

BRANCH LINES

UNISON West Sussex Branch newsletter • www.unisonwestsussex.org.uk

NJC PAY

**West Sussex
members
reject 1%**

82.2% VOTED TO REJECT THE OFFER

Full story on page 3

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Chichester High latest 4 • Check your pay 7 • Overseas recruitment 8



WELCOME



Welcome to the latest edition of Schools and Academies Branch Lines. This Spring we

focus on a number of both national and local issues impacting on our members.

We're involved in several collective negotiations where council schools are seeking academy status. Our branch officer James Ellis talks you through these on pages 4 and 5. We also discuss national concerns over the increasing number of academies being created. We bring you up to date on relevant issues such as:

the 'real' living wage being paid to staff at Woodard Academies (see below); NJC pay negotiations; council cuts; language requirements for overseas staff and Occupational Health reporting. We also feature another of our workplace reps: Angela Elliott from Shoreham Academy.

Dan Sartin, Branch Secretary



Woodard Academies to pay 'real' Living Wage



We are pleased to report that Woodard Academy Trust has agreed to seek 'Accredited' (real) Living Wage Employer status.

This is the higher pay level calculated by the independent Living Wage Foundation, not the 'living wage' misappropriated as a title by the Tory government.

Woodard's national agreement will affect staff locally in Littlehampton Academy and the Sir Robert Woodard Academy in Lancing. It will be implemented in two stages:

- From 1 April 2016 the trust will increase the minimum hourly rate paid to staff to £7.85
- From 1 September 2016 it will increase the minimum hourly rate to £8.25

Initially the trust is proposing to pay any increase to staff paid below the living wage rate as a supplement to pay, pending a pay review and grading arrangements across the trust.

Woodard's have also standardised the progression date for pay increments for all Academy Support Staff to 1 September each year where they are applicable.

Both these proposals benefit our members employed by the trust. UNISON warmly welcomes this approach on pay, which was achieved after negotiations in late 2015 between the union and the trust.



Converting to academies costs councils £30m

A BBC investigation has revealed millions of pounds of debt has been inherited by councils across England as schools convert to academies.

Opponents say local authorities are forced to use their government education grant to clear the debts.

The Department for education (DfE) said local authorities should pay the debts as they were accumulated when the schools were under council control. In the South East region, there was a debt total of £2,319,022.

The Local Government Association said vital cash was being taken from schools not involved in the scheme.

The BBC's Freedom of Information request (Fol) to all local authorities in England revealed £32.5m has been spent by councils on clearing debts since the Academies Act was introduced in 2010.

Under the academies scheme, when council-maintained schools choose to convert, local authorities have to pick up the tab for the costs of conversion including the cost of any deficit and legal fees.

David Simmonds, deputy chairman of the Local Government Association, said: "It is not fair that some schools are burdened with a deficit while other schools can walk away and leave that debt behind at the detriment of other schools in the community.

"It is not right that the taxpayer foots the bill. This money could instead be spent in ways which directly benefits pupils."

NJC PAY OFFER REJECTED

Members of UNISON West Sussex have spoken on NJC pay. As in 2014, you have again rejected the employer's offer in the consultative ballot.

The Branch conducted an electronic ballot of members for the first time, and this improved turnout. 82.2% of West Sussex members voted to reject the offer and take one or more forms of industrial action to get an improved offer. Only 17.8% voted to accept the two-year deal.

These results were returned to the UNISON NJC Committee, elected for the purpose of agreeing NJC pay strategy. Overall UNISON members rejected the offer by 64%, with 35% voting to accept it.

UNISON will now seek further discussions with the employers in a bid to break the deadlock over pay and seek to get a new offer on the table.

The NJC Committee also agreed to seek permission from UNISON's Industrial Action Committee to set a formal postal ballot underway for all-out strike action.

It is crucial that we now recruit more reps and members to UNISON. We will need strong support for any industrial action. Tell your workmates that they have to be 'in it to win it' and get them to join us. Contact the branch office if you would like a visit to your school from a branch officer to discuss pay.



COLLECTIVE ROUND-UP



Schools lead and Branch Officer, James Ellis (pictured), talks us through the main issues of three local academy chains developing recognition agreements with UNISON. These are based on TUC good practice and include facility time, time off for training and resources for workplace reps. There are terms of reference for regular union/academy meetings and 'joint consultative committees' (JCCs). The University of Brighton's agreement was recently completed. Warden Park's is almost there, and we've started negotiations with Schools Works. All chains have responded positively so far.

1. Broadfield (Crawley)

The two Broadfield infant and junior TKAT schools (The Kemnal Academy Trust) are merging from September 2016. Staff are naturally anxious about this but the union has a good workplace rep and met with its Broadfield members to discuss the current situation. Further meetings are planned through the year. We will continue to represent the needs and concerns of our members during negotiations.

2. Chichester High Schools

The former separate Chichester High Schools for Girls and its namesake for Boys are merging. This is not least because of falling rolls in both due to the opening of the free school in Chichester: an area where there are already adequate school places available and no need for another school. Government policy has seen sixth-form funding being reduced, resulting in significant redundancies (9.5 full-time equivalent support posts). We are helping our members through the selection process and guiding them through the consultation.

3. Littlehampton Academy

The Woodard academy chain is trialling a new sickness absence policy. The policy is generally acceptable, but problems have been caused because it was not expected or announced in advance. There are issues concerning the rights of staff when for example, needing time off to attend medical appointments. The chain has not yet agreed the policy nationally with UNISON and so should not be unilaterally introduced at Littlehampton until that is completed. Any sickness absence issues should be addressed using the existing policy. UNISON will negotiate the implementation of the policy following the trial. Initial problems seem to stem from an over-zealous management application of new processes.



Could you be a school/ academy rep?

All the work the West Sussex branch does with academies mirrors national best practice and agreements. We enjoy good relations with our colleagues in the teaching unions, but we are aware of ever-increasing workloads as more employers emerge to run schools. Branch resources can only stretch so far, which is why it is so important to have good, well-trained local reps.

We currently have no workplace reps in either the University of Brighton or Schools Works chains. To get the most from negotiations, we need local reps to attend

the important meetings set up as part of the recognition agreements. It's a great development opportunity and provides skills that can also be used in your job. You'll also become more familiar with academy trust-wide issues, representing views from several workplaces. If you think you could do this with our ongoing support, complete our short form on the back page.

Many UNISON members in West Sussex schools are already workplace reps. They're people just like you. You can read about one of them – Angela Elliott – on page 11.

'STARS' group: age of transfer

The Storrington Area Schools public consultation on changing the age of transfer to secondary schools in-line with the national curriculum continues. The proposal to close Rydon Community College is meeting stiff opposition. Rydon is looking to become an academy to avoid being managed by Steyning Grammar School, which will have a Years 7 and 8 annex.



NJC: check your pay

Though NJC pay rates are currently being nationally negotiated, with UNISON campaigning against the employers' current offer of a two-year annual 1% pay-rise (see page 3), it's important to remember that most local academy chains should be paying NJC-agreed rates. Please check to make sure your pay aligns with NJC grades. If it does not, let us know.



Bohunt School, Worthing

Worthing's latest secondary school, Bohunt Academy, opened in September 2015, but currently has only year 7 classes. We are keen to represent our members based there, as the school grows and staffing levels increase. If you are, or going to be working there, we invite you to join the union. A potential workplace rep has come forward so you will have support from them and from branch officers. Search 'Join Us' on our website for more information.

3 What you will pay each month

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£11,001–£14,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£7.85
£14,001–£17,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£9.70
£17,001–£20,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£11.50
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Please tick one box only.

- Our Affiliated Political Fund takes UNISON members' views directly into the Labour Party, working to promote UNISON policies.
- The General Political Fund is used to pay for branch, regional and national campaigns but is independent of any political party.

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Teacher shortfall forces overseas recruitment

Schools are conducting mass recruitment abroad as new figures show 50,000 teachers left the profession in a year, even though pupil numbers continue to grow. It's the largest number to quit in a year since records began.

This, along with a shortfall in teacher training applicants, has left headteachers unable to fill key positions. They are being forced to look elsewhere. Academy trusts are recruiting up to 50 teachers in single whistle-stop visits to Jamaica and elsewhere.

The government is encouraging foreign teachers to move to England, with officials

“building relationships with target countries”, according to a letter sent to a recruitment agency by a DfE official. It says ministers plan to “help widen the existing recruitment pool by supporting schools to confidently recruit where necessary internationally”.

An appeal on the department’s website boasts to foreign teachers of ‘generous starting salaries’.

Shadow education secretary Lucy Powell claimed the crisis in teacher numbers was due to a combination of a botched recruitment handling, a lack of forward planning and the denigration of the profession by former education secretary Michael Gove.

Applications to teach are also down by 21,000 compared with last year.

Pupil numbers continue to grow with 582,000 more projected by 2020. The country will need nearly 160,000 additional teachers over the next three years. On current trends there could be a shortfall of 65,000 applicants.

Language requirement for public service workers



UNISON has made its contribution to the Cabinet Office consultation on language requirements for the public sector workers’ code of practice, which is part of the Immigration Bill 2015.

We believe the introduction of a fluency duty in English and Welsh is part of a broad agenda of politically-driven immigration control.

While effective communication and community cohesion are important aims for public services, the new fluency duty is unnecessary and has the potential to increase discrimination against workers perceived as not being British. This will also have an impact on groups beyond which the consultation document outlines might be covered. This could lead to breach of the equality duty of public service bodies.

HELP FOR UNISON MEMBERS

If you’re a migrant worker from a non-EU country and need advice on immigration issues related to your work situation and right to work in the UK then get in touch.

UNISON provides free immigration telephone advice to UNISON members from non-EU countries working in the UK. We work with the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) to provide this support.

If you have been a UNISON member for more than four weeks, call UNISON Direct on 0800 0857 857. Be ready to give your full name, contact phone numbers and your UNISON membership number.

Thank you!

“A huge and quite frankly unbelievable improvement over the last week and a half; I’ve felt better and less tired than I’ve felt for well over a year! Thanks once again for the terrific support; you’ve been brilliant.”

UNISON West Sussex
member to Workplace Rep

“I would like to thank you for all your help and advice in this matter. I would like to thank you and the union for all you have done. I have filed away the Statutory Right in case I ever need it.”

UNISON West Sussex
member to branch officer

“Once again thank you for your input. I will keep you informed of any other concerns. I view this as a victory where common sense has won.”

UNISON West Sussex
member to Workplace Rep



Legal advice wins £27k payout for TA!

One of our West Sussex teaching assistant members was awarded a £27,000 pay-out after intervention by UNISON's solicitors Thompsons.

This followed an injury on the way to work. She was knocked-off her bicycle, hitting her head on the car's bonnet. She broke her wrist but also suffered from 'post-concussion syndrome', causing her to feel exhausted and unable to concentrate. She couldn't read or use computers and took several months to recover.

She had already taken independent legal advice (they would have taken 30% of any award), but was told about UNISON's free legal support through Thompsons. They doggedly pursued her claim, including tackling bureaucratic obstacles largely due to questionable service from Capita. Capita were responsible for administering sick pay insurance readjustments from the £30,000 award back to the council, totalling £3,000. They were poor at responding to the solicitor's enquiries, unnecessarily slowing down the case. It took an intervention from the council's Legal Services to get any sense. Fortunately, following advice from Occupational Health and Thompsons, our member phased her returned to work four months later and is now working full-time.

It shows one of the benefits of UNISON membership. Our legal team at Thompsons do not operate like 'no win no fee' solicitors, and will offer sound legal advice to our members free-of-charge on both work and non-work related matters.

Accidents can happen to anyone any time. UNISON membership can help alleviate stress in difficult situations. Effective legal support is just one way our members benefit. Please do all you can to encourage others to join.

Aspire's damning Ofsted result

The council's former Adult and Community Learning Service, now outsourced to social enterprise 'Aspire Sussex' has been rated as 'inadequate' just three years after it was rated as 'good', when under council control.

It's yet more evidence of outsourcing failure. Not only does this reflect poorly on previous Aspire management, but also on the quality of the council's contract management, brought in for particular criticism by Ofsted.

In their report, Ofsted remarked: "West Sussex County Council (WSCC) managers do not adequately manage and monitor the provision. The contract management team sets Aspire very ambitious targets, yet when these are not achieved managers do not interrogate the underlying reasons sufficiently, agree alternative actions or revise the target." Members will recall that the council's audit function could only give a 'limited assurance' rating to the council's commissioning function in 2015. This judgement reinforces that view.

During the three years since it was outsourced the service almost went bankrupt. Staff unanimously passed a vote of no confidence in the previous Chief Executive who has now left.

This result is in no way a reflection of the hard work of our Aspire members but it does reflect the poor way they have been previously treated.

UNISON believes the new Chief Executive will make improvements to the service, but it begs belief that a 'good' service can be turned to 'inadequate' so quickly after outsourcing.

The UNISON branch will be raising this experience further to underline to councillors the damage that outsourcing can do to great public services.



Grants for you

The union offers its members access to a range of grants available at different times of the year.

Here are a couple of examples you might want to consider in the next few months:

- 1. School uniform grant:** if you need to buy new school uniforms for your children for the start of the 2016-17 academic year, UNISON sets up a limited fund in late spring/early summer. This is aimed at members on a low income and consists of a one-off payment (last year this was up to £120). We're waiting for details of this year's offer, and will tell you straight away when we hear more. Application deadline is usually in early July.
- 2. Learning and Open University Grants:** these grants are offered on a first-come, first-served basis until funding is spent for members studying at their own expense. Funds are available from 1 September and your course of study must start in 2016. You can apply for a learning support grant of £70 for further education or first degree level courses or an Open University grant of £60 or £120, depending on the course. These grants can be used for study on any general development or career-related course relevant to work in the public sector. For more details and application criteria search for 'learning grants' on www.unison.org.uk

WOMEN IN UNISON | ANGELA ELLIOTT • WORKPLACE REP PROFILE



"I'm an ICT technician based at Shoreham Academy. I've been a UNISON member since 2001 and rose to the challenge of Workplace Rep in 2008 when the school was council run. September 2009 saw us

become an academy with sponsors United Learning (same as Midhurst Rother College and The Regis School). In April 2012's Easter break we moved into a new building.

"My role is to look after the constantly changing desktops, laptops, interactive white boards and their users.

"There are about 150 teachers and about 80 support staff at the academy, varying from admin to technicians and catering staff. Of the latter who remain on WSCC contracts, they have unfortunately been TUPEd at least 3 times. I have been involved in all

those transfers. The Inclusion and Learning Support Department has been restructured. I was involved in this along with great support from the branch office. I have also dealt with numerous disciplinary procedures – with total support from the branch's Casework Coordinator.

"I've attended many UNISON training programmes such as:

- Local Government Pension Scheme – Governance and Investments
- Diploma in Employment Law
- Communication Skills for Trade Union Representatives
- Handling Members' Problems (Grievance and Disciplinary)

"For 2016 and the future: be prepared for anything as you just don't know what's round the corner!"

Occupational Health 'DNAs'

A recent review of management information from OH (Occupational Health) Assist shows there is an increasing number of people not attending OH appointments – recorded as 'Did Not Attends (DNAs)' – originating from schools.

The review shows these are caused by a number of circumstances, some of which could be avoided.

There are examples where the school's main number has been used as the primary contact telephone number for OH Assist to contact to carry out the appointment. However, because another call is in progress when the OH appointment is due, the



number provided is engaged. OH Assist will try to make contact 3 times, but if they cannot make contact with the referred employee, it is classed as an employee DNA. Each DNA is charged to the overall budget and means that money is being wasted. To help reduce the number of DNAs, please:

- 1 ensure your referral document includes an accessible primary telephone number and an alternative;
- 2 include an additional manager on the referral form with separate contact numbers;
- 3 where you agree, include a personal mobile telephone number so that an SMS text reminder can be sent.

All schools to be academies by 2020?

Government plans soon to be published could result in every state school in England being turned into an academy by 2020.

A green paper will aim to deliver David Cameron's ambition to make "local authorities running schools a thing of the past" and complete the "true blue education revolution" started by Michael Gove.

Last November's spending review gave a hint of what was to come by opening the way for sixth-form colleges to become academies and suggests ministers believe the move could save hundreds of millions.

Any such move would be strongly opposed. Even Ofsted's annual report said that turning a school into an academy does not automatically lead to a rise in standards and that some of the best schools are still being run by local authorities.

Roy Perry, (Conservative Leader of Hampshire County Council and Chairman of the Local Government Association's Children and Young People Board) said: "If government were to say there is no role for local government in education that would be a sad day. Schools spend billions of public money yet, at present, there is no rigorous accountability for academies that are 'coasting'; no clear understanding of what happens when one falls into this category; and no risk assessment in place for those rated as good or above. Local democratically elected councils should have a role in this."



Thank you!

"I just wanted to thank you for your support today, superb outcome! I certainly couldn't have done it without you! Thanks again. Will keep you updated. Best wishes."

UNISON West Sussex
member to Workplace Rep

"Just wanted to say thank you for the support from your office over my recent matter and also thank you to 'x' for supporting me yesterday. Thanks."

UNISON West Sussex
member to Workplace Rep

NOMINATION FORM to become a UNISON Workplace* Representative

Complete and send to: UNISON West Sussex, County Hall, West Street, Chichester, PO19 1RQ.

I would like to become the Workplace* Representative for *(name your team, location, directorate or employer)*:

Full name (PLEASE PRINT)	Signature	Date
Proposed by (PLEASE PRINT)	Signature	Date
Seconded by (PLEASE PRINT)	Signature	Date

Please note: proposers and seconders should be UNISON members from the same workplace.

*A workplace may be a large team, a location (a day centre for example), a section within a directorate, or an employer.