

## UNISON supporting school staff – a history lesson

In January 2011 UNISON was due to ballot its school members in England on agreeing a new framework for negotiating pay and conditions of service through the School Support Staff Negotiating Body – SSSNB.

It should have been the culmination of a long process aimed at achieving justice for school staff. We pursued the new framework because:

- UNISON members felt that current terms did not reflect the pace or scale of change in school jobs.
- Many schools were moving to self-government and taking employer status from local authorities.
- Workforce remodelling and reform was recognised through the teachers' review body, but other school staff had no equivalent school-based machinery.
- Many school staff felt undervalued and exploited.

Lengthy government-supported talks took place between unions and employers. These included faith, foundation and trust school employers, not previously represented at national level. Detailed work produced a range of options for change and a constitution was agreed for the SSSNB. A working group identified more than 100 school roles and a new job evaluation scheme was ready for testing. Another working group was developing a new approach to working time, core contract provisions and a handbook.

UNISON members were keen that any SSSNB agreements were backed by law to ensure implementation at school level. The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 gave the SSSNB statutory powers and clarified its remit and relationship to the government. Its timetable allowed for proposals to be finalised by the end of 2010; these would have been put to members in early 2011.

“All the reasons for fighting for fair pay and conditions for school staff still exist.”

Christina McAnea, UNISON  
Head of Education Workforce



**Top:** SSSNB would have represented the whole school support staff team.

**Below:** delight at the formation of SSSNB has turned to anger and frustration.

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# What went wrong?

The May 2010 general election resulted in a Tory / Lib Dem coalition government intent upon public sector cuts.

The testing of job roles in schools was halted as was all other SSSNB work, pending a government review. Letters were written, evidence submitted and political pressure brought to bear. Meetings took place with Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education in an attempt to convince him that the SSSNB work should continue; for the good of staff, students and schools.

Towards the end of the year, we were informed that the body would be abolished but that unions and employers were free to finish its work on a voluntary basis.

## What happens next?

While UNISON continues to voice its fury at this attack on school staff, the government remains unmoved. Our national schools' representatives were deeply dismayed at the government's decision to abolish the SSSNB. It seemed unthinkable that we could be back at square one after investing so much time and effort on a new deal for school members. Many school staff were joining and getting involved in the union at this exciting time and they would also feel disappointed with the government's actions. We recognise that staff in schools are facing major challenges along with colleagues in local authorities – jobs and conditions are being cut and pay frozen – but all the reasons for fighting for fair pay and conditions for school staff still exist. We are now asking you for your views on how we take this forward.

UNISON's national schools committee felt that there was a real need to enter into dialogue with members and to hold discussions throughout England

on the way forward for school staff. Members should:

- Be made aware of the abolition of the SSSNB.
- Consider whether we should seek agreement with employers to finish and implement SSSNB work.
- Identify priority issues for school members.
- Indicate what action they would support to achieve justice for school staff.

## Consultation process

The abolition of the SSSNB and the current climate of cuts require an even stronger union presence and level of organisation. UNISON wants to listen to its members in schools and to develop processes that enable it to respond to workplace concerns.

There are some key issues to consider:

- Should we try and continue to take forward the discussions and negotiations with the employers – that is, the local government employers as well as those representing self-governing schools including faith, foundation and trust schools?
- What are the key issues we need to resolve?
- Would members be prepared to take some kind of industrial action if the employers refuse to negotiate with us?

On page 3 is a quick survey we would urge you to complete. Your answers to the questions will be considered by those UNISON members who represent schools at a national level and will set the agenda for the coming year and beyond. Members can submit individual and group responses as

well as those developed in branch or regional meetings. If you feel you need more information on the work of the SSSNB so far and UNISON's key objectives you can find this on UNISON's website: [unison.org.uk/education/schools/sssnb.asp](http://unison.org.uk/education/schools/sssnb.asp)





## March for public services

# 26 March

On 26 March thousands of people from all over the UK will march in London to speak out against the government's savage and unfair spending cuts.

Join us with your colleagues, friends and family in speaking up for vital public services.



[unison.org.uk/26march](http://unison.org.uk/26march)

# UNISON listening to you

Please take a few minutes to tell us what's important to you.

**1 Should UNISON seek agreement with local authority employers to finish the work that was being done by the SSSNB to:**

- Finalise the development of school role profiles, testing them against real jobs?
- Negotiate Local Government National Joint Council advice on how this information can be used in job evaluation and single status negotiations?
- Finalise a working time formulation to recommend to authorities?
- Continue to meet with employers in a school staff working group?

**2 Should UNISON seek agreements on the above with the other SSSNB employers (eg representatives from faith, voluntary aided and foundation/trust schools)?**

- Yes  No  Don't know

**3 A strike, even for one day, would send a strong message to the employers and government about how important school staff are in running schools.**

Industrial action short of a strike would need to be maintained over a period of time (eg several weeks). We could run a campaign for members to work only to their job description and paid hours for a set number of weeks. We know most school support staff work unpaid hours every week and take on additional responsibilities.

Would members be prepared to consider taking industrial action (this would require a legal ballot) to push forward a claim on a new pay and grading framework by:

**Taking part in a strike day(s).**

- Yes  No

**Taking action short of a strike, for example:**

- Not doing work outside your agreed job or grade.
- Not covering for a colleague on the same grade.
- Following the correct procedures and not taking shortcuts to complete duties.
- Only undertaking work that you have been properly trained to do.
- Not taking on additional duties.
- Working only your contracted hours.
- Taking full lunch breaks and breaks away from your computer.
- Not doing any work in your own time.

**4 What are the major issues that UNISON should address on behalf of school members using representation, negotiation and campaigning?**

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**We welcome your comments**

So please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

**Submitted by**

I am a UNISON member  Yes  No

School

**Or:**

we are a group of  (how many?) UNISON members at:

Address

**Or:**

UNISON branch

UNISON region

Return your form to:

**Education and Children's Services  
Freepost WC5652/13, London WC1H 9AJ  
by 31 March 2011.  
Thank you.**

# Join UNISON — your friend at work

PLEASE FILL IN THIS FORM IN BLOCK CAPITALS USING BLACK INK AND GIVE IT TO YOUR UNISON REP OR SEND TO THE ADDRESS BELOW  
**UNISON EDUCATION, FREEPOST WG5652/13, LONDON WC1H 9BR**

## 1. YOUR PERSONAL DETAILS Please tick or fill in the boxes below

Mrs  Ms  Miss  Mr  Other

First name  Other initials

Surname/Family name  Date of birth  /  /

Home address

Postcode

National insurance number (from your payslip)

**How would you describe your ethnic origin?**

Bangladeshi  Asian Other  Black UK  Chinese  Black  Black Other  Indian  African  White UK  Pakistani  Black  Irish  Caribbean  Asian UK  White Other

Please tick this box if you require materials in a different format (eg large print or Braille) – be sure to supply contact details below

Please give a telephone number/voice/text/email address for UNISON to contact you – indicate if work or home  
 Contact tel/voice/text/email

**2. YOUR EMPLOYMENT DETAILS**

Employer's name

Your job title/occupation

Department/section

Workplace name and address

Postcode

Payroll number (from your payslip)

## 3. WHAT YOU WILL PAY – FROM 1 October 2003

Please tick the appropriate box for your earnings before deductions.

| Weekly pay      | Annual pay      | YOUR SUBSCRIPTION—WHAT YOU PAY per week | per month | Band | Please tick the appropriate box to indicate how often you are paid   |
|-----------------|-----------------|---|-----------|------|--|
| Up to £38.47    | Up to £2,000    | £0.30                                   | £1.30     | A    | <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fortnightly<br><input type="checkbox"/> Four Weekly<br><input type="checkbox"/> Monthly                                      |
| £38.48–£96.16   | £2,001–£5,000   | £0.81                                   | £3.50     | B    | <input type="checkbox"/> Please tick this box if you are a student member in full-time education (including student nurses or Modern Apprentices).<br>Your subscription is £10 per year. |
| £96.17–£153.84  | £5,001–£8,000   | £1.22                                   | £5.30     | C    |  |
| £153.85–£211.53 | £8,001–£11,000  | £1.52                                   | £6.60     | D    |  |
| £211.54–£269.23 | £11,001–£14,000 | £1.81                                   | £7.85     | E    |  |
| £269.24–£326.92 | £14,001–£17,000 | £2.24                                   | £9.70     | F    |  |
| £326.93–£384.61 | £17,001–£20,000 | £2.65                                   | £11.50    | G    |  |
| £384.62–£480.76 | £20,001–£25,000 | £3.23                                   | £14.00    | H    |  |
| £480.77–£576.92 | £25,001–£30,000 | £3.98                                   | £17.25    | I    |  |
| £576.93–£673.08 | £30,001–£35,000 | £4.68                                   | £20.30    | J    |  |
| £673.08+        | over £35,000    | £5.19                                   | £22.50    | K    |  |

## 4. POLITICAL FUND

UNISON's Affiliated Political Fund (APF) is used to campaign for and promote UNISON policy and the need for quality public services within the Labour Party, locally and nationally, in Parliament and Europe. UNISON APF affiliates to the Labour Party.

UNISON's General Political Fund (GPF) is used to pay for campaigning at branch, regional and national levels of the union and for research and lobbying in Parliament and Europe. It is independent of support for any political party.

*It is important that you indicate a choice of fund by ticking one of the boxes below.  
 Your subscription shown above includes a political fund payment so you do not pay any more by being in one of the funds.*

## 5. YOUR AUTHORISATION

- I wish to join UNISON and accept its rules and constitution.
- I authorise deduction of UNISON subscriptions from my salary/wages at the rate determined by UNISON in accordance with its rules to be paid over to them on my behalf and I authorise my employer to provide information to UNISON to keep my records up to date
- I authorise deduction of the following Political Fund payment as part of my subscription: Tick one box only  
 Affiliated Political Fund  General Political Fund

### Now please sign and date below

Signature

Date

### OTHER WAYS TO PAY

direct debit

cheque

*(please tick if appropriate)*

If you have been a member of a trade union before, please state which one:

### DATA PROTECTION

UNISON will process your membership information together with other information for administration, statistical analysis, conducting ballots and other statutory requirement purposes.

We may also send you newsletters, journals and surveys and let you know about educational and campaigning matters. We will disclose your information to our service providers and agents for these purposes.

If you do not want any mailings from UNISON besides those required by statute as shown in bold above, please tick this box.

We may share your information with organisations with whom we have a business relationship for your benefit. We, or they, may contact you by mail, telephone, SMS, fax or e-mail to let you know about goods, services or promotions which we think may be of interest to you.

If you do not wish to receive such information please tick this box.