

BRANCH LINES

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



ARE OUR SCHOOLS 'WORTH LESS'?

Complete our
survey on
the schools'
funding crisis.

See page 3



Welcome to the new school year. UNISON really values the work you do. I would directly

say to new staff who are not yet UNISON members, to join us straight away using the form in the centre pages.

There has never been a more critical time in our country's modern history for schools to be well resourced, effective and performing well. No-one yet knows the full impact of the vote to leave the EU and its impact on schools. However, as the new Education Secretary Justine Greening settles in, there are plenty of fundamental issues affecting our members in West Sussex schools she must face.

Most important of these is the regional inequality of the schools' funding formula and the disparity between West Sussex schools and other areas. Please complete our survey telling us the impact of the funding crisis on your school (page 3). Armed with your evidence, we can make a much stronger case for change, and so benefit our children and all those who work in schools.

We also discuss the government's u-turn on academies and present independent research showing that academies perform no better than local authority schools (page 14). We provide an update on the latest in the long-running story of Capita payroll services (pages 12 and 13).

Dan Sartin, Branch Secretary

Labour leader tells government to listen to Tory council leaders

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn urged the government to listen to the views of Conservative council leaders over forcing schools to become academies.

Back in May, in addition to West Sussex County Council, Kent County Council (KCC) urged the former education secretary Nicky Morgan to drop the plans, saying there was no evidence academies fare any better than local maintained schools. In a letter to her it said: "There are 'significant disadvantages' to forced academisation".

FORCED ACADEMISATION DISADVANTAGES

- the costs to councils to convert its existing schools;
- the ability of schools to manage conversion;
- the plan to remove parent governors; and
- the lack of oversight by councillors.



Mr Corbyn urged the then Prime Minister David Cameron to listen to the views of council leaders on an issue which has been condemned by many Conservative councillors.

"Why is this costly re-organisation of schools being forced on schools already good or outstanding? Conservative councillors and MPs don't want this. Who does want this costly top-down re-organisation?" he said. "If the government wants support for these proposals, they might like to pick up the phone and talk to the leaders of Hampshire, West Sussex (see page 5) and his own Oxfordshire County Council, who are deeply concerned."

SCHOOLS FUNDING CRISIS – please complete our survey!

UNISON West Sussex is conducting a survey of all its schools and academies members. We want to better understand the impact of the school funding crisis on you and the children whose education you support.

Results will complement the work of the ‘Worth Less?’ campaign (see page 4), to secure an improved budget settlement for West Sussex schools through the national funding formula. This will help secure our members’ jobs and working conditions

and improve education in our county. A great deal of the work UNISON does supports members in school restructures and when facing redundancies. We have seen:

- members’ jobs go;
- pressure placed on remaining staff;

- reduced support to children with special needs;
- downward pressure on grades;
- vacancies not filled and posts deleted; and
- increasing use of temporary contracts.

None of this is good for you or West Sussex children. It’s caused by government failure to address the schools’ funding crisis.

We want to understand your views and experiences of what’s happened in West Sussex schools over the past two years. What capacity has been lost? What was the impact on the school?

Please take a few minutes to complete our survey: share it with colleagues who are not support staff (such as your headteacher) and with non-members. Encourage them to join UNISON!

We will campaign supported by these results to bring this funding scandal to the attention of all West Sussex residents, and force a change for the better.



PLEASE COMPLETE OUR SURVEY
[www.unisonwestsussex.org.uk/
news/schools-survey](http://www.unisonwestsussex.org.uk/news/schools-survey)

Worth Less? campaign



West Sussex schools' non-political 'Worth Less?' campaign challenges the government to allocate per pupil funding more fairly to West Sussex schools, which have suffered from long-term underfunding compared to other local authorities (LAs).

The campaign was started by Jules White, headteacher at Tanbridge House School in Horsham on behalf of all the county's primary, secondary and special schools. West Sussex has the lowest per-pupil funding of any shire county in the country.

The issue for West Sussex special schools is particularly acute. The latest DfE figures

show the national average funding for LA maintained special schools is over £22,000 per pupil per year, compared with an average West Sussex figure of just under £17,000. This means West Sussex special schools receive £5,000 less annually per pupil than similar schools in other areas. The situation for mainstream primary

and secondary schools is no less serious. If West Sussex children were funded at average national levels, schools across the county would receive an extra £41m per year.

THE CAMPAIGN HAS TWO GOALS

1 A substantial interim funding payment to tide West Sussex schools over until the new formula comes into effect (up to three to five years).

2 The formula itself must ensure West Sussex children receive a much fairer deal than is currently the case.

CONSULTATION

School funding formula

The DfE says for the new funding formula there will be a basic level of per pupil funding, with extra support allocated depending on need, such as high levels of deprivation or for schools in high-cost areas.

For local authority schools, there will be a two-year transition period, during which funding will stop being distributed through councils. Councils will have a funding role in areas with 'high-level special educational needs', but will no longer be involved as a channel for basic funding for schools. Cash will go directly to heads. Academy schools and trusts already receive funding through the government's Education Funding Agency.

In December, MPs presented a petition calling for change, saying the best-funded

areas received up to £6,300 per pupil per year, while the worst-funded received £4,200.

National UNISON's Jon Richards said: "The best-funded areas also have some of the best results for state schools. The issue is of underfunding of poor areas – not overfunding of the successful areas."

Dan Sartin, UNISON West Sussex Branch Secretary said: "It's important to recognise the union does not advocate diverting funds away from those areas currently receiving a better settlement. We don't want to 'rob Peter to pay Paul'. There should be greater investment in poorly funded areas to bring them up to the same level as others."

The consultation closed on 17 April. The outcomes are at least two years' away from being announced: a year later than was originally planned.

Government's academies u-turn

Plans to force England's schools to become academies were abandoned in a government u-turn in May after threats of industrial action by head teachers. Conservatives (including WSCC Leader Louise Goldsmith: see opposite) strongly opposed the plans because all schools – even high performing ones – were to be forced into the new arrangements.

However, the government said it would still force academy conversions in two areas:

- 1** Where the local authority can no longer viably support its remaining schools because too many schools have already become academies.
- 2** Where the local education authority consistently fails to meet a minimum performance threshold across its schools.

The government also announced measures to protect small rural schools, including extra financial support and a requirement that any closure would have to be agreed by the local authority and the regional schools commissioner.

In its recent analysis of school grades, the Local Government Association proved that 81% of council-maintained schools are rated as 'good' or 'outstanding', compared to 73% of academies and 79% of free schools.

UNISON West Sussex believes in good, local schools working together to improve educational standards for all that are accountable to their local communities. This is why we oppose the government's academies and free schools programme. Academies are run by private sponsors and funded by taxpayers but with little community accountability. They are allowed to set their own curriculum and terms and conditions for staff.

Council leader opposes academy plans

Louise Goldsmith, Conservative leader of West Sussex County Council, has strongly challenged her own government's forced academy proposals.



She said: "I have reservations that the 'one size fits all' academies approach does not seem to promote any benefits to pupils and parents in West Sussex."

In a letter to former education secretary Nicky Morgan, Mrs Goldsmith said the council felt the academies approach would mean there was "not a strong enough voice for the parent and child. Councillors of all political persuasions were united in their concerns about a lack of democratic accountability inherent within the proposals." She also warned the move would make it harder for councils to fulfil statutory duties to provide enough school places for children in West Sussex and to ensure the most vulnerable youngsters in the county got the best start in life.

With 82 per cent of county schools currently rated 'good' or 'outstanding', Mrs. Goldsmith argued there was no need to force change to improve standards and there was no evidence to suggest having all schools run by multi academy trusts (MATs) would deliver better results.

Louise Goldsmith's position is welcome but all the more remarkable given West Sussex's firm backing for academisation in the policy's early years. Faced with evidence of the deterioration of relationships between the council and schools, WSCC performed its own u-turn. The branch is pleased that Mrs Goldsmith made this positive case for West Sussex children.

Transferring your health records

From 1 October 2016 the County Council's Occupational Health (OH) Service will be provided by Health Management Limited (HML).

To ensure a smooth transfer, all employee health records held by the current provider OH Assist will need to be transferred to HML. If, however, you do not want your records to be transferred, you should notify your headteacher, business manager or bursar of your decision in writing by 28 September. HML is a specialist occupational health provider with considerable experience of delivering occupational health services throughout the UK.

HML is bound by the provisions of the Data Protection Act to ensure your details remain confidential and are not disclosed to a third party without your express consent. Please note that by declining to allow your records to be transferred, it may prevent HML from providing you with a full range of Occupational Health Services.

UNISON West Sussex encourages its members to permit the transfer of any health records to HML. Should you have any queries, please email: office.unison@westsussex.gov.uk



Head quits over 'factory farming' pupils

A head teacher has resigned from a West Sussex primary school, saying 'factory farming' children was failing to prepare them for the future.

Kit Messenger left Manor Field Primary in Burgess Hill at the end of the summer term, after 16 years.

In a letter to governors, she cited the narrowing curriculum and government plans for all schools to become academies. The governors said they were saddened but supported the reasons for her resignation.

Ms Messenger said she no longer felt able to achieve her vision for children at Manor Field in the current educational climate. "The narrowing of the curriculum has increased significantly over the past two years... the pressure to focus only on reading, writing and mathematics has become untenable," she said.

"I have increasingly felt that we are 'factory farming' our children and failing to prepare them adequately for a successful future. "I strongly believe in a state system in which all children have access to a good, rounded education and where staff are treated with respect and enjoy fair working conditions. I do not believe this will be possible under our progressively fragmented educational system."



We've just launched our new Facebook page at www.facebook.com/unisonwsx. Like us to get the latest updates from the branch. Also follow us on Twitter [@unisonwsx](https://twitter.com/unisonwsx)

ADVICE FOR UNISON MEMBERS

TEACHING UNIONS STRIKES

Following the NUT strike on 5 July, two other strike days are anticipated by the NUT for September 2016. Though UNISON members have not yet been balloted for industrial action, it was discussed at the recent local government conference.

The union is looking to possibly coordinate industrial action in the autumn if proposals in the budget and Queen's Speech are not withdrawn. UNISON's National Joint Committee meets soon and will be discussing options then. Meanwhile, here's a general guide for you to follow if other unions take industrial action in your school.

1 You must go about your usual contracted duties in the normal way, but without covering any of the duties of striking teaching union members.

2 We encourage you to visit picket lines outside working hours or during scheduled breaks, to show solidarity. Take cakes or biscuits! They're always most welcome.

3 School support staff should not be expected to provide cover for or take classes, where this would normally be done by teachers who are taking action. In particular, higher level teaching assistants or cover supervisors should only be taking classes or providing cover where they are contracted to do so, if it is timetabled or part of their normal duties.

4 Staff should not be moved from the duties they would normally have carried out in order to cover classes, as this would frustrate the industrial action of colleagues.

5 If you have any queries talk to your UNISON rep or the branch office.

Why are the NUT and others taking strike action?

1 It's in response to the schools' funding crisis, which is impacting on teachers' terms and conditions and children's education.

2 The NUT is also highlighting the complete break-up of our education system into individual academies, resulting in a breakdown of teachers' employment rights.

3 Hard fought for entitlements such as sick leave and maternity/paternity rights are under attack. Meanwhile, pay systems are now being decided at school level.

4 Academisation is a monumental waste of head teachers' time. There is absolutely no evidence this sort of deregulation will lead to higher standards. It will increase local disputes and increase teacher shortages.

5 Schools urgently need extra funding to meet the additional costs government has put on them through increased National Insurance and pension payments. This amounts to a 5% charge on the teachers' pay bill for schools. The government has frozen the cash per pupil given to schools, while increasing what's taken from them. For every 20 teachers employed, a school has to find an extra teacher salary to give to the Treasury.

Join UNISON – essential cover if you work in schools

Send to: UNISON West Sussex, Central Attic, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RQ.

1 Tell us about you

Title	First name												
Surname/family name		Date of birth / /											
Home address													
Postcode													
email													
Phone number (please indicate if home, work or mobile)		National insurance number (from your payslip)											
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Please give your ethnic origin: <i>(tick one box)</i>													
<input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/> Black African	<input type="checkbox"/> Black UK	<input type="checkbox"/> White UK									
<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/> Asian UK	<input type="checkbox"/> Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/> Black other	<input type="checkbox"/> Irish									
<input type="checkbox"/> Indian	<input type="checkbox"/> Asian other			<input type="checkbox"/> White other									

2 Tell us about your job

Employer's name
Your job title/occupation
Workplace name and address
Postcode
Payroll number (from your payslip)

3 What you will pay each month

Please tick the appropriate box for your earnings before deductions.

Annual pay	▼	Your subscription
Up to £2,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£1.30
£2,001-£5,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£3.50
£5,001-£8,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£5.30
£8,001-£11,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£6.60
£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
£20,001-£25,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£14.00
£25,001-£30,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£17.25
£30,001-£35,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£20.30
over £35,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£22.50

4 Choose your political fund

One of the ways UNISON works on your behalf is through political campaigning. Your subscription includes a political fund payment so you won't pay any extra, but in UNISON you choose how you want that money to be used.

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.

5 Choose how you wish to pay *Please tick ONE box only*

EITHER deduct from salary:

I wish to join UNISON and authorise deduction of subscriptions from my pay by my employer.

Signature

OR pay by direct debit:

please complete the direct debit form below

I wish to join UNISON and authorise deduction of subscriptions by direct debit

Date

Please go to unison.org.uk/privacy-policy to see how we will protect and use your personal information

Instruction to your bank or building society to pay by Direct Debit



Please fill in the form and send to UNISON West Sussex, address overleaf

Name and full postal address of your bank or building society

To: The Manager Bank/building society

Address

Postcode

Name(s) of Account holder(s)

Service User Number

9 7 0 0 5 0

Reference number (for office use only do not complete)

Please pay UNISON Direct Debits from the account detailed in this Instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this Instruction may remain with UNISON and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank/building society.

Signature(s)

Date

Bank/building society account number

Branch sort code

Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account

COLLECTIVE ROUND-UP

Many West Sussex schools have been hugely impacted by the fall-out from the government's unfair schools funding formula. Budget reductions have had a profound impact on the way schools are managed and staffed. Many of our support staff members have been the target of local school cutbacks. Our collective round-up this term features concrete examples of where this is happening and the knock-on impact on local children's education. In all the examples below, UNISON is fully involved supporting our members.

1. Gossops Green Community Primary, Crawley

The school, which OFSTED rated as 'requires improvement' in 2014 and is on the vulnerable schools list, will become an academy in November. A separate restructure resulted in two support staff redundancies.

2. Seaside Primary, Lancing

Together with 'The Laurels', this 'outstanding' school has chosen to become an academy under the New Horizons Academies Trust. There is no strong objection from our members based there, but as in every conversion to an academy, we challenge schools to continue to:

- pay NJC pay rates; and
- make sure union subs deductions from salaries continue.



3. Thomas Bennett College, Crawley

We've had a number of issues arising from a reorganisation of teaching assistants at Thomas Bennett. One related to the payment of lunch duties, with processes inconsistently applied. UNISON resolved this with the school but found a number of problems with the restructure process. These ranged from insufficient time given to consider our representations, through to poor communication with our members. In the end, the only redundancies were voluntary, but UNISON felt more of these could have been avoided as the school has now externally advertised some of the new posts. In our view, this was a poorly managed consultation, which does not reflect well on The Kemnal Academy Trust (TKAT).

4. 'STARS' group of schools

Rydon Community College is to close in 2017 and become an 'annexe' of Steyning Grammar. There has been strong local opposition to this. UNISON is working with the County Council and local schools to ensure all staff will have a suitable role under the new arrangements. A union-agreed protocol is expected to be utilised. Staff-focused consultation will influence how the reorganisation will be rolled-out. UNISON is supporting its members.

5. Broadfield Infant and Junior schools, Crawley

The merger of two schools into a single academy managed by The Kemnal Academy Trust (TKAT) is now complete, with the union successfully saving two teaching assistant posts that were at risk. UNISON did this by challenging the headteacher to allocate the national average 80% of school budget to staffing, rather than the 75% they originally proposed. This means more vulnerable children in the two schools can continue to be supported effectively.

6. West Sussex Catholic and Church of England (CofE) schools

Both the county's Anglican and Catholic dioceses are forming academy trusts. This could have a profound impact on the education provided in hundreds of local schools and a radical change in the relationship between the council and local education. The Central School in Chichester has already become a CofE academy and others are likely to follow. The Catholic diocese has recently become more active and wants to meet with UNISON. Not least on their agenda is the need for these new employers to discuss recognition agreements with the union. The potential impact of these trusts cannot be underestimated.

Schools struggling with SEND

Teaching assistants will not be surprised to learn that schools in England are struggling to support the 1.1 million pupils with special needs or disabilities (SEND).

A survey of 1,100 school leaders found delays to assessments, insufficient budgets and cuts to local authority budgets hampering the ability to cope. The study by 'The Key' consultants, which provides leadership and management support to schools, calls for increased funding. It suggested:

- 82% of mainstream schools in England do not have sufficient funding and budget to adequately provide for SEND pupils;
- 89% of school leaders believe cuts to local authority services have had a detrimental impact on the support their school receives for SEND pupils;

- 75% of schools have pupils who have been waiting longer than expected for assessment of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan (EHCP);
- 88% of school leaders think initial teacher training does not adequately prepare teachers to support SEND pupils.

The survey suggests primary schools are under the most strain:

- 8 in 10 primary school leaders said their budget was insufficient;
- 9 in 10 at primary level have had the support they receive for SEND provision

affected by cuts to their local authority;

- Delays in assessment of SEND and long waits for EHCPs also appear to be more common for children of primary school age.

Conservative Cllr Roy Perry, chairman of the Local Government Association's children and young people board, said: "We were clear with the Department for Education that implementing the SEND reforms was significantly underfunded by the government and this has been borne out in reality."

For more information on The Key research, go to www.thekeysupport.com/about/media-press/surveys/

Capita services to schools

Several schools have complained to UNISON about the quality of payroll services since they were transferred to Capita by West Sussex County Council (WSCC).

Regretfully, 23 highly capable payroll staff were made redundant last year. When it became apparent the service could not cope with this loss of capacity, they were replaced with new staff on worse terms and conditions. WSCC failed to react quickly enough to the rapidly deteriorating situation, resulting in 12 schools to date leaving the contract to find better service providers. Recognising the severity of the situation, Capita responded by introducing some improvements. Though it's too early to assess the impact of these changes, they are none-the-less welcomed by the union. Here are five examples.

- 1** Capita's new payroll call-logging system will allow staff to track queries and response times more comprehensively.
- 2** Schools must complete a new electronic form to log queries to improve payroll data quality.
- 3** The deadline for schools to send in monthly payroll information has been extended by 5 working days.
- 4** A new schools' portal will be launched in September to make it easier for schools to send information to Capita.
- 5** Members of the working group set up last year to deal with concerns about Capita will have a quality assurance function.

Schools leaving the contract include some from the local authority and others from academy chains. However, all are leaving because of concerns about the quality of the service. WSCC has been forced to pioneer new, unproven and challenging processes to help some of those schools transfer smoothly to a new provider. Our view is that it's a complete waste of time and money: a situation needlessly created by reckless council outsourcing in 2012.

The branch is very involved in negotiations with the County Council to improve the Capita contract across the board and achieve better treatment of Capita staff providing the service.

New Director for Education and Skills

Deborah Myers has been appointed as West Sussex County Council's new Director for Education and Skills: a permanent replacement for the former interim director Jay Mercer.

UNISON enjoys a unique relationship with education and children's social care senior management: we meet every six weeks to raise issues of concern from our schools-based members and work with them, advocating support staff needs in any change to policy or practice. We also attend the County Schools' Forum. UNISON represents support staff in relation to NJC pay and the Local Government pension Scheme (LGPS).

We are the only trade union in the county officially 'recognised' by the employer to represent school support staff. Any others who claim they can represent your collective interests are simply not being straight with you. We look forward to a professional working relationship with Deborah and wish her well in her new role.

"Thank you to the Unison team for recent meetings to discuss pertinent information about retirement policies"

Branch member to branch secretary

Got a complaint about Capita?

West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and Capita have agreed processes with UNISON to help you successfully raise a complaint or escalate an issue which does not seem to be progressing.

We've heard from many members that payroll, pension and IT queries particularly can often be logged, but are then not responded to. You can now escalate the matter to a higher level or complain by following the processes linked from our website via the 'Capita Issues' icon.

If your issue is serious please alert your local rep or the branch office at the same time you lodge a complaint. UNISON will help you resolve the problem if agreed processes are unsuccessful.



Processes include raising complaints or issues about:

- Pensions
- Schools' Payroll and Recruitment
- IT Services (including IT reasonable adjustments)

Also on our website is Capita's 'Have Your Say' leaflet. This explains the process used to escalate pension-related issues through their Customer Relationship Team (CRT). It includes information about the Pensions Ombudsman Service and the Pensions Advisory Service.

Should any of these processes be unsuccessful, please contact the branch office for further advice: 01243 777636 or office. unison@westsussex.gov.uk

New professional standards for TAs

New professional standards for teaching assistants, (which were scrapped by the government earlier this year), were brought back to life and published in June by a group made up of unions and educational experts.

The new standards, that help clarify the roles of teaching assistants, will bring them into line with their teacher and head teacher colleagues, both of whom already have their own sets of standards.

Originally commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE), the teaching assistant standards were drafted by a working group

of experts. But then just as they were about to be published, the government changed its mind, and the standards never appeared.

Keen to see the standards published and the professional status of teaching assistants acknowledged, the group – UNISON, school leaders' union NAHT, the National

Education Trust (NET) and Maximising Teaching Assistants – asked the DfE for permission to press ahead.

Permission was granted, but only if the four organisations made clear this exercise no longer had the blessing of ministers. Unlike the professional standards for all other groups of education staff, the teaching assistant standards have no legal backing, but the four organisations believe that they help define the role and purpose of TAs.

The new standards will help support staff because they can assist trade unions to hold employers to account and ensure staff are fairly treated – see the website below.

WOMEN IN UNISON

WORKPLACE REP PROFILE

DENISE WESTLAKE

Denise is the Secretary at St. Giles Primary School, Horsted Keynes near Haywards Heath. Her job ranges from providing secretarial support to the Headteacher to organising school trips.

She joined the union in February 2015 and has since recruited several new members of the non-teaching staff at her school. The positive and helpful experience she received persuaded her to become a workplace rep.

"I hadn't much idea about trade unions before I joined and I didn't know there were such things as reps to help in local workplaces" said Denise. "I'd taken a lot of advice from

branch office staff and wanted to give something back to the union for all its support. I was particularly interested in finding out more about formal workplace reorganisations and employment law. Courses on both of these are run by the union. You can sometimes feel quite isolated working in a small, rural primary school, so it's important to have reps so staff there have someone to call on when they need it."



Academy trusts no better than LAs at raising school standards

The Education Policy Institute think tank has produced a league table of multi-academy trusts and councils in England. At both primary and secondary levels it shows academy trusts are among the most and least successful at improving pupil performance.

The analysis concludes there is little overall difference between academy trusts and local authorities. Their average is described as 'almost identical'.

Comparisons are based on how much pupils have improved, rather than exam results. The report also highlighted other factors, such as regional differences. Schools in London are higher performers. Both local authorities and academy trusts do better if they have schools in the capital.

The Sutton Trust education charity has also published a report warning that too

many academy trusts are not providing a good enough education for disadvantaged pupils. It says that one in five academy chains is 'performing substantially below the national average for attainment and improvement' for children from poorer families.

It's interesting to note the Woodard Academy Trust (which has two schools in West Sussex) appears 168th out of 174 in the lowest performing category.

Lizzie Rowe, chief operating officer of the Education Fellowship, the lowest rated primary academy trust, said

that trusts needed time to make progress.

Roy Perry, Conservative chairman of the Local Government Association's children and young people board, said: "Councils have long been highlighting the fact that school structures are not a magic bullet to improve education, and what really matters is outstanding teaching and strong leadership."

Local councils of all political shades are apprehensive about government education policy which is more concerned with ideology rather than evidence.

Staff discounts platform launched

West Sussex County Council (WSCC) will officially launch a new online staff discounts platform during September using the brand name West Sussex Choices.

Once registered all WSCC schools' staff will be able to access over 8,000 discount offers and make significant savings by making regular use of the platform. The platform has an email newsletter, useful tools and features to reflect individual preferences.

There will be something for everyone, including: cinemas, household shopping, travel, attractions, beauty, wellbeing, fashion, accessories and homeware. WSCC schools' staff will be able to save online and in shops through retail cards and vouchers, discount codes and cashback; make savings on holidays through online travel bookings; and access local discounts.

In addition to a monthly draw, there will be extra prizes on offer during the platform's launch period for those WSCC schools' staff who have registered.

The discounts platform is available to all staff directly employed by WSCC, including support staff and teachers in schools. It is not available to Capita staff or members of the WSCC workforce employed through other partner organisations, third parties and staff at academy schools.

To register from 14 September go to www.westsussexchoices.co.uk

UNISON CAMPAIGN

End school workers' term-time contracts

UNISON is to campaign for school workers across the UK to be employed during every week of the year, local government delegates in Brighton declared at conference in June.

Delegate after delegate pointed out that the vast majority of school workers employed on so-called term-time contracts are women, effectively paid for just 10 months of the year. But as Nuala Conlon of Northern Ireland reminded delegates: "We all live 12 months of the year, and people want to live – not just exist."

And national secretary Jon Richards pointed to disputes involving teaching assistants in Derby and Durham, "where staff face huge pay cuts" after being moved to term-time contracts, something he described simply as "morally wrong".

It had been a "full year" across the various education sectors, said Mr Richards, with pay cuts, privatisation and schools being pushed into academy chains in England. But there were bright spots, he said – such as national negotiations for further education in Scotland, or leading the way on professional registration in Wales – and the union is recruiting again, growing across education and children's services.



FREE LEGAL COVER

Just one of the benefits
for UNISON members
and their families

Advice and representation on:

- Employment law
- Personal injury (at or away from work, on holiday or on the roads)
- Serious injury (including brain and spinal cord injuries)
- Industrial illness
- Basic will writing (complete service)
- Conveyancing (reduced rates)

UNISON members' families covered for:

- Personal injury (away from work, on holiday or on the roads)
- Clinical negligence (special terms)
- Conveyancing (reduced rates)

UNISON members keep 100% compensation – whatever the injury, however complex the claim.



Thompsons: committed to supporting the trade union movement and proud to stand up for UNISON members.

Get in touch for expert advice
today on 01243 777636

