

# BRANCH LINES

UNISON West Sussex Branch newsletter • [www.unisonwestsussex.org.uk](http://www.unisonwestsussex.org.uk)



## Teaching Assistants join TUC march for better pay

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# New panel for teaching assistants

The Department for Education’s (DfE) announcement to set up an independent review panel to look at the status and professional standards of teaching assistants (TAs) has been welcomed by UNISON.



Jon Richards, UNISON Head of Education and Children’s Services said: “This is very welcome news. We have been campaigning to achieve this for years and we are delighted that Karen Jackson, a UNISON member and higher level teaching assistant is on the panel.”

“We look forward to the re-introduction of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body, recently proposed by Tristram Hunt, Labour’s Shadow Secretary for Education.” This would advise our 360,000 support staff on wages and conditions. It would impact directly on lunchtime supervisors, teaching assistants (TAs) and caretakers, who have seen their wages cut by 18% in real terms since Michael Gove axed collective pay bargaining in 2010 as it “did not fit well with the government’s priorities for greater deregulation.” Plans were supported by UNISON’s General Secretary Dave Prentis. He said: “This is great news. These staff work alongside teachers to enable all pupils to have the opportunity to learn and make the most of themselves.”

## WELCOME



Welcome to the first edition of Branch Lines written especially for our members in schools and academies.

School support staff are really important to the branch, and much appreciated for the campaign support they give us, as well as being valued for the great job they do. The branch provides day-to-day individual and collective support to schools across the county out of our Chichester-based office. It’s busier than ever!

We hope this school-themed version of Branch Lines will keep you up-to-date with the wide range of work we do to support you and other members. In the next issue we’ll cover some of the ‘softer’ benefits of membership, like how to use your UNISON membership to save money, and access our legal support when it’s not related to work. But meanwhile, I hope you’ll enjoy reading the first ever version of Branch Lines aimed especially at you. Feedback will be appreciated, of course.

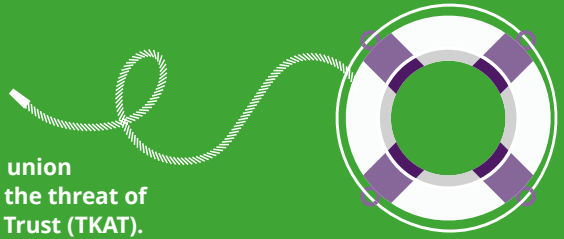
*Dan Sartin, Branch Secretary*

### DID YOU KNOW?

**The Kemnal Academy Trust’s Thomas Bennett School in Crawley, has received a ‘requires improvement’ judgment from Ofsted. Prior to joining TKAT in 2012, it was judged to be ‘good’.**

(The Guardian 11/11/14)

# Rescued from redundancy



Here's two examples showing how the union helped West Sussex members fighting the threat of redundancy in the Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT).

## 1. A UNISON member recently won a redundancy pay-out against the Kemnal Academies Trust.

When the trust reorganised its office staff, her job was at risk. Being pregnant and with less than two years' service, she was anxious about being dismissed without pay. However, through skilful negotiations by our Branch Officer, she received full maternity pay and redundancy reflecting her nine years' local government service. More than well worth the £17.25 monthly subscription!

## 2. TKAT also tried to avoid paying UNISON members redundancy payments following a TUPE transfer from WSCC.

Members were told they would not be paid an enhanced redundancy rate, to which they were contractually entitled. However, UNISON officers discovered a previous commitment from Kemnal and WSCC to maintain this rate. The branch insisted TKAT pay this rate for all transferred members. They eventually agreed.

## So how important are school support staff?

**An inaccurate County Council press release posted in July this year led a UNISON member to contact the Branch office. She complained about the tone of the release, which reinforced the commonly-held view that WSCC sees only teachers as being important in schools: support staff being seen as a less important role.**

UNISON is actually the largest trade union in education. We have more school support staff members than the NUT has teachers. So for example, when considering industrial action, it is not simply NUT action which will close schools, as WSCC asserted, but joint action by the two unions.

School support staff are a vital part of our education system. The success of many schools and teaching

staff relies on the excellent support provided by UNISON members. We have asked the WSCC Communications Unit to remember this in future press release and to recognise that our members are as important as any other professional in the education service. After our intervention, the Communications Unit did correct the press release on the WSCC website.



# Critical mass of schools commit to living wage

Building on UNISON's earlier success with Academy Trust Reach2, staff in more than 12,000 schools are set to be paid the living wage as a result of landmark agreements secured by UNISON. This accounts for almost 50% of schools across the UK and is the latest success in the union's long-running campaign.

School support staff such as cleaners, administration staff, some teaching assistants and catering staff, are just some of the employees who will be paid the living wage as a result of the union's campaign.

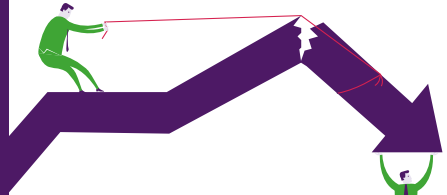
UNISON, the largest education union in the country, has negotiated living wage arrangements with councils, the Catholic Church, the Church of England, the Schools Cooperative Society and multi academy trusts including Oasis Community Learning, Reach 2 Academy Trust and The Elliot Foundation.

UNISON Head of Education Jon Richards said: "We are fast approaching a critical mass of schools committed to paying the living wage which is a significant step. We are now working with the Living Wage Foundation to encourage as many schools as possible to win formal living wage accreditation.

"As well as lifting families out of poverty, paying the living wage is proven to boost productivity and reduce staff turnover, leading to financial savings for employers.

"As a result of our agreements the living wage is fast becoming the benchmark for the minimum rate of pay in schools for both directly employed and contract staff."

The union has also produced a step-by-step guide to implementing the living wage for schools.



## IN CRISIS? Littlehampton Academy



**Five members of the mathematics department at the Littlehampton Academy - including one with 18 years' experience - left the school after half term.**

A former staff member claimed the academy's mathematics department was now in a dire situation, with fears about student attainment. It's alleged that some of the teachers were not leaving to go straight into other jobs, compounding fears of a 'crisis'. The academy is part of the Woodard Academies Trust. Earlier this year, Ofsted placed the school in special measures following an inspection at the end of last year.

**'There are 500 fewer Sure Start children's centres and a 40% reduction in early intervention funding than when the coalition government came to power.'**

Stephen Twigg MP

## UNISON ADVICE

# Medicines in schools

**The Children and Families Act 2014 changed the law to state that from September 2014, schools must make arrangements to support pupils with medical conditions.**



It advised schools on roles and responsibilities for staff. It remains the case that support staff cannot be required to support children with medical conditions unless it is part of their contract. Where they do take on these duties, they must receive sufficient training and be graded appropriately. Here are three things you need to do to help your school successfully meet these requirements:

- 1** If your school does not have a medical policy, or it needs updating, request a timetable for consultation of the new policy to reflect legal changes.
- 2** Elect a UNISON Workplace Rep (if you don't already have one).
- 3** Contact the branch office for advice.



**If you are asked to administer medicines without the appropriate training, tell UNISON immediately.**

## VIOLENCE AT WORK

# Ask to see risk assessments

**Before agreeing to start work with children or young people who may have unpredictable or challenging behaviour, it's vitally important you ask to see the care plan or risk assessment completed by the school (please note: a care plan can include risk assessment information).**

This should include issues to consider when children are transported on school-related journeys, and situations where you are expected to work with them on a one-to-one basis. It will reduce your exposure to risk.

If it is not immediately available, teaching assistants should only agree to start such work where there is an agreement in place to review the care plan or risk assessment within an acceptable timescale. Depending on the school or academy, it can be stored in different ways, so you need to know where it is located. You should contact your manager first, as they should know how to find it.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 states that employers have:

- a duty of care to protect staff from occupational violence where it is reasonably foreseeable;
- to complete a risk assessment; and
- take reasonably practical measures to reduce the risk.

Care plans for children should include reference to potentially violent behaviour so you are fully able to take appropriate action.

If you have problems accessing care plans or risk assessments, or there are unacceptable delays, let us know.



# Worthing Age of Transfer

UNISON officers and reps are working hard to support members in Worthing schools consulting on staff reorganisations. These are to help manage changes to the age children will transfer to secondary school. From September 2015 children will transfer a year earlier than at present.

UNISON has been involved right from the start by participating in the public consultation and attending initial school briefings. Following this, with WSCC's HR department, we drafted the protocol for managing staff issues. More recently, we have attended staff briefings and advised members during consultation.

Although the changes have implications for most schools in Worthing, there are about a dozen where there are significant changes to staff numbers. The protocol, designed to redeploy staff, should ensure minimal redundancies.

Any UNISON member affected by these changes should contact James Ellis in the UNISON Branch Office.

## ALTERNATIVE MANIFESTOS

# Launched by unions

Both UNISON and the National Union of Teachers (NUT) recently launched their manifestos. They will be used to challenge all political parties, highlighting the huge challenges facing public services because of the current government's austerity measures. With less than a year to go to the general election, they set out what's needed to ensure public services survive.

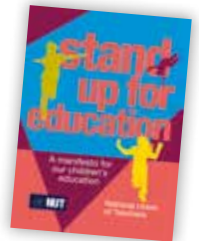
### UNISON is calling for:

1. a new deal for closing the deficit and ensuring our public services are properly funded, with more emphasis on higher taxes for the wealthy;
2. more financial freedom and fairer funding for local government;
3. a complete change of direction on privatisation and outsourcing;
4. a renewed commitment to the public-service workforce; and
5. public sector reforms to be underpinned by the values of a good society: care, compassion, dignity, respect, fairness, equality, accountability and the public good.



### The NUT's manifesto focuses on:

1. tackling child poverty;
2. every child's right to be taught by fully qualified teachers;
3. creating a flexible, inclusive and accessible curriculum;
4. restoring the role of the local authority as the democratic, local organisation responsible for education ;
5. cutting excessive bureaucracy and creating more time for teaching, not testing;
6. ending approvals for further free schools and stopping the academies programme.



## 'Child poverty alone is estimated to cost the UK £29bn a year'

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

# Academy regulation ‘too weak’

**Checks and balances on how academy schools in England spend large amounts of public money are ‘too weak’, research commissioned by MPs has found.**

A report carried out for the Education Select Committee said ‘questionable practices’ were being signed off. However, the report stressed that cases of deliberate fraud were rare. The research - carried out by the University of London’s Institute of Education - found that while regulation had improved since 2010, problems were still occurring, including potential conflicts of interest.

One interviewee described an academy head teacher who had spent £50,000 on a one-day training course run by a friend. Another cited the

chairman of a multi-academy trust, who was also a lawyer specialising in education, who used his company to provide all legal services for the trust. Another said the chairman of governors in one academy told staff they would be dismissed if they discussed with students or used textbooks referencing abortion or contraception.

The report said the “vast majority of academy trusts” were staffed by “honourable people”.

It added: “Cases of deliberate fraud are rare and many of the instances where

real or perceived conflicts have arisen are the result of people being asked to work too fast with too few controls.

“Nevertheless, the general sense from the literature and the evidence collected for this study is that the checks and balances on academy trusts in relation to conflicts of interest are still too weak.”

The study backed the findings of a Commons Public Accounts Committee report in April 2013, which suggested introducing a ‘fit and proper persons test’ at individual academy and academy trust level.

## Can you help? | Become a UNISON Schools or Academies Representative.

**It’s a vital Branch role. Representatives:** invite new colleagues to join; represent members’ views; distribute information about UNISON; and get involved in local issues and negotiations. Full support provided and paid time-off to carry-out duties.

**Interested? Complete the form below.**

## NOMINATION FORM - UNISON School or Academies Representative

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

I would like to become the School or Academies Representative for:

*(name your school or academy):*

<b>Full name</b> (PLEASE PRINT)	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Proposed by</b> (PLEASE PRINT)	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Seconded by</b> (PLEASE PRINT)	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>

Please note: proposers and seconders should be UNISON members from the same school or academy.

# ‘Britain needs a pay rise’

Saturday 18 October. UNISON West Sussex sent two coaches of members to London to take part in the TUC march ‘Britain needs a pay rise’.

Teaching Assistants such as Katie Slaughter of Lyndhurst Primary School, Worthing (pictured on the front cover), joined colleagues from a wide range of services and workplaces marching from Embankment to Hyde Park.

By the time the march set off at noon, purple and green flags filled the allocated UNISON area - joyful but with a serious message: we need fair pay and justice, not just to defeat austerity but to fix an economy which has still to recover from the crash of 2008.

The march followed successful picket lines across the county back in the summer, such as that at Fordwater School, Chichester, where the action of Teaching Assistants and other school support staff helped reinforce our message to government.

# Free Schools cause misery

**Two West Sussex Free Schools, the recently closed Discovery School in Crawley, and The Chichester Free School are: “two case studies in the costly and dangerous dismantling of our state education system,” said Sarah Maynard of West Sussex Academy Watch.**

Discovery closed after inspectors said it was ‘inadequate’, as the school’s reliance on unqualified teachers meant that, according to the National Association of Head Teachers, its pupils ‘had been taught nothing’ for an entire term (Independent, 4 May 2014)

Meanwhile, the opening of The Chichester Free School last year coincided with more than 70 staff losing their jobs in neighbouring secondary schools, the Chichester High Schools for Girls and Boys.

UNISON West Sussex Branch Secretary, Dan Sartin said, “The cost in redundancy payments for staff in existing schools is a huge drain on the public purse.”

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## Join UNISON! MEMBERSHIP FORM REQUEST

Complete and send to: UNISON West Sussex, County Hall, West Street, Chichester, PO19 1RQ. You can also join online at: [www.unisonwestsussex.org.uk/join](http://www.unisonwestsussex.org.uk/join)

<b>Name</b> <small>(PLEASE PRINT)</small>	<b>Email address</b>
<b>Workplace address</b>	<b>Home address</b>

I would like more information on (please tick all that are relevant):

Joining the union

Becoming a rep