

BRANCH LINES

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



**See page 8 for reasons why
education support staff should
vote in May's general election**

SEE INSIDE

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I DON'T DO POLITICS BUT...
I DO CARE ABOUT MY
CHILD'S EDUCATION

WELCOME



Welcome to the second edition of Schools and Academies Branch Lines. In this

issue we focus on many of the issues impacting on school support staff. We've a number of local issues causing us concern, such as the impact of the new Chichester Free School on pupil numbers in neighbouring high schools, and the damning indictment of local education policy by an independent peer review (see opposite). But most importantly, you'll see throughout our newsletter, reminders about the need to vote in May. If you're not registered, or know of someone who isn't, please make the effort to enrol. Your vote makes a difference.

Dan Sartin, Branch Secretary

WSSC education policy: a damning indictment

Chief Executive of Devon County Council, Phil Norrey, has delivered a damning report into the ambition, attainment and management of WSSC's education function as a follow-up to the corporate peer review.

This was a series of reviews conducted at both officer and councillor level commissioned by the WSSC cabinet and former Chief Executive, Kieran Stigant. Its purpose was to find out whether new organisational structures and resource allocations set up at that time were able to deliver the council's priorities. Phil Norrey was part of that original peer review and was invited back to conduct a more in-depth assessment of WSSC's education policy.

It is clear the council's ideological obsession with academisation has not paid off. Many academies "wish to remain part of the family of West Sussex schools," and

WSSC's "clear promotion of academisation was all the more keenly resented because of the long survival of a paternalistic relationship between the council and its schools," he stated.

WSSC's obsession with freezing council tax and imposing swingeing service cuts has come at a price, as school support services were put under pressure and hard-working staff struggled to cope. "The council is a low spender on school improvement services and its central education function more generally." Perhaps it is not surprising then that, "West Sussex is the lowest performing of all South East counties at GCSE."

To read the full report go to: www.unisonwestsussex.org.uk

Worthing Age of Transfer latest

The branch continues to support members during this process and is preparing for the final movement of schools-based staff at the end of the school year.

The protocol for redeployment, agreed between the unions and WSSC, is in place for those staff who may be displaced

from their current workplace and may be suitable for a vacancy at another school on the redeployment register.

If any UNISON member is affected by the age transfer process and needs advice or support, please contact the branch office.

It performs poorly across a range of key measures: from foundation stage to GCSE, and was placed just 97th out of 151 councils in the GCSE performance of pupils entitled to free school meals. Mr Norrey goes on to suggest 13 fundamental actions the council must take to address these issues. The council's lack of meaningful action for its own schools at every key stage prevails throughout the document: "It was clear to us that something had 'got lost in translation' between the council's clearly stated high level ambitions and the mechanisms which might help it achieve them."

Let's hope the recommendations are completed in full. The education of West Sussex children should not be compromised by the dogma of those in charge at County Hall.

As a result of the report, and UNISON West Sussex lobbying, the proposed £685k spending cuts on the West Sussex Learning Service were removed from the 2015-16 budget at the full council meeting on 13 February.

www.unisonwestsussex.org.uk/news/norrey/

Controversial restructure at St Andrew's

The results of a restructure consultation at Worthing St. Andrew's School for Boys have just been announced.

The school has a significant budget deficit, which in UNISON's view, has been caused by previous poor financial management. The school has commissioned a WSCC audit of the school's accounts. We are waiting for the results. However, we know that far more of the budget was spent on staffing than should have ever been allowed, creating an unsustainable model.

UNISON strongly intervened because proposals to tackle the problem have been unfairly aimed at school support staff. Up to 5 fte jobs will be lost, with no teaching staff affected.

The school states it has benchmarked support staff numbers at other schools, which generally

have fewer staff in the areas identified for reductions. However, the union argues that comparisons with other secondary schools in the area are unfair because St. Andrew's is a boys' school. Nationally, significantly more boys have special educational needs (SEN) than girls. Therefore, a higher level of support staff is justified.

UNISON put forward alternative solutions, which spread the impact of job cuts between support and teaching staff, but the school has chosen to offset the reduction of resources by employing lower paid lunchtime supervisors, removing the duty from learning support assistants.

"It's particularly short-sighted when the school role is expanding, demand for support staff is growing, yet resources are reduced," said Karen Anssari, UNISON rep. "The removal of lunchtime duties does not fully compensate for this reduction. Classroom support for boys with SEN will be reduced."

We will now be supporting our members through the selection process. We welcome the commitment to transparency of the audit results and hope that lessons will be learned.

ONES TO WATCH...

The Branch is supporting our members at:

- **St. Peter's C.E. Primary School**, Ardingly.
Changes to work patterns and reductions in hours are proposed for the school's office staff team.
- **Bognor Regis Nursery School Children's Centre**.
A re-organisation by the Headteacher is proposing to change roles, grades and hours for some staff



Pension win for education support staff

UNISON Norfolk county branch has successfully prevented a multi academy trust from setting up an arm's length company structure which would have denied all new support staff access to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

The TEN group, a multi-academy trust led by Norwich City (further education) College, informed UNISON of its plans to deny all new support staff access to the LGPS earlier in the autumn.

If this plan had gone ahead it could have resulted in other academy trusts looking to use the same structure in a cynical attempt to deny new staff access to a decent pension.

This welcome decision, along with the recent decision by the AET Multi Academy Trust to shelve their proposals to transfer all school support staff to an arms-length company, should act as a deterrent to other multi academy trusts who are trying to set up 'novel or contentious' new companies.

“ I DON'T DO POLITICS BUT... I DO CARE ABOUT A LIVING WAGE. ”

UNISON West Sussex joins AAA

Our branch has recently affiliated to the education campaign group, the Anti-Academies Alliance (AAA). This is to help lend our local voice to the growth of national opinion against the privatisation of our education system.



The alliance is not against the children, parents or hard-working teachers and support staff in academies, but against the politicians and big businesses who have used academy conversion and free schools to help privatise and deregulate state education. The profit motive should not be a target driving schools.

During last year's UNISON campaign against the academisation of Worthing High School, the AAA worked with the branch on our strategy and approach, spoke at several public meetings supporting the union's line and were generally very helpful and knowledgeable.

Our branch believes AAA's concerns such as: teacher and school place shortages, political interference in the curriculum and educational inequality, are shared by our school-based members and beyond and is happy to be affiliated to this campaign.

Chichester Free School causes merger

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 for Boys. The redundancies occurred due to falling pupil numbers, which has been blamed on the new school.

The situation has deteriorated to a level where The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT, who run the high schools) must seriously consider ending the current single-sex education option and merge teaching in mixed classes. Both schools are only '50% full' which was attributed to increased 'parental choice' nearby and fewer children locally in the age range.

It's hoped this decision will stabilise the current falling roles and give parents an alternative mixed teaching option to the free school. However, current year groups will remain separate. Mixed classes will only start from 2015-16, with a gradual transfer to full mixed set-up as that year group progresses through the school. The merger may cause redundancies from both the existing girls' and boys' schools. The schools have been subject to three restructures in only 18 months, with a fourth due by this September.

Free Schools have attracted recent criticism from the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee for opening in areas that do not have a forecast need for places. Only 19% of new secondary free schools are filling such need, said their report.

UNISON West Sussex Branch Secretary, Dan Sartin said, "These ideological experiments are a disaster for local residents. Government policy is responsible for the mess, but WSCC shares the blame by encouraging the proliferation of free schools in our county."



Building work in progress at Heene Primary School'

WSCC buys pub land to expand school

A petition containing over 2,000 signatures helped persuade WSCC to buy the former 'Jolly Brewers' pub site on Clifton Road to expand facilities at neighbouring Heene Primary School, Worthing.

The school will use the site to expand its playground facilities. The land was originally earmarked for residential development, but the planning application was rejected. Council officers worked hard for months to negotiate the purchase of the land: a decision strongly welcomed by UNISON.

UNISON West Sussex Rep at Heene Primary School, Tracey Clift said: "With the school roll on the rise this additional land will make a huge difference to our children."



Schools suspend staff in child protection confusion

Hundreds of teachers and support staff have been suspended amid confusion over child protection rules in England's schools, say unions.

UNISON has been pushing the DfE to clarify when and where staff involved in childcare should be barred from such a role if they live with someone who may have committed a relevant offence. This is known as 'disqualification by association'.

We are pleased to report that the DfE has now clarified the guidelines. If you are employed in an activity classified as 'childcare', please read the revised guidelines. You can find them on the branch website under the 'News' tab.

These guidelines clarify the following issues:

- 1. Who the guidelines apply to and who they do not.**
- 2. The responsibilities of schools and childcare professionals when requesting information from a third party.**
- 3. A list of relevant offences.**
- 4. Redeployment, waivers and pay arrangements during suspensions.**

If you require further information, please contact the branch office.

WOMEN IN UNISON

PROFILE OF A WORKPLACE REPRESENTATIVE

Karen Anssari

St. Andrew's School for Boys, Worthing



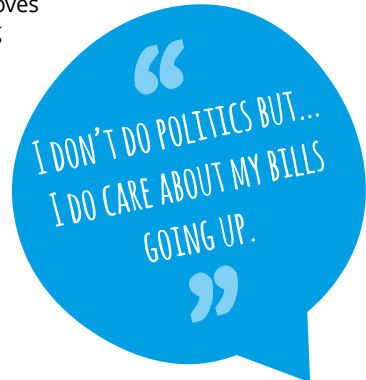
"One thing that's really good about having a strong union presence is that it makes sure restructure consultation processes are followed correctly," says Karen, our Workplace Rep at St. Andrew's School. "It reassures our members, knowing things are being done thoroughly, transparently and that their views are being fully considered."

"We're currently going through a major restructure which will have an impact on some support staff. But I've convened talks with members and attended meetings with the school management and business manager. I've advised individuals about their own situation, as there is always

the potential for confusion. You can't underestimate the pastoral support benefits the union provides at times like this.

"I've been a UNISON member for about 8 years, but a rep for 18 months. I've worked hard to treble union membership over the years. I've done presentations about the union at departmental meetings as well as talking to people individually at lunch breaks and after school. I find that often, people have a very odd view of unions, but the reality is that they're there to help you, especially when times are tough.

Karen is a learning support assistant, and loves her job working with Years 10 and 11 pupils. "UNISON office staff have supported us well through this consultation," she says, "and it's really helped keep us together."



Conservative education plans 'electioneering'

Under a new Tory government, schools that 'require improvement' will be automatically considered for conversion to academies unless they set out a clear plan for rapid change.

Any academy requiring improvement could be forced to accept a new sponsor. Currently, only schools judged 'inadequate' can be forced into a change of status.

Nicky Morgan, the education secretary, also proposes a 'war on illiteracy and innumeracy'. This would force year six pupils to complete new writing and times tables tests. Schools would need to pass this to avoid having their leadership replaced.

In response, the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) warned that extra testing was counterproductive. Its head, Russell Hobby, said: "This is about breaking the morale

"The surest way to raise standards in every lesson, in every school, is to improve the quality of teaching in the classroom. That begins with an end to David Cameron's unqualified teachers' policy."

Tristram Hunt, Labour's shadow education secretary



of a profession to score points in the election. This is pure electioneering, but the constant churn and bluster make any concerns expressed about tackling workload ring hollow. Apparently, headteachers will be sacked should any – yes, any – child fail the test. Mistakes happen. Children feel under the weather or have a bad evening beforehand. This does not mean that teachers are not working as hard as possible."

Tristram Hunt, Labour's shadow education secretary, argued that the Conservative policy of allowing untrained teachers to work in schools would make reform harder.

"I DON'T DO POLITICS BUT... I DO CARE ABOUT HOW SAFE MY NEIGHBOURHOOD IS."

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.

Supporting you through academisation

When a WSCC school decides to become an academy it can feel threatening and uncertain. We are there to help you make the transition as smooth as possible.

Three more primary schools: **Blackthorns, Holmbush** and **Lindfield** are set to become academies from April this year. Our members there have been supported throughout the process by our reps and office staff. They have gathered

evidence, participated fully in formal consultation processes and negotiated general agreements with employers on terms and conditions when staff are TUPE'd over. We make sure your voice is heard.

The branch has negotiated key principles that WSCC and schools (as employers) should follow when a school decides to become an academy. For the most part, this results in little change to our members' jobs and a smooth transition into the new arrangements. We will continue to support you as new practices and processes are introduced and intervene where they cause concern.

If your school decides to become an academy get in touch with us right away.

USE YOUR VOTE!



As a UNISON member, you belong to an organisation that seeks to influence the political process to improve the lives of our members and the services they provide.

UNISON can help you make your voice heard on the issues you care about. What makes us so influential is that we all speak together, with our members making their voices heard by using their votes in local, national and European elections. UNISON does politics, and so should you.



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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

Name (PLEASE PRINT)	Email address
Workplace address	Home address

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

Joining the union

Becoming a rep