

Value Education. Vote Education.

The General Election on 12th December is critical as it will decide the future of education for a generation.

Cuts have devastated schools and colleges up and down the country. Teachers and support staff jobs have been lost and class sizes are rising every day.

The NEU is determined to make the issues affecting our members central to the election campaign.

Education funding and Child poverty are two of these issues. In 2017 our funding campaign and election work resulted in 750,000 voters changing their minds and put school funding at the top of the news agenda. The government has recognised this and in order to neutralise the issue they have announced an increase in education funding of £7.1bn. However, the government has so far broken election promises, and this is eight billion less than what is needed to address the shortfall. Crucially it fails to reverse the cuts schools have suffered since 2015: a staggering 83 per cent of schools – that's 16,523 – will still be facing cuts in April.

Furthermore, the cuts are uneven throughout the country and fall heaviest in poorer areas. In Hackney, we are facing a real term cut in funding of £747 per-pupil by 2020/21 but in North East Somerset (Jacob Rees-Mogg's constituency)



they will get an increase of £11 per pupil.

That's why we are asking NEU members to come together and join the elections activities aiming to put school funding at the top of the national agenda.

● **Check out the school cuts website and join the campaign.** <https://schoolcuts.org.uk/>
There's many ways you can get involved:

● **Leafleting:** Getting out and about at the school gate to talk to

parents and community members about the school funding crisis.

● **Social Media:** Keep the pressure up online everyday by sharing graphics and videos about school cuts with your family, friends and groups. Why not record some vox pops about why you are voting the way you are as a teacher.

● **Texting:** Reach out to people up and down the country via text to encourage them to attend local events, get out to vote and hand out leaflets in their area.

● **Data Entry:** Grow our movement of people who are opposed to school cuts by entering the names of new petition signers every week.

● **Phone bank:** Encourage people to vote and explain the issues.

Supporting prospective parliamentary candidates that share our views.

We will be offering the opportunity for candidates to make a pledge for education. When candidates have taken this pledge, they will be sent a campaign pack and offered the opportunity to join a series of campaign calls framed around the big issues affecting education e.g. funding and child poverty.

● **You have until the 26th November to register to vote.** Visit <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>

Hackney responds to climate change

On 20th September 2019 students from across Hackney proudly walked out of their schools to passionately protest an issue they deem to be of colossal importance. Whilst teachers were anxious to support these passions it was legally difficult for them to leave the school premises or openly voice support. Many teachers decided to have a day of lessons surrounding climate change for younger pupils and those less willing to walk out of school.

A group of students from Clapton Girls arrived at the Town Hall Student Strike armed with banners and catchy slogans. They eloquently spoke on the top of the Town Hall steps to a large group of supporters from the local community. These impressive young women described the impact climate change is having around the world and spoke about their horror at the lack of action from government officials. They ardently spoke about the impact climate change will have on their futures and described the type of action they would like to see taking place now to avoid a disastrous outcome.



Hackney students did us proud by protesting in different ways.

Many parents were at the rally with their young children, having made the decision that they should join the protest and return to school after lunch. Children as young as seven climbed the steps, took the mic and explained why they believe action is needed for climate change.

Whilst the rally was a raving success, schools also had a successful day, full of creative and informative lessons on climate change. At Homleigh Primary the children watched a Greta Thunberg video and read poems about the environment in the playground to a large audience. The pupils made their own pledges as to how they would help take care of the environment.

At Clapton Girls they created science lessons with a climate change focus while their sixth formers traveled to strikes and rallies. And at Sebright they performed informative assemblies to share with their school community. All commendable actions.

Students have come together around the world and have asked us for our support and help. Our students in Hackney should be listened to. It is our duty, as their teachers, to help them achieve their goals in combating climate change.

Learning how to team up with our teachers

Two members of support staff from Stoke Newington School & Sixth Form attended a one-day NEU Support Staff Conference in October.

After speeches from NEU's President Amanda Martin and Joint General Secretary Kevin Courtney, the day then was made up of two sets of seminars each followed with whole conference plenary sessions. Support staff, addressed by conference as 'Education Professionals', could choose between topics covering 'Behaviour for Learning'; 'Redundancies and Restructurings'; 'Mental Health for Staff'; 'Strategies for reading, writing, spelling'; and 'Conflict Resolution'.

Between us we attended the first three and both of us found them relevant, constructive and informative. 'Behaviour for Learning' covered how to help staff adopt strategies to deal with a range of behaviours presented by students and how to treat all students equally, not just focussing on disruptive students but also ensuring 'invisible' children are included. Delegates learned

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What do we think about support plans?

Support plans are used in different ways in different schools and for different reasons. We consider the positive and negative aspects and how they can be useful and what we in schools should be arguing for.

Staff may struggle at different times in their lives. We know that schools are stressful places to work. Quite often staff start to struggle at work when events outside the workplace are putting additional stress so that the individual can no longer cope with what was previously a manageable workload.

The Education Support Partnership reports the number of teachers reporting stress up from 64% in 2018 to 73% in 2019 and this is almost certain to be similar for support staff.

It is important to recognise and address stress before it does too much damage. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to spotting the signs of stress but noticing is everything. Notice physical changes, anything from increase heart rate to digestive problems, skin disorders or just looking different, perhaps frowning more. Notice any emotional changes, less patience

than normal, quick to anger, more emotional than usual, or simply weary of all that is demanded of you.

If you find yourself reaching for props that you hope might make you feel better or more able to cope, like sweets or alcohol, then be aware of the extent to which you rely on them.

In a good school where the well-being of staff is seriously considered then a support plan can be a good thing. Where counselling, coaching or mentoring are offered and where stresses in the workload is addressed then a support plan can help someone get back on track while they get through a stressful period in their life.

We know at the union that this is not always the case and it is very important that individuals

A SUPPORT PLAN should:

- Have clear targets and short timescale.
- Include real support such as CPD, reduced workload or professional coaching/counselling.
- Be helpful and developmental.
- Follow a clear policy with representation at any meetings with management to review the plan.
- Recognise positive contributions and take account of present stresses and workload.
- Result in as positive an outcome as possible for all.

should not:

- Be additional workload with vague or numerous targets and no clear timescale.
- Put unnecessary pressure on an individual including constant monitoring, additional observations and negative judgements.
- Be used to get rid of expensive (and experienced) staff.
- Simply be a tool to show an headteacher is addressing whole school concerns.
- Ignore past success and any present stresses.
- Be a quick route to dismissal.

seek help early on in order to get the best outcome for all. Talk to a colleague, friend or union rep, seek advice and support before it gets too serious.

Support plans have been over-used and have become a threat within schools and a big source of casework for local districts. They target individuals so are more difficult to campaign around but create a threat within an already stressful workplace. They often present additional stress and increase in workload and are often understood by the individual targeted as a way to push them out.

The NEU website describes how members of staff who underperform sometimes have a relatively short period of service (and so perhaps need additional support or training). A much

larger proportion are experienced educators who are overloaded with work and/or face a plethora of new initiatives from local and central government. Members of staff who underperform may also be dealing with the effects of diminished health or additional stresses outside of work.

Not everyone subject to capability proceedings is underperforming. The NEU believes the capability process is often abused, contributing to a large number of people leaving the profession. In previous years UPS3 teachers, support staff, black staff and women over the age of 50 were targeted disproportionately. Now, however, teachers and support staff across the board are reporting unjustified treatment.

While the NEU recognises the pressures on head teachers to save money and increase results with fewer resources, managing workload, supporting staff development with care is vital to retain and motivate staff.

Organise in your school and agree actions to address workload, improve well-being and reduce stress. Call us at Hackney NEU 0208 985 2056.

We would like to know about good practice as well as to support you through difficulties. Schools have different approaches and sometimes different policies. Please let us know if you have any concerns about how they are used.

Another useful contact is the Education Support Partnership on 08000 562 561 or via www.educationsupport.org.uk.

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tactics and methods for helping to manage behaviour in classrooms.

In 'Redundancies and Restructuring' we learned about the legal aspects of schools carrying out these exercises and what rights affected staff have. The range of potential redundancy 'situations' were explained, proper consultation, the terms of a redundancy package, employees' rights, contracts, and the roles of the union rep, TUPE, the Governing Body and the Local Authority.

'Mental Health for Staff' looked at the understanding of and recognition of issues that affect mental health at work such being able to distinguish between "pressure" and "stress"; we looked at the work of the World Health Organisation on employees' mental health; and were introduced to the term 'mental fitness' and how to achieve/sustain this condition. We were made aware of levels of diagnosis across school-aged children, the impact of the stigma of mental health difficulties creating a barrier to seeking help and differing cultural perceptions of mental health.

After the workshops, conference debated and voted on which of two motions should be prioritised. 'Pay rise/support staff pay' won over 'Conditions and anonymity for education professionals' although some anxiety had been expressed by delegates that in the current funding climate this could put jobs at risk.

At the end, members were invited to share their experience of being NEU members and/or reps. It was quite an emotional response. Some frustration, much optimism, a feeling of continuing struggle in the workplace but a realisation that much work needs to be done in order to take full advantage of being in the same union as our teachers – which is a very welcome thing.

Overall it was a very worthwhile and successful conference. Effective follow-up is crucial and teamwork with our teaching colleagues in order to be better respected by our employers.

Sixth form strike



Teachers "have had enough"

Sixth Form College teachers are set to escalate their action over pay, workload and funding when they walk out for a third time.

Nine more colleges voted to join the national action meaning that over thirty colleges will be striking on 20th November. The Institute for Fiscal Studies reports that the Sixth Form education sector has suffered the largest cuts to funding and that it would take £1.1 billion to repair the damage done over the last 10 years.

Sixth Form College teachers earn 15% less in real terms now than in 2010. Whilst school teachers have been awarded a meagre 2.75% for 2019/20 they have been offered just one per cent.

Jamie Duff, NEU rep at BSix college in Clapton said: "Sixth Form Colleges are on the brink. This government seems intent on destroying these most valuable institutions. They have had their budgets cut year on year and seen redundancies of both teaching and support staff. The remaining staff are facing intolerable workloads and significant cuts to vital student services that provide counselling, careers advice and extra-curricular enrichment.

"Sixth Form College teachers have had enough – they are sick of working more for less. They can see the damage that the cuts have done and are striking to defend the sector and the young people they teach."

 **General meeting** 

Hackney branch of the NEU

UK Disability History Month

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Colleen Johnson, National Executive Officer for Disabled members, on fighting for a much more inclusive education system and how the school cuts work against our SEND pupils in particular.



Monday 25th November @5pm
The Urswick School Paragon Rd E9 6NR
Crèche available/childcare paid
Cab fares will be paid



UK Disability History Month (UKDHM) runs until 20th December. We will look at how the leaders of the disabled people's movement changed the way disability was seen, from being a personal burden to a human rights issue. We will also examine the struggles of disabled people from earlier times for fairness, equality and a life worth living plus the culture of the disability arts movement. For more info see: <https://ukdhm.org/>



Hackney

How to contact Hackney NEU

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