
Education Trade Unions Report

Report being considered by: Schools Forum on 13th July 2020

Report Author: Gary Upton

Item for: Information **By:** All Forum Members

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To inform members of the activities of the teacher trade unions

2. Recommendation

2.1 The Schools' Forum note the report.

Will the recommendation require the matter to be referred to the Council or the Executive for final determination?	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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3. Introduction/Background

3.1 Introduction

It is well known that most teachers are members of trade unions. The work of a trade union is not confined to collective issues or individual difficulties alone. Good relationships between the unions and employers are shown to ease relationships between the school and staff and help ensure orderly transitions with regards to policies and in many cases allow issues and concerns to be dealt with before formal processes are necessary. This year has posed many challenges, where the contact from members and the issues they have experienced remain largely the same I think it would be fair to conclude that relationships with many employers are strengthening, this has been particularly highlighted with the recent COVID pandemic, where much time has been spent engaging with members individually and collectively and spending time feeding back to employers and the LA, resulting in a smooth return to work. This has taken a large amount of facilities time and continues to highlight its' importance, the effective use of this time has seen a relatively trouble free transition into school reopening and I know that the union representatives have appreciated the constructive manner in which employers have engaged with our advice and our members. Adequate time off to allow adequate training to ensure the smooth running of operations and to assist members both collectively and individually. It is important to point out that where facilities time is not overly used on collective and individual issues, this is reflective of time spent on building positive relations between our members and their employers. Employers where facilities time is lacking have found that it can be more time consuming and costly in dealing with member concerns and issues.

3.2 Individual Issues

The union officers spend most of the facilities time dealing with members individually but since march, as outlined above, much time has been spent in collective consultation with members and employers. Teachers in West Berkshire schools are able to contact their union representative directly by email or telephone but there is increasing use of online platforms for both meetings and briefings and local representatives have taken a lead role on behalf of unions in ensuring members are well informed on both union advice and

employer's initiatives. I think it is fair to say that this year, more work has been received before any formal process takes place, this is testament to the hard work unions and the LA have put in together in ensuring that good communication takes place between employers and members before formal processes take place, this can be equally as time consuming for a union officer but certainly aids more harmonious industrial relations. Some of our work is received from members once they received formal notification of capability; disciplinary; grievance; or consultation on change to contracts, pay and conditions including redundancy but in many cases these members have not engaged fully with us previously and usually haven't engaged with the employer, clearly pointing to the fact that full engagement at an early process improves relations between all parties.

During informal contact we give advice on how the member can try to resolve the matter for themselves. This is often successful, where local officers know schools and heads well we are able to advise teacher members how they can deal with a problem informally.

3.2.1 Capability

Processes for supporting colleagues through the informal part of performance management have been clearly strengthened with fewer instances of cases reaching any formal action.

Appraisal systems continue to be used well. Teachers are entitled to be supported by a trade union representative throughout this 'support through appraisal' process. As suggested above, where employers engage with the union during this process return to work or moving colleagues on is a much smoother process.

3.2.2 Appraisal

As discussed above, constructive appraisal is vital for our members to know exactly where they stand with regard to their CPD needs, where this is provided and policy is well negotiated we find our time is spent more on working with employers to review policy and process rather than firefighting capability or disciplinary issues.

3.2.3 Disciplinary

As with other processes, where disciplinary matters have arisen thorough investigation and good communication between all parties has been maintained.

3.2.4 Contracts, Pay and Conditions

September usually sees a high volume of member contact and again, we have supported members to maintain constructive conversations on this and in most cases have avoided resorting to formal appeal.

3.3 Collective issues

In line with the positive news on school budgets, relatively few restructures have taken place and, in line with strong relationships between parties, individual and collective grievances have been low

3.4 LA Policies and guidance

We have continued to work within LA guidance and have engaged fully in conversations with the LA on any changes to this, we have ensured that guidance is adhered to, which has positively been the case between all parties.

4 Funding 2019-20

Union	Members	Flat Rate Element	Additional funding distributed in proportion to membership numbers
NASUWT	574	£1,129.23	£13,615.98
NUT	572	£1,129.23	£13,568.53
ATL	485	£1,129.23	£11,504.79
NAHT	90	£1,129.23	£2,134.91
ASCL	47	£1,129.23	£1,114.90
Totals	1768	£5,646.15	£41,939.11

5 Consultation and Engagement

Secretaries of the recognised teacher trade unions (Association of Teachers and Lecturers, Association of School and College Leaders, National Association of Headteachers, National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, National Union of Teachers)