

Welcome back, we hope you've had an enjoyable summer and well-earned rest!

Please take the time to read the Newsletter and stay up to date with any workplace issues, the latest learning and training opportunities, your local UNISON Representatives and National events and campaigns.

Stars in our Schools 2015



Preparations are well under way now for this year's 'Stars in our Schools'. All Headteachers will shortly be receiving a nomination card asking them to nominate their team of School Support staff who go above and beyond in what they do. We will then choose two winning teams, one from the North of the County and one from the South of the County as this year's winners. The winning team will each receive an individual prize and will also be put into a draw to be in with the chance of winning some very exciting 'Treats', and the winning Schools will each receive a cash prize to be used for the benefit of the pupils.

Ask your Headteacher to look out for the nomination cards, due to be sent out this month, we will also be visiting Schools and Academy's across the County to promote this exciting campaign. Good luck....

School Forum Group

At the recent SEN Training day it was suggested that we set up a School Forum Group, where we meet at the Branch once a month, to discuss any issues, share ideas and meet new people.

Please email us if you are interested.

schools@staffsunison.org.uk

School staff hit by cuts to tax credits

In his recent budget the chancellor announced with much fanfare that he would be increasing the National Minimum Wage to £7.20 an hour in April 2016 for workers ages 25 and over. It was already due to rise to £6.70 in October.

He also announced that basic rate taxpayers would pay £80 a year each less in income tax.

At the same time, however, the chancellor announced big cuts to working tax credits, which are an essential support for families who are not getting paid enough to live on.

Tax credits have a threshold and for every £1 you earn above that threshold the tax credit is currently reduced by 41p – this is called the 'taper'. The chancellor has reduced the threshold that applies to tax credits from £6,420 to £3,850 – so reductions start sooner and the rate of withdrawal is increased by raising the taper from 41p to 48p.

These changes will cost low-paid workers far more than they'll gain from higher hourly pay and lower income tax.

For example a couple with one person earning the minimum wage with one or two children, will see their annual income cut by £1,277.50.

Jon Richards UNISON's National Secretary for Education and Children's Services said: "Many hard-working school support staff and their families will have their finances plunged into chaos as a result of these changes to tax credits. UNISON will be campaigning and working with MP's and the House of Lords to do everything we can to try and defeat these cruel proposals".

Steward Profile

In each newsletter we would like to do a steward or member profile section, and ask for a few words about your experience as a support worker in school. If you are willing to send a few words, please email

schools@staffsunison.org.uk

Training

Following on from the SEN training that we put on, we are looking at offering further courses, please contact us if you are interested in further details.

schools@staffsunison.org.uk

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)

The EEF have made the following recommendations to maximise the impact of TAs in Primary and Secondary Schools, based on the best available researched evidence. They provide a framework by which Schools can transform the way TAs are deployed and supported, to help them thrive in their role and improve outcomes for pupils. Some of the recommendations are:

- TAs should not be used as an informal teaching resource for low-attaining pupils.
- Use TAs to add value to what teachers do, not replace them
- Use TAs to help pupils develop independent skills and manage their own learning

Please visit www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk for the full 'Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants' report.

Want to become more involved?

Being a steward opens up many opportunities including:

- Time off for training
- Representing members in grievance/sickness absence/disciplinary hearings
- Recruiting & Organising Opportunities
- Being involved in how your branch is run

If you wish to become a steward in your workplace and would like more information please contact us.

Or join our School Forum group, contact details below.

Managing difficult behaviour in Schools

Difficult behaviour is a key area of concern for UNISON members working in schools. Unfortunately school support staff are often overlooked when behaviour management strategies or training programmes are rolled out in schools.

With this in mind, UNISON commissioned behaviour consultant Tom Bennett to write a guide for support staff on managing difficult behaviour. This guide gives straightforward advice for building confidence, diffusing difficult situations and building relationships with students. UNISON members can download the guide free at www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2015/04/On-line-Catalogue22970.pdf UNISON members can also contact us for a hard copy to be sent out.

Dates for your diary...



Film Club:

The next Film showing will be 'Mandela' on Thursday 22nd October at 7 pm

UNISON is running a monthly Film Club free of charge for all UNISON members, guests are also welcome. Refreshments will be available for a small charge and the proceeds will go towards future film showings. The film will be shown at the Branch Office, 56 Eastgate Street, Stafford ST16 2LY.

Some dates may vary due to staffing and Public Holidays, so check out our website for details each month.

Sign up now and send your details to stephen@staffsunison.org.uk

Staying in touch

Please note this newsletter will only be sent electronically and will be published on our website. If your colleagues do not receive this, please ask them to contact the Branch to check their details.



A few words from your Reps...

Welcome back to another new academic year. For those members who have had a well-earned break, we hope you have enjoyed it and for those who have still been working, being the busiest part of your year, we thank you!

Many of us will be going back to changes in our schools and for some this will be a challenging time.

Last year we attended an unprecedented amount of meetings with the Local Authority and with the Academy Trusts to support you, our members, in your day to day roles; we will continue to do so this year.

Please keep an eye open on all our branch communication to you as we will also be running several competitions and training events that you don't want to be missing out on!

Wade Rogers & Nigel Brindley

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Staffordshire UNISON Schools and Academies