the Department of Education to address the issue of online Bullying of School Staff by both children and adults



MANAGEMENT OF CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS

Conference deplores the lack of training for teachers and school leaders in the effective deployment of classroom assistants. Conference calls for EA to put in place proper policies and procedures to help support the classroom assistants in their role within an increasingly diverse classroom environment.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR DEPENDENTS OF ANY AGE

In the context of rising pension age, our ageing society and the resultant need for caring, Conference calls on DE to extend leave of absence to cover absence for dependents of any age

SEND TRANSFORMATION AND BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT

Conference has grave concerns with regard to the proposed changes to the structure, availability and delivery of the EA support services. In order to meet the needs of all pupils, it is vital that the new system delivers a clear pathway for referral, is sufficiently staffed and that those employed in the services receive adequate training and notice with regard to any changes to their current contractual duties. Conference notes with concern the timeline for implementing those significant changes and urges the employers to shift their focus from budget pressures to the schools, the pupils and the staff involved in the services.

REVIEWS

Conference welcomes the work which was put into the Workload Reviews by representatives of both the employers and the teaching unions over an 18-month period following the Pay and Workload Agreement of 2020. Conference calls on the Minister to access funding and resource which will now allow the recommendations of these reviews to come to fruition in the interests of the teachers – and the children – in the schools.



DISABILITY

It is the contention of Conference that the legislation in NI around rights of workers with a disability and the responsibilities of employers has been well defined and well established for a considerable number of years.

Conference, therefore, has grave concerns about the marked lack of knowledge, process and procedure in relation to dealing with teachers' disability within both the school context and, indeed, the wider education system.

Conference calls on the employing authorities to ensure that all employers are fully aware of their responsibilities in this area under the legislation and that clear processes and appropriate funding are in place, both at school and system level, to ensure that reasonable adjustments can be provided where needed to allow teachers with a disability to remain in employment with the support and dignity which they deserve – and to which they are entitled.

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF EDUCATION

Conference recognises the pressures our education system is under and the need for transformation in the interests of a more effective service.

On this basis, Conference welcomed the commissioning of the Independent Review of Education and sees merit in a number of the recommendations – but not all. Conference calls on the Minister to ensure that the teaching unions are fully involved in consultation regarding the potential impact of the recommendations on the schools and system and to work together with NITC to ascertain the best out-workings of the Report for all.

BEHAVIOUR AND TEAM TEACH SUPPORT SEN AND MAINSTREAM

Conference acknowledges DE's draft guidance on the reduction and management of Restrictive Practices. However, Conference calls upon DE to ensure all schools and education settings are appropriately funded and resourced to prevent, support and manage crisis situations.



GOVERNANCE

Conference has grave concerns around the lack of accountability which pertains to the governing bodies of schools.

This is particularly pertinent in cases where Governors fail to take appropriate advice from the employing authorities, fail to act on advice from the employing authorities and/or seek to circumvent agreed procedures pertaining to Teachers' Terms and Conditions.

Further, unlike in other areas of work, there is no effective and defined process in place to raise a complaint against an individual school governor as an employer in cases of unacceptable behaviour.

Conference calls on the Department of Education to revisit the links and relationships between the employing authorities and school governors and work with NITC to ensure that accountability lies where it should and that the appropriate procedures are in place should action be required.

EA TRAINING FOR STAFF

Conference recognises the importance of Teacher Professional Learning.

Conference calls on EA to ensure that such opportunities are made available at the appropriate times and with the appropriate times and with the appropriate resources which allow supply teachers and teachers to access them within their contracted time.

EARLY CAREER TEACHERS

Conference calls on the employers to look at ways to improve the support, funding and training available to help provided the professional foundations for Early Career Teachers.



INCREASED FUNDING FOR THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF TEACHING STAFF

Conference recognises the pivotal role played by teaching staff in the education system in contributing significantly to the development and health and wellbeing of pupils. Conference recognises that the demands on teaching staff have increased over the past number of years, and especially as a result of the aftermath of Covid-19, resulting in heightened stress levels, burnout, and adverse effects on the physical and mental health of our teaching workforce.

Conference highlights and commends those schools who are leading the way in innovative and collaborative staff wellbeing initiatives.

Conference demands that the Education Authority includes and promotes a range of strategies to address health and wellbeing as part of continuing professional development opportunities for teaching staff to be included in Staff Development Days. Conference demands that the Department of Education increases funding to all schools to ensure that these opportunities can be utilised and sustained into the future.

STANDARDISED ASSESSMENTS

Conference calls on DE/EA to partake the review of Statutory Assessment at Key Stages 1,2 and 3 as set out in TNC2020/1.

Currently schools are forced to use private, English based testing much of which is not in line with the Northern Ireland curriculum. This places undue stress on young people and their teachers. It also places a significant financial burden on school budgets.

GL assessment holds a monopoly on standardised assessment in schools. Conference is concerned that DE is failing in its statutory duties to provide age-appropriate testing based on the Northern Ireland curriculum.

Conference calls on:

- (i)** DE to carry An urgent review of current assessment practices in primary schools
- (ii)** And UTU to survey to schools on use of testing and data



EARLY CAREER TEACHERS

Conference calls on the employers to look at ways to improve the support, funding and training available to help provided the professional foundations for Early Career Teachers.

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS

Conference despairs at the lack of hours allocated to schools for educational psychologists, and the fact that teachers themselves are required to prioritise their children in order of need. Conference is further concerned that EA is prepared to accept private assessments in some areas as a basis for school support. Conference calls on EA to revisit this decision and determine which professional voices will be taken into account to ensure the appropriate placement and support for individual children. Conference further calls on the Minister for Education to access funding for the support of children with SEN as a matter of priority.

INCREASED INVESTMENT IN PUPIL SUPPORT SERVICES

The current state of investment in pupil support services for pupils with a range of special needs, medical needs, trauma, or for those requiring counselling falls short of adequately addressing the unique challenges faced by these pupils. Conference demands that the Department of Education substantially increases the funding for Pupil Support Services.

LEADERSHIP WORKLOAD REVIEW

Conference calls on DE to put in place the means to implement the recommendations from the Leadership Workload Review.



EA TRANSPORT

Every child has the right to access a full balanced educational experience and the lack of transport should never impact on the child arriving late or having to leave school early. Conference demands that the needs of the child are put first and adequate resources are available to ensure that their education is not impacted.

TRAINED FULLY QUALIFIED SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

Conference deplores the lack of specialist subject teachers available for either short term or long-term teaching. DE needs to undertake an effective audit of teaching vacancies in subjects and key stages and inform and support teacher training colleges and other appropriate institutions to address the shortfall in these areas.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Technological advancements in education continue to shape the learning environment for our pupils and educational staff. The explosion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the past 18 months will bring both challenges and benefits to the classroom. Teachers must prepare for the impact as educators as AI will challenge their professional role, teaching methodology and pupil / class interactions.

Conference calls on the Employing Authorities to establish a forum to engage with all stakeholders to inform them about the latest developments in AI but also to debate, discuss and address concerns for the implications that may have potential negative consequences to the teaching workforce.

LEADERSHIP WORKLOAD REVIEW

Conference calls on DE to put in place the means to implement the recommendations from the Leadership Workload Review.



ATTENDANCE / EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE

Conference deplores the abysmal lack of funding made available to tackle the significant fall in pupil attendance. Attendance is linked directly to attainment. The Educational Welfare Service is seriously understaffed. Conference calls on DE to invest in this vital service.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Technological advancements in education continue to shape the learning environment for our pupils and educational staff. The explosion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the past 18 months will bring both challenges and benefits to the classroom. Teachers must prepare for the impact as educators as AI will challenge their professional role, teaching methodology and pupil / class interactions.

Conference calls on the Employing Authorities to establish a forum to engage with all stakeholders to inform them about the latest developments in AI but also to debate, discuss and address concerns for the implications that may have potential negative consequences to the teaching workforce.

EDUCATION INFORMATION SOLUTIONS (EDIS) PROGRAMME

Conference remains concerned regarding the delivery of a single School Management System that have been outlined by the Education Authority. Conference demands that the Education Authority continue to update and engage with school leaders and teachers around the timescales and the critical planning and support that will be offered to schools to ensuring an effective and smooth transition can be delivered.