
Education Trade Unions Report

Report being considered by: Schools Forum on 19th July 2021

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 covers both representing members in individual casework but also in collective consultation with the employer and in briefing and training members, these activities, if done well, reduce the need for individual casework. We believe it is fair to say that we have continued to enjoy constructive and positive relationships with West Berkshire and the forums used this year have allowed us to communicate effectively with Head Teachers and employers, and we thank them for considering our advice and guidance when operating their schools, this has meant that we have been able to direct members to you and your colleagues directly without the need for further intervention, this further shows the importance of regular and positive dialogue between schools and trade unions. We have spent a significant amount of time this year briefing members and employers regarding the union positions on school closure, reopening and operation throughout the COVID pandemic, this wouldn't have been possible without access to facilities time. Contact with and from members this year has been time consuming. We also have attended fortnightly briefings with West Berkshire to relay these concerns and seek sensible solutions.

3.2 Individual Issues

Union officers have spent much time on both individual and collective issues. The use of email and online platforms has made contact with members more regular and these have, in some cases, shone a light on individual concerns and queries. Most individual work tends to be resolved before formal processes take place but we have had a lot of contact regarding social distancing, online teaching and work duplication, drop-ins and learning walks and mask wearing. We have invested time in communicating with employers regarding our position on these and, thanks to good working relationships, have been able to reassure most members and resolve matters quickly, this continued to be testament to the hard work unions and the LA have put in together in ensuring that good communication takes place. Some of our work continued to be received from members once they received formal notification of capability; disciplinary; grievance; or consultation on change to contracts, pay and conditions including redundancy.

3.2.1 Capability

Appraisal systems continue to be used well. Teachers are entitled to be supported by a trade union representative throughout informal support processes, which we welcome, as this resolves most issues.

3.2.2 Appraisal

As discussed above, this continues to be used well and we have welcomed the contact with West Berkshire in continuing to review and amend these policies. The regular communication between us has seen a smooth running of these processes and allowed us to resolve member concerns quickly.

3.2.3 Disciplinary

As with other processes, where disciplinary matters have arisen through investigation, 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

There have been few collective issues, in addition to fortnightly catch ups union officers attend the ECM, where we continue to welcome the positive dialogue with West Berkshire in reviewing policies and pre-empting any issues which could result in collective concern, which has allowed us to brief members accordingly.

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.

3.5 COVID response

Unions have spent time supporting schools and members, including senior leader, in implementing enhanced health and safety measures as a response to the Covid pandemic.

4 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)