

Disabled Teachers' Conference

Action planned on equality issues for teachers with disabilities

Members were welcomed to this year's Disabled Teachers' Conference by Mandy Hudson, NUT section National Executive Disability Equality seat holder.

Kevin Courtney, Joint General Secretary of the National Education Union (NEU), spoke about the new union and how organising and activism around equality issues would be very important. A question and answer session heard activists speak about the barriers they had faced and how they had challenged them.

There were a number of workshops, such as keeping disabled members in the picture; getting a network off the ground; disability discrimination and harassment: recognising the signs; the Mental Health Charter; and digital networks – organising members.

Motions were debated on the support and promotion of disabled education



staff and disability equality; support with Personal Independence Payments applications and appeals; and abortion rights and disability.

Our keynote speaker was Ellen Clifford of Disabled People Against the Cuts (DPAC), who spoke about non-apparent or hidden impairments. Many members do not realise they can self-identify as disabled to the union and be part of our section.

Lots of action was planned and links made, with opportunities to be on a working party for future conferences.

Supply teachers

Fair deal for supply teachers

Another successful meeting of the national network for Supply Teachers on the 2nd December 2017 included a lobby of the New Directions agency.

This provided the opportunity to present them with the Low Pay Award for 2017, highlighting the scandalous daily rates being offered to highly qualified and dedicated teachers.

Attended by nearly 40 teachers from all parts of England and Wales several ongoing problems and injustices were highlighted. The increasing use of unqualified staff, agencies manipulating or ignoring Agency Worker Regulations, the lack of pension rights and ever-decreasing pay rates were some of the items discussed.

The Supply Teachers network continues to strive to increase awareness of these concerns, bringing them to the attention of all those who have an interest in the future and quality of the education of our children.



NUT

Hackney News

January 2018

Putting testing in its place

In October of last year the new Ofsted chief, Amanda Spielman, argued that schools were becoming exam factories and were focusing too much on exam results rather than providing children with a good grounding in a broad range of subjects. She went on to say:

“A good curriculum should lead to good results. However, good examination results in of themselves don't always mean that the pupil received rich and full knowledge from the curriculum.”

'Flimsy' education

“In the worst cases, teaching to the test, rather than teaching the full curriculum, leaves a pupil with a hollowed-out and flimsy understanding.”

Notwithstanding the breath-taking hypocrisy of this coming from the head of an institution that almost entirely bases its judgements of schools on exam results these are sentiments that a lot of teachers would agree with.

There has been a lot of discussion and campaigning around assessment over the last few years particularly in the primary sector over baseline assessment and SATs. However, although there has been some success with the ending of baseline assessment and the announcement last year that KS1 SATs were to be scrapped, there is still much more to campaign over. The KS1 SATS are only due to be scrapped in 2023 when the government is planning on reintroducing baseline assessment.

Strategies we can use

In order to support our campaigns against the overuse of high stakes testing two new books have been published. The 'More Than A Score' campaigning group has produced a very useful book entitled 'Beyond the Exam Factory: alternative to high-stakes testing'. The purpose of this book is to reclaim testing and it argues that



assessment has always been a part of a teacher's practice in order to evaluate what children have learned and how to move them forward. However, this formative approach has been replaced by a high-stakes testing regime the purpose of which is to “police schools and teachers”. The book draws together a number of real alternatives and presents a wide range of assessment strategies that teachers can use.

Along with this Dr Jon Berry has

followed up his book 'Teachers Undefeated' with 'Putting the Test in its Place: Teaching well and keeping the number crunchers quiet', a series of case studies of schools which eschew the obsession with teaching to the test and prove that it is possible to teach a wide-ranging and rich curriculum and still provide children with the knowledge and skills to perform well in examinations.

Trusted and supported

One of the strengths of this book is that none of the schools chosen have classroom practices that seem particularly or radically different to those of most teachers. The key differences lie in the fact that teachers are trusted, supported and given the time to develop well-planned and engaging lessons rather than constantly having to evidence their teaching and obsess about unproven and statistically invalid data.

Jon will be speaking about his book at our next general meeting on Monday 22nd January and both books will be available (see advert left).

The NEU is committed to continue to oppose unnecessary high-stakes testing which deforms the curriculum and contributes to a stressful and dull learning experience for our students.

Stand Up To Racism

A priority for us

The fight against racism remains central to our work in 2018.

The last few months have seen the entry of the far-right Freedom party into the Austrian government, and the election of deputies for the Allianz fur Deutschland in Germany, as well as the continuing abandonment of refugees in and around Calais. Delegations there in December reported continuing police harassment, with refugees, including pregnant women, sleeping under plastic. In this country racist attacks have risen, along with islamophobia and anti-semitism.

However, we have also seen sustained resistance to racism.

Anti-racists and anti-fascists have marched over Europe, and challenged racism, in Austria, in Berlin, in Poland

and here in the UK, and numerous local campaigns and groups have been set up. In Hackney, Stand Up To Racism held a fundraising event for Care4Calais before Christmas with £2,000 raised, including collections at our NEU reps' training in November, and Stoke Newington and Clapton Schools. We know many colleagues have done collections in their own schools, and we want to continue to develop this work. We would also encourage members to get involved in these events:

● **Stand Up To Racism Trade Union Conference: Saturday 10th February** supported by the NEU, the TUC and other major unions including Unison and Unite.

Workshops including a session on Educating Against Hate in Our Schools

● **March Against Racism on UN anti-racist day: Saturday 17th March**



Challenging sexism in schools and colleges

A one day conference for anyone working in education or youth services, parents, carers and young people

Sat 17 March 2018 10am-5pm

Hamilton House, 4 Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BB

Book now: www.challengingsexismschools.eventbrite.co.uk



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Hackney

School cuts

Union relaunches campaign against funding cuts

The budget at the end of last term did little to alleviate the huge funding gap in education. There was no attempt to reverse the real terms education cuts and no attempt to stem the worsening teacher recruitment and retention crisis.

As our joint General Secretary, Kevin Courtney, said in his response: "We note the announcement of £42m for teacher training, which translates to about £1,000 per teacher in selected schools. The only credible response to the widespread and worsening teacher recruitment problems is to properly invest in education, including fully funded proper pay levels across the profession, not sticking-plaster solutions like this that have not worked in the past."

Despite the small increase in education funding announced last July our data shows that 88 percent of

schools will face real terms cuts per pupil.

The result of this will be yet more narrowing of the curriculum, more job losses, less enrichment activities such as school outings and less money for equipment.

At our last reps' training almost everyone had experienced the loss of teaching assistants at their school as TAs were either made redundant or simply not replaced if they resigned.

A small but not insignificant harbinger of things to come was the survey the NEU carried out in August last year. All in all 1,800 school staff in England were surveyed.

- 94% paid for classroom resources or equipment from their own pocket in the last school year.

- Over a quarter (26%) of them spent between £101 and £500 of their own money on school resources last year



and nearly a third (31%) between £51 and £100.

- Nearly four in ten (39%) respondents said their school asked parents for money to help with school funding last year.

- Two-thirds (68%) said their school asked parents to pay to attend school concerts and sports events, over a fifth (22%) said school had asked parents to pay for books, with similar numbers asking parents to pay for design technology (22%) and art materials (21%).

The NEU is in the process of relaunching the campaign against funding cuts in the light of the new figures. It is vital that we get the message out that the latest small increase in funding is a drop in the

ocean that goes nowhere near solving the desperate financial problems most schools will be facing.

SEND funding crises
The plight of SEND pupils will be even more severe as they are on the front line of these cuts.

- A planned 5% cut to high needs funding planned by the council from April 2018.

- The loss of at least 70 support staff in Hackney schools since May 2017.

- A cut of 48% to Hackney's pre-school service for children with special needs.

- A proposed cut to special schools' funding from April 2018.

On top of this there is a proposal from HLT to reorganise the way in which SEND funding is delivered in Hackney mainstream schools. Local

families with children who have SEND are strongly opposed to the arrangements because they are likely to amount to a big cut to funding and support for disabled and vulnerable pupils in Hackney and make it more difficult for students to obtain an EHCP.

If you are interested in supporting this campaign visit www.hackneyspecialeducationcrisis.co.uk

Unite dispute

Cleaners in six schools vote unanimously to strike

More than 40 cleaners in six schools in Hackney will strike for four days in a dispute over the 'outrageous' failure to pay proper holiday rates.

The cleaners voted by 100 percent on a 60 percent turnout for strike action, following the refusal of their employer OCS Group Ltd to pay the London Living Wage; proposals to cut pay with new term time only contracts; and refusing to pay holiday pay in line with its legal obligations, which state that holiday pay should reflect normal remuneration.

The cleaners are also angry over OCS' failure to discuss the five percent pay claim for April 2018.

Unite regional officer Onay Kasab said: "What we have here is outrageous salami-slicing by OCS of pay and employment conditions of an already lowly-paid group of workers.

The bosses need to sit down and hold constructive talks with Unite to resolve this dispute, otherwise classroom rubbish will be uncollected and toilets uncleaned at the end of January – with further action on the cards going into the spring."

The Hackney schools that will be affected, if the strike goes ahead, are Cardinal Pole, Clapton Girls Academy, Hackney Free School, Haggerston, Ickburgh and Stoke Newington.



Being a union rep

First steps as NEU representatives

When my co-rep and I became joint reps at our school, we chose to do so because we could spread the workload.

It also became clear that we could share our plans and ideas with each other which was perhaps even more helpful. Our first step was to send round a quick Google survey to find out what was affecting our members the most. We broke down issues affecting workload into six categories that we recognised as having an impact. We didn't get a response from everyone (nor did we expect to, these are busy people!) but the responses were really valuable and helped us to plan our first meeting.

At that meeting, we

discussed the results of the survey and it was noticeable that teachers immediately felt reassured that other members of staff felt the same way about workload issues as they did. We identified a couple of key areas that came out of the survey and opened this up for discussion from our members. We listened to them, took minutes of the meeting and followed this up with a meeting with the head.

In particular, our members expressed concern with the rate at which they were expected to incorporate new ideas and teaching styles into their practice. These were coming thick and fast and one of these new initiatives

was followed up only a week later with a formal observation, causing some teachers a lot of stress and anxiety. The quantity of paperwork for assessment was also raised as a concern as it was frequently requiring a large amount of additional time on top of day-to-day planning and marking and was eating further into evenings and weekends.

We arranged a meeting with our head and shared both positive feedback from our members and the most pressing concerns. She listened when we shared people's feelings about workload and stress. Individually, few teachers had even thought of approaching her. In

particular, we stressed that as a group we considered ourselves to be working at well over 100% of our capacity, and that any new initiatives, planning styles, teaching methods, assessments, data submissions or anything else additional to our core responsibilities needed to be considered in terms of time-cost and that something else would need to be removed from our plates to compensate.

While there is always room for improvement, I'm pleased to say that our management showed that workload and stress were issues that they took seriously. We won some very quick concessions that improved our workload immediately and showed our members that we could improve things together.