

Save the Children Gaza appeal
NEU supports humanitarian
aid to Palestine. See page 15.

In defence of the arts
Creativity must remain central
to the curriculum. See page 22.

Diversity in leadership
Paving the way for Black
head teachers. See page 35.



educate

January/
February 2024

Your magazine from the National Education Union

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cuts + pay
squeeze**

= recruitment
and retention
crisis



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Rewards

Educate

January/February 2024

Suzanne Norman, a design and technology teacher in Peterborough.

Photo by Kois Miah  [koismiah](#)

Welcome



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WELCOME to this issue of Educate – your trade union magazine. Trade unions are a vital voice for working people in society. Yet this Government is hellbent on silencing or ignoring us.

We found out in November, during the Covid inquiry, that Gavin Williamson, former Secretary of State for Education, didn't want to "give an inch to the unions" on the issue of face masks in schools. Gavin was in "no surrender" mode and Boris Johnson "gave him full support in this approach".

Think about that for a second – during an unprecedented public health crisis, in which more than 200,000 people died, the Government put its anti-union ideology before the health of school staff, parents, students and the communities in which they live. This jaw-dropping pig-headedness should not be forgotten or forgiven.

More confirmation – as if it were needed – of the Government's animosity towards working people's right to organise is the implementation of new anti-strike legislation.

The UK already has the most restrictive strike laws in Europe, including high thresholds for postal ballot turnouts. The right to strike is going to be further eroded by the insistence that education staff provide a 'minimum service' during a trade union dispute – threatening public sector workers with the sack if they don't cross their own picket lines.

If this Government – or indeed a future one – wants to avoid strike action, it should focus on addressing the issues we raise with them, whether that is pay, school funding, recruitment and retention, or the state of school buildings. On pages 26-29 we outline just how deep the crisis is for schools.

We also report on the mounting calls for a ceasefire in Gaza, with a moving poem by Michael Rosen, illustrated beautifully by Dan Berry. We select some paintings from Tim Sanders' most recent visit to Palestine, and cover the launch of Save the Children's appeal, which aims to raise £50,000 for vital humanitarian supplies for the children of Gaza (page 15).

I hope you enjoy reading your magazine during the Christmas holidays. Have a well-earned rest, and come back in the new year feeling rested and revitalised. As ever, please email your news and views to educate@neu.org.uk

Max Watson
Editor, Educate





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LIVE ON STAGE AT THE CAMBRIDGE THEATRE, LONDON



The rest is history 15 February 2003

The largest demonstration in British history took place in opposition to the imminent US-UK led invasion of Iraq. Estimates vary that between 1.5 and two million people protested in London, with up to 30 million people protesting worldwide on the same weekend.

Features

PHOTO by Save the Children



15

**NEU
appeal in aid
of Save the
Children's
humanitarian
work in Gaza**
p15



22

22 Arts under threat

Why we must protect and promote the arts in schools (left).

26 A perfect storm

Funding cuts, low pay, crumbling buildings and a recruitment and retention crisis (below left).

31 CPD for all our members

Continuing professional development – a must for every educator (below right).

PHOTO by Jason Thomas



26



31

PHOTO by Koits Miah

Regulars

19 **Union people**

21 **Michael Rosen**

33 **Tim Sanders &
Warwick Mansell**

35 **A class act**

39 **International**

40 **Jon Biddle & reviews**

42 **Teacher's pet & letters**

47 **Photo opportunity**

48 **Crosswords & sudoku**

50 **Final word**

News

6 **More funding cuts**

Beyond Ofsted demands overhaul of assessment.

8 **Strikes update**

Lyon Park; Oasis Sheppey and Connaught schools.

12 **SW women's day**

Pensions; Maternity Matters; independent sector conference.

14 **Black educators' conference**

Save the Children appeal; Welsh summer holiday proposals.

16 **Physical pain of EY educators**

Sixth form pay; report on assessment; pensions strike.

17 **Bigger picture**

Prints from Palestine.

18 **Results of leadership survey**

Music for Youth at Albert Hall.

‘Inspections should stop immediately’

Beyond Ofsted inquiry demands overhaul of accountability regime

OFSTED inspections should stop immediately because they are driving fear, doing more harm than good, and worsening the recruitment and retention crisis in teaching.

That was the message from Lord Jim Knight, chair of Beyond Ofsted, an NEU-funded inquiry into inspection, as he launched its report at the House of Commons in November.

Under the proposed new system, schools would self-evaluate, carrying out a performance review and working with a school improvement partner on an action plan.

A national safeguarding body would be created to carry out annual audits of schools. “Child safety is the most important thing for all of us, and is what parents are concerned about,” said Lord Knight, a former Labour Schools Minister. “The compliance checks will give that reassurance to parents around safety.”

One-word judgements should be scrapped and Ofsted given a legal duty of care for those it inspects.



Lord Jim Knight at the launch of the Beyond Ofsted report

PHOTO by James Linsell Clark

“The framework has evolved, but the thing that has remained consistent is fear.”

Researchers from University College London surveyed 6,708 teachers and leaders and held focus groups with parents, governors and educators. They also carried out a literature review and looked at inspection and accountability systems in other countries.

The Beyond Ofsted inquiry has recommended that inspection in England is completely overhauled, with Ofsted no longer inspecting individual schools. Instead, it would focus on how groups of schools, such as those in multi-academy trusts or within a

local authority area, are performing in terms of leadership and governance.

Two days to ‘judge’ a whole school

Primary head Kulvarn Atwal spoke at the report launch. He said Ofsted had agreed it was impossible to go into an individual lesson and judge the quality of a teacher, so questioned how the inspectorate can go into a school for two days and effectively judge a school.

Patrick Cozier, who has been a secondary head for 17 years, said: “The framework has changed and evolved, but the thing that has remained consistent is the fear.”

The union has been campaigning for an inspection system that is supportive, effective and fair. In March, NEU deputy general secretary Niamh Sweeney and a group of union members handed in a 52,000-signature petition to the Department for Education, calling for Ofsted to be replaced.

■ View the final report at beyondofsted.org.uk

Williamson ‘didn’t want to give an inch to unions’ during Covid

SINCE the Covid inquiry began its work, the NEU has been actively engaged in ensuring the voice of educators is heard and that lessons from the education sector are learned.

Evidence produced for the inquiry on 30 October in the form of WhatsApp messages

showed that former Education Secretary Gavin Williamson opposed masks in schools, principally on the grounds that it was what unions had recommended. One of the messages said that he “didn’t want to give an inch to the unions”.

Daniel Kebede, general secretary of the NEU, said: “This revelation simply confirms what teachers and parents

had always suspected – that Gavin Williamson prioritised point scoring over serious engagement with the representatives of hundreds of thousands of education workers about the best way of suppressing the spread of Covid-19 in schools.”





TEACHERS across Northern Ireland went on strike in November to demand fair pay. The strike, headed by the NEU and the five teachers' unions of the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council, highlighted the need for substantial pay reforms in the education sector. Pauline Buchanan, NEU NI joint regional secretary, said: "Pay for teachers in Northern Ireland is trailing behind their counterparts in Scotland. This disparity means many qualified educators seek better opportunities elsewhere. A teacher in Northern Ireland should not earn 15 per cent less than a teacher in Scotland. The short boat ride is luring away talented, young teachers and we are seeing a recruitment crisis," she said. (Pictured above) NEU members at Belfast Royal Academy PHOTO by Brian Morrison

Schools face further funding cuts

THE union has hit out at the Government for failing to boost funding for education in 2024/25, forcing most schools in England to make cuts from April.

NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede said Chancellor Jeremy Hunt's autumn statement had made a "mockery" of the Prime Minister's claim at the Conservative Party conference that education is at the heart of his Government's priorities.

Ahead of Hunt's statement in November, education union leaders wrote to him highlighting that just 3.9 per cent of the UK's national income is spent on education, compared to the OECD average of five per cent. The NEU and sister unions are

continuing to press the case for more funding, as school buildings crumble and educators leave the profession in droves for jobs with better pay and a manageable workload.

NEU surveys of members have shown that most teachers and support staff are 'very' or 'extremely' worried about keeping up with household bills.

Government must value educators

"In order to recruit and retain the teachers we need, the Government must demonstrate it values them," said Daniel.

"This means a properly funded and major correction in pay, alongside the investment needed to reduce sky-high workload and make school and college buildings fit for purpose."

Members won their biggest pay rise in decades in 2023 – 6.5 per cent – after taking strike action between February and July. But the autumn statement indicates next year's pay award is likely to be much lower.

The chronic recruitment and retention crisis – the result of more than a decade of unmanageable workload and real-terms falling pay – means there is a shortage of more than 20,000 specialist teachers. That figure includes 4,000 too few maths teachers and almost the same shortage of language teachers.

Daniel said: "The Chancellor's statement does nothing to repair the damage caused by 13 years of Conservative cuts. The Government will pay a heavy political price for continuing to ignore the problems it has created."

■ See **page 26**

Brent members celebrate victory for support staff

SUPPORT staff at Lyon Park Primary School in Brent, north London, have won a dispute over plans to cut pay and jobs.

The school, which is part of the Wembley Schools Federation, began a consultation on a restructure last July. It planned to axe a number of support staff roles and change the pay and job description of others.

Nursery nurses were told their contracts would change from permanent to term time only, resulting in a significant pay cut. And teaching assistants' contracts were amended to say that they would be required to cover lessons when teachers are on leave.

After six days of strike action, a meeting with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) led to a resolution on all points.

Jenny Cooper, Brent joint district secretary, said she was heartened by the solidarity shown by members. "They really understand about collective action and what the union is for. They have been brilliant and fought a really positive campaign."



The picket line at Lyon Park Primary School

Joint reps Camille Robin and Kazuyuki Sato told Educate: "The staff group is especially strong. Everyone stuck together and there was a great sense of solidarity."

"We did not want to strike, as we all love

to teach. It was hard work – we have been to many meetings and attended picket lines in the freezing cold.

"We are delighted our hard work has paid off."

Trust acts after strike over staff safety

AN agreement has been reached between NEU members and an academy over student behaviour and staff safety, following three days of strike action (pictured) in November.

Members at the Oasis Sheppey Academy in Kent had been dealing with behaviour problems for many months, including regular disruption of lessons, damage to school equipment, abusive language and numerous incidents of pupil threats and violence.

They voted to accept an offer and assurances provided by the Oasis Learning Trust following a meeting of union members with the trust's chief executive. The agreement includes commitments for:

- £500,000 for additional behaviour specialist staffing
- fixed tariffs for specific types of misbehaviour, including five days' minimum exclusion for threats against and assaults on staff
- the establishment of a joint union-



employer behaviour and safety working group.

Maria Fawcett, NEU regional secretary, said: "The employer has made several promises and members have now put their trust in Oasis to deliver a safe and acceptable working and learning environment. Members rightly expect rapid improvements to be made and

they have made it clear that further action will result if promised improvements in behaviour management and safety do not take place."

As a result of the action, the NEU branch has recruited a health and safety rep, an equality rep and two union learning reps.

■ Visit neu.org.uk/assaults

Members had been dealing with numerous incidents of pupil threats and violence.

Connaught strike action ‘too much’ for MAT



Connaught School for Girls picket line

NEU members at Connaught School for Girls in Leytonstone, east London, are celebrating a victory after plans to transfer to a multi-academy trust were dropped.

Star Academies, which was proposed as a potential sponsor in May, runs primary and secondary schools across England. Connaught staff were extremely concerned at some of the

planned changes to the school day, including an increase in maths lessons, to the detriment of personal, social, health and economic education, moving from a five-period to a six-period day with increased staff/pupil contact time, and a shorter lunch break on Friday.

Members have spent several months campaigning against the takeover and took 15 days of strike action. The day prior to the announcement that Star had pulled out,

members had decided to escalate strike action and had been joined by general secretary Daniel Kebede on the picket line.

NEU rep Pablo Phillips told Educate: “The strike action was too much for Star and highlighted the failings of the trust.

“It’s a big win for the pupils – we’ve maintained a broad and balanced curriculum, and they will have fun clubs and exciting extra-curricular activities.”

Water safety education ‘the key to potentially saving lives’



THE mothers of two young people who drowned last year are urging schools to sign up to a free water safety skills programme.

Joe Abbess, 17, from Southampton and Sunnah Khan, 12, from Buckinghamshire died on 31 May when a suspected rip current caused sea conditions to change. They were

within a defined safe swimming zone on a lifeguarded beach in Bournemouth, but rip currents – which cannot always be seen – are dangerous for even the strongest swimmers.

The Royal Life Saving Society UK’s (RLSS UK) Water Smart Schools programme has been designed for use in the classroom. It provides educators with lesson plans, videos and resources for schools, colleges and special educational needs settings. They complement other areas of the curriculum, including geography, art, IT and personal, social, health and economic education.

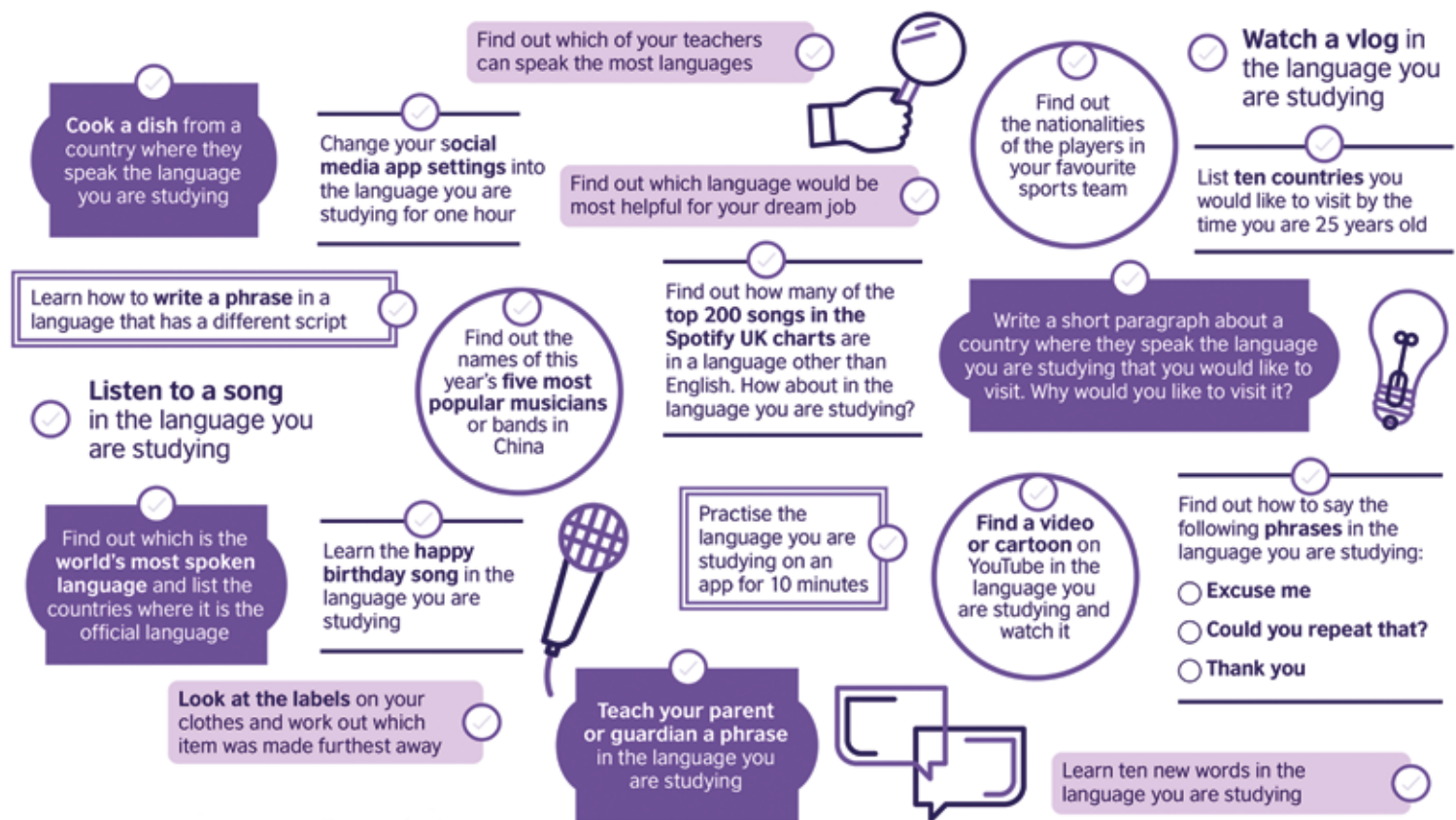
Joe’s mother Vanessa Abbess said: “Education is the key to potentially saving lives. I am certain that Joe would want to warn others of the dangers, as he was a very caring young man. I am keen to support the RLSS UK initiative in his memory.”

The NEU believes that teaching young people how to stay safe in the water is vital. Drowning is one of the leading causes of child trauma-related deaths in the UK, according to figures held by the National Child Mortality database.

■ Visit tinyurl.com/svxadz7

The Great Languages Challenge

The activities in this challenge are designed for you to use in class or as a homework activity.



Find out which of your teachers can speak the most languages

Cook a dish from a country where they speak the language you are studying

Change your **social media app settings** into the language you are studying for one hour

Find out which language would be most helpful for your dream job

Find out the nationalities of the players in your favourite sports team

Watch a vlog in the language you are studying

List **ten countries** you would like to visit by the time you are 25 years old

Learn how to **write a phrase** in a language that has a different script

Find out how many of the **top 200 songs in the Spotify UK charts** are in a language other than English. How about in the language you are studying?

Write a short paragraph about a country where they speak the language you are studying that you would like to visit. Why would you like to visit it?

Listen to a song in the language you are studying

Find out the names of this year's **five most popular musicians** or bands in China

Find out which is the **world's most spoken language** and list the countries where it is the official language

Learn the **happy birthday song** in the language you are studying

Practise the language you are studying on an app for 10 minutes

Find a **video or cartoon** on YouTube in the language you are studying and watch it

Find out how to say the following **phrases** in the language you are studying:

- Excuse me
- Could you repeat that?
- Thank you

Look at the labels on your clothes and work out which item was made furthest away

Teach your parent or guardian a phrase in the language you are studying

Learn ten new words in the language you are studying

Did you know completing just two international activities will qualify your school for the Foundation Level International School Award? Find out how www.britishcouncil.org/foundationisa

Discover more free resources to support international learning and bring languages to life. Visit www.britishcouncil.org/findresources

Ever-widening gap between rhetoric and reality



NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede calls out the Government's reality gap.

IN my first few months as general secretary I have learned one big thing from

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak: the gap between what the Government says and what the Government does is huge.

It was just a couple of months ago that Rishi told us that his “main funding priority from now on will be education”. He’d got the message. Education “is the best economic policy, the best social policy and the best moral policy”.

That was October though. By November, and his Government’s autumn statement, something must have changed in Rishi’s thinking. The Government is still committed to “world-class education”, but it just isn’t going to pay for it. The Office for Budget Responsibility’s analysis is that the Government is planning real-terms cuts in education spending every year until 2029.

So the teacher shortage will continue, school buildings will crumble, SEND problems will keep growing. Yet our schools will be “world-class”. How can this possibly be true?

Dubious claims about quality

This is where the Government starts talking about Ofsted, the market reform of initial teacher education (ITE), the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and SATs. They’re all meant to be part of the same great success story. Our class sizes are going up. So is the number of children eligible for free school meals. But our standards, says Education Secretary Gillian Keegan, are rising too and that’s what really counts.

There’s that reality gap again. The Government makes a new claim about quality every week. But when we probe those claims, they start to look very dubious. The union-funded Beyond Ofsted inquiry has just published its report (see page 6). More than 90 per cent of teachers who responded to its survey thought that Ofsted was not a reliable and trusted arbiter of standards. The EBacc is widely seen as a measure responsible for the crisis in arts education. Parents and school



Prime Minister Rishi Sunak speaking at the Conservative Party conference in October PHOTO by Jess Hurd

leaders believe SATs results have little to do with high standards. The focus on synthetic phonics to teach reading is “failing children”, say researchers.

This is not evidence of “world-class quality”. It’s evidence of gaslighting.

Extra funding for Oak offering

It should make us think twice about the latest Government initiative. The latest round of curriculum materials from the Oak National Academy has just been offered to schools. At the same time, the Government has said that Oak will get extra funding to develop AI resources.

Like most Government initiatives, Oak is wrapped in hyperbole, delivering “world-class digital education products built around our rigorous, high-quality curriculum”.

For many, Oak is synonymous with the pandemic, lockdown and partial school closures, a response to the rapid shift to online teaching. But today it is a very different creature. In summer 2022, it was taken over by the Government to become an arm’s-length body of the Department for Education. Its remit is to produce full curriculum packages for each subject and key stage. It claims to be “by and for” teachers. In

reality, its resources are developed through a commercial tendering process with different organisations, including multinational companies, bidding to develop these packages.

AI only a sticking plaster for workload

Educators were not consulted on the creation of the Oak national curriculum body, and they have no way to influence its direction. Subject associations doing brilliant work have no place in Oak’s plans. The many complex issues surrounding AI are not open for consultation and debate; the money for the AI work was provided without any scrutiny or bidding process.

Oak’s selling point is the reduction of workload. Workload is a major concern for all our members. Some ‘technical solutions’ like AI may help address it. But the bigger problem is the quality of work. Job satisfaction for educators won’t be achieved by an endless stream of central initiatives in a high-stakes accountability system.

I have a request for this Government and the next one. No more “world-class” rhetoric please. Just do the job. Resource our system. Be honest about its problems. Involve its skilled professionals in addressing them. In other words, Rishi Sunak, come back to reality.

‘Uplifting’ independent schools conference

HAVING just been elected to the union’s independent sector national council, I was delighted to attend my first sector conference on 11 November.

I found it an uplifting and engaging event, with members sharing their experience, supporting each other and working together towards common goals.

The day began with an address from general secretary Daniel Kebede, who gave a commitment that the NEU would support independent sector members whose teachers’ pensions are under threat. NEU national president Emma Rose shared her experiences of working collectively to prevent increasing workload by creating an NEU presence in schools and standing together in solidarity.

As a science technician, I found it encouraging that support staff issues were prominent on the agenda. We debated two excellent motions on workload and support staff pay, before selecting the latter to go forward to annual conference. I am enjoying the camaraderie of being active in my union and



(From left) NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede, NEU president Emma Rose, executive member Brian Metcalf, NEU GDST branch secretary Sadaf Choudhry, and national official independent sector John Richardson at the NEU independent sector conference
PHOTO by Phil Rowett

would encourage support staff to become more involved. We should have a support staff rep in every state, academy and independent school.

By Alexandra Cook, NEU independent sector national council, and science technician at Royal Russell School, Croydon



THE NEU held a supply officer training course (pictured above) over two days in November. Here, two members give their feedback.

The course combined specific issues faced by supply members, campaign tactics and opportunities for discussion and questions.

A key theme was pay and conditions – often supply teachers are paid significantly less than their permanent colleagues, while agencies profit by taking their cut.

Being a supply educator is hugely rewarding, but can be lonely. This weekend brought us together as colleagues and will allow us to support each other going forward.
By Caitlin Bradbury, Nottingham

The course covered many concerns, including isolation and pay. We found out how we can work collectively to help overcome these issues. We discussed how to structure a motion for annual conference and wrote one together as a group. We were shown how to use the Agency Workers Regulations (AWR) calculator app, and discussed the issues teachers face when making a pay claim.

I would highly recommend the course to other supply officers.
By Rohima Chowdhury, Oldham

‘Unacceptable’ threat to TPS

EMPLOYER contributions to the Teachers’ Pension Scheme (TPS) will increase by five per cent in April, risking more independent schools pulling out of the scheme.

The Government has committed to covering the cost for local authority and academy schools for 2024/25. However, independent schools will need to meet the increase themselves.

Since 2019, more than a quarter of independent schools have left the TPS or begun a ‘phased withdrawal’, which only protects those already in the scheme. New teachers are placed in inferior defined-contribution schemes.

The NEU has supported members in more than 80 independent schools to defeat plans to remove them from the TPS.

NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede said: “To face the threat of losing a decent pension is unacceptable. It should set alarm bells ringing across society. The NEU will robustly support our members to take all necessary action to defend their terms and conditions.”

Anti-strike laws: Minimum Service Levels talks a sham

Talks with Government over further restrictions on the right to strike were “never meaningful”, says NEU. Read more at neu.org.uk/msl-talks

THE 2023 Royal Institution (Ri) Christmas Lectures included The Truth about AI by Mike Wooldridge, professor of computer science at Oxford University. Mike tackled the big questions facing AI research and unravelled the myths surrounding the most rapidly evolving field of science in the world today.

The Ri worked in partnership with the NEU to allocate schools tickets for the live filming of the lectures. Tickets were free to students aged 11-17 from schools in the most disadvantaged London boroughs. NEU members and their students can watch the recordings online.

■ Visit rigb.org/christmas-lectures

PHOTO by Paul Wilkinson



SW women: tackling sexism

UNDETERRED by the cold winter weather, women educators (and their children) gathered in Taunton, Somerset, for the NEU South West women's day on 10 November.

It was great to be able to meet, eat and share our thoughts and experiences before the main workshops started the following morning.

Georgina Phillips, NEU policy officer for gender equality, discussed the NEU's It's not OK toolkit (see below) and delegates explored the 'ten elements to a whole-school approach' in tackling sexism and sexual harassment. It was excellent. The conversations around how such issues had been confronted and

challenged by members were insightful and inspiring and continued into lunchtime.

Developing allyship in the workplace was the focus for the afternoon session, led by equality, diversity and inclusion specialist Anna Campbell. Topics included identifying allies, and how we have power and can use it to influence people to stand up for our cause. The supportive and collaborative approach by all the women was fantastic.

Feedback from this event has been overwhelmingly positive. We are excited to be planning events for the spring and summer terms and hope you will join us.

By Meryl Campbell, NEU South West women's organising forum representative



Pregnant women: know your rights in the workplace

ADVICE setting out pregnant women's rights in the workplace has been produced by the union as part of its Maternity Matters series.

It covers issues ranging from disclosing a pregnancy to your employer, through to the right to take pregnancy-related sickness absence without facing sanctions, and your legal entitlement to an individual risk assessment.

The union drew up the advice after a survey of more than 3,000 members, carried out with charity Maternity Action, revealed many women are subjected to degrading and discriminatory treatment during their pregnancy.

A checklist for leaders to help them provide a supportive environment for pregnant staff is also available.

■ Visit neu.org.uk/maternity



THE NEU has added a new resource to the It's not OK toolkit – Getting started: a whole school approach to preventing sexism and sexual harassment. It contains case studies to help inspire you, including practical tips.

Visit neu.org.uk/end-sexism-sexual-harassment

Have your say on plans to change Welsh summer holidays

MEMBERS in Wales are being asked for their views about Welsh Government (WG) proposals to shorten the summer holiday by one or two weeks. The total number of holiday days throughout the year would remain the same.

Announcing a consultation on its plans in November, the WG claimed the changes would mean breaks were spread out more evenly across the school year. A week taken from the start of the summer holidays would be added to the October half-term, "so that staff and learners get more time to rest during the long autumn term".

A proposal for a four-week summer holiday would see an extra week added to the summer half-term.

A survey by NEU Cymru in 2022 found that 83 per cent of members were concerned about any changes to the school year.

The WG is proposing to introduce the changes from September 2025, but NEU Cymru said it was disappointed by the timing. New GCSEs are to be introduced in 2025, following the new Curriculum for Wales in 2022.

Emma Forrest, NEU assistant general secretary, said: "The workforce has gone through significant periods of change in order to implement the new curriculum. Any changes need to be evidence based and ensure the wellbeing of the workforce. They will also need to benefit children and young people in their learning."

■ NEU Cymru members will receive a survey email soon. The survey closes on 31 January.



NEU executive member Louise Lewis and general secretary Daniel Kebede

PHOTO by Kois Miah

'Energy and enthusiasm' at BEC

THE Black educators' conference, which took place in Birmingham in November, was the biggest ever.

Half of those who attended were new and young educators and brought fresh energy and enthusiasm. For many, the highlight was the speech by Daniel Kebede, the union's first Black general secretary.

Daniel spoke of the work of previous generations: the Black trade unionists at the forefront of the struggle for racial justice and the fair distribution of wealth, and the Black educators who wanted education to be the practice of liberation. To frequent applause, Daniel explained how their legacy is inspiring his vision for the union in the coming years. Schools should be places that encourage open

and questioning minds, which speak to students' cultures and experiences, he said, and the NEU should be a home for every educator.

"Messages like this are what first made me join the union," wrote one delegate in their evaluation of the conference.

But, Daniel argued, we are a long way from these goals. A range of policies close down the potential of education, not least for Black learners. He warned that the Government 'securitising' schools through measures like Prevent risk making many students feel not more secure, but less. Surveillance does not create a good learning environment.

Faced by these challenges, Daniel said he was determined that the union would be a force for change.



THE first NEU Cymru LGBT+ educators' conference was held in Swansea in November. Over two days we planned, organised, trained, discovered, networked and exchanged ideas on the LGBT+ issues that arise for our members and the students we support. We celebrated successes and pledged to carry on the NEU's equality journey. Some of our delegates had never attended a union event before, while others were experienced organisers. We welcomed a wide range of members, among them early career teachers, support and supply staff. The conference heard from Kacey DeGroot, executive LGBT+ seat holder, and Sarah Maslen, founder of Undivided, which provides training on LGBT+ inclusion. Opportunities to network and plan provided valuable time to discuss how to organise in districts and affect change within schools.

By Ian Stewart (he/him), secondary teacher, NEU rep, Swansea

Please support our lifesaving Gaza appeal

A FUNDRAISING appeal in aid of Save the Children's humanitarian work in Gaza has been launched by the NEU.

Following the dramatic escalation in violence witnessed in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel since 7 October, thousands of civilians, including children, have been killed. The children of Gaza are living through a nightmare. Urgent humanitarian assistance is required by 2.2 million people, but food, fuel, medicine and water are all in catastrophically low supply.

As a result, the NEU is joining forces with Save the Children to raise £50,000 to help the charity to provide lifesaving support to children. This support includes:

- delivering essential supplies such as water, food and toiletries
- establishing child-friendly spaces so children have a safe space to recover
- providing mental health and psychosocial support for children and caregivers
- ensuring children can continue to access education.

A member of Save the Children's team in Gaza said: "We are rationing water bottles. Food is running out. The wounded and sick cannot be treated. At night, children sit in the dark, wondering if they will live to see the morning. No one can fully grasp the extent of the suffering.

"Like everyone in Gaza, my greatest wish is to wake up each day with my family members and loved ones safe. The fear that we may not see another day together is a constant burden on our hearts."



A young girl stands amid building rubble, Gaza, 20 October

PHOTO by Mohammed Zaanoun/ Middle East Images/AFP via Getty Images

A graveyard for children

UN secretary general António Guterres has described Gaza as becoming a "graveyard for children" with hundreds being killed or injured every day. At least one child is reported to have been killed every ten minutes, while more children were killed in the first three weeks of the siege than the annual number of children killed in conflict zones worldwide since 2019. More than 1,000 children are reported missing and assumed buried under the rubble.

There is now no safe place to be a child. More than 200 schools have been badly damaged, while refugee camps, hospitals

and places of worship have all been attacked. In total, 1.5 million Palestinians have been displaced, and more than 22,500 educators are extremely vulnerable.

NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede said: "Children in Gaza are experiencing unimaginable horror, loss and terror every day. Thousands have been killed while those who survive the bombing will not all survive the unfolding humanitarian disaster.

"International solidarity is essential. Getting aid to children, such as food and water, alongside education and psychosocial support, is vital. Save the Children has decades of experience doing this in Gaza.

"I hope members and their districts will give their full support to assist this lifesaving work."

■ Visit [neu.org.uk/gaza-appeal](https://www.neu.org.uk/gaza-appeal)



Save the Children staff in Egypt prepare supplies for Gaza

PHOTO by Save the Children

- **£10** could provide a **dignity kit** containing a variety of sizes of sanitary towels and underwear.
- **£250** could provide one household with cash (or a cash voucher) to help them buy **food, water and other essentials for one month**.
- **£1,725** could provide **3,600 water bottles** to those struggling to access drinking water.
- **£9,280** could provide **baby kits for 250 families** to give them the items they need to provide basic care to their child.

Urgent reforms to assessment needed

THE all-party parliamentary group (APPG) for schools, learning and assessment, which the NEU provides administrative support for, has published a new report.

The report, titled *Towards a fairer, more useful and fit-for-purpose way to assess children and young people in the 21st century*, follows a year-long inquiry into assessment reform. It includes submissions from academics, campaign groups, thinktanks and education consultants, as well as school heads and teachers, parents and post-16 students.

The report concludes that significant reforms are urgently needed, including:

- an alternative to SATs for key stage 2
- a consultation on designing a secondary baccalaureate
- a new qualification for those not taking maths and English as main subjects
- replacing school league tables with a new system of school accountability
- further research into the potential benefits and risks of using technology for assessment
- a study of digital learner profiles to evaluate their use at primary and secondary level.

The APPG is chaired by Flick Drummond MP and Emma Hardy MP. It will use the report to press all major political parties to commit to assessment reform ahead of the General Election.

- Visit schoolsappg.org.uk/news



98.5% of early years staff suffer chronic pain

A NEW study into the effects of musculoskeletal disease on early years practitioners has found that 98.5 per cent of survey respondents experience chronic pain.

The research project, led by the University of Derby and supported by the NEU, is seeking to address gaps in understanding regarding potential hazards posed by the physical demands common in many early years roles.

Using a sample of 195 early years practitioners and leaders, the survey found that the longer someone had worked in the sector, the more pain locations they reported.

Many people working in the early years sector regularly undertake significant physical tasks as routine aspects of their role.

Lorna Taylor, physiotherapist and founder of Jolly Back, an organisation dedicated to improving the working lives of early years and primary educators, said: "These findings provide evidence for what we know anecdotally about the physical demands of early years roles and working environments causing aches, pain and absence from work.

"I hope the research raises awareness so improvements can be made."

- The University of Derby has launched Project SMARTeY to support musculoskeletal awareness.

Visit tinyurl.com/2wi2hszx

- Visit jollyback.com



"The physical demands of early years roles cause aches, pain and absence from work."

Lorna Taylor, physiotherapist & founder of Jolly Back

News in brief

Pay win brings sixth form teachers in line with schools

TEACHER members in sixth form colleges have voted to accept an 8.4 per cent increase in the starting salary and a 6.5 per cent pay rise on all other points.

The increase brings members in colleges in line with their school counterparts and follows nine days of strike action between November 2022 and July 2023.

Extra funding for post-16 was part of the agreement with the Department for Education that ended the disputes

about pay for teachers in schools and sixth form colleges. Support staff will also receive a 6.5 per cent increase under the National Joint Council (NJC) Support Staff Pay Agreement 2023/24.

Members strike over fire and rehire threat to pensions

TEACHERS at St Mary's, an independent school in Cambridge, took strike action in December over plans to fire then rehire staff on contracts removing access to the Teachers' Pension Scheme, or face a pay cut to stay in the scheme.

Members of the NEU and sister union NASUWT were joined on the picket line by NEU deputy general secretary Niamh Sweeney.

She said: "Teaching staff at St Mary's are highly regarded by pupils and parents, as shown by their support today. It is a shame that they have been driven to take strike action to protect their terms and conditions. The full weight of the NEU is behind them."



Bigger picture



TIM Sanders, acclaimed East London artist (and Educate cartoonist), was artist in residence with a group of medical workers who visited Palestine in May and September 2023. He drew cats, gardens and dancers, as well as recording what Palestinians face daily under military occupation.

The East London Palestine Solidarity Campaign has signed A4 prints of both these pictures - of the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem and the Apartheid Wall in Bethlehem.

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campaign.org](http://shop.palestinecampaign.org)**

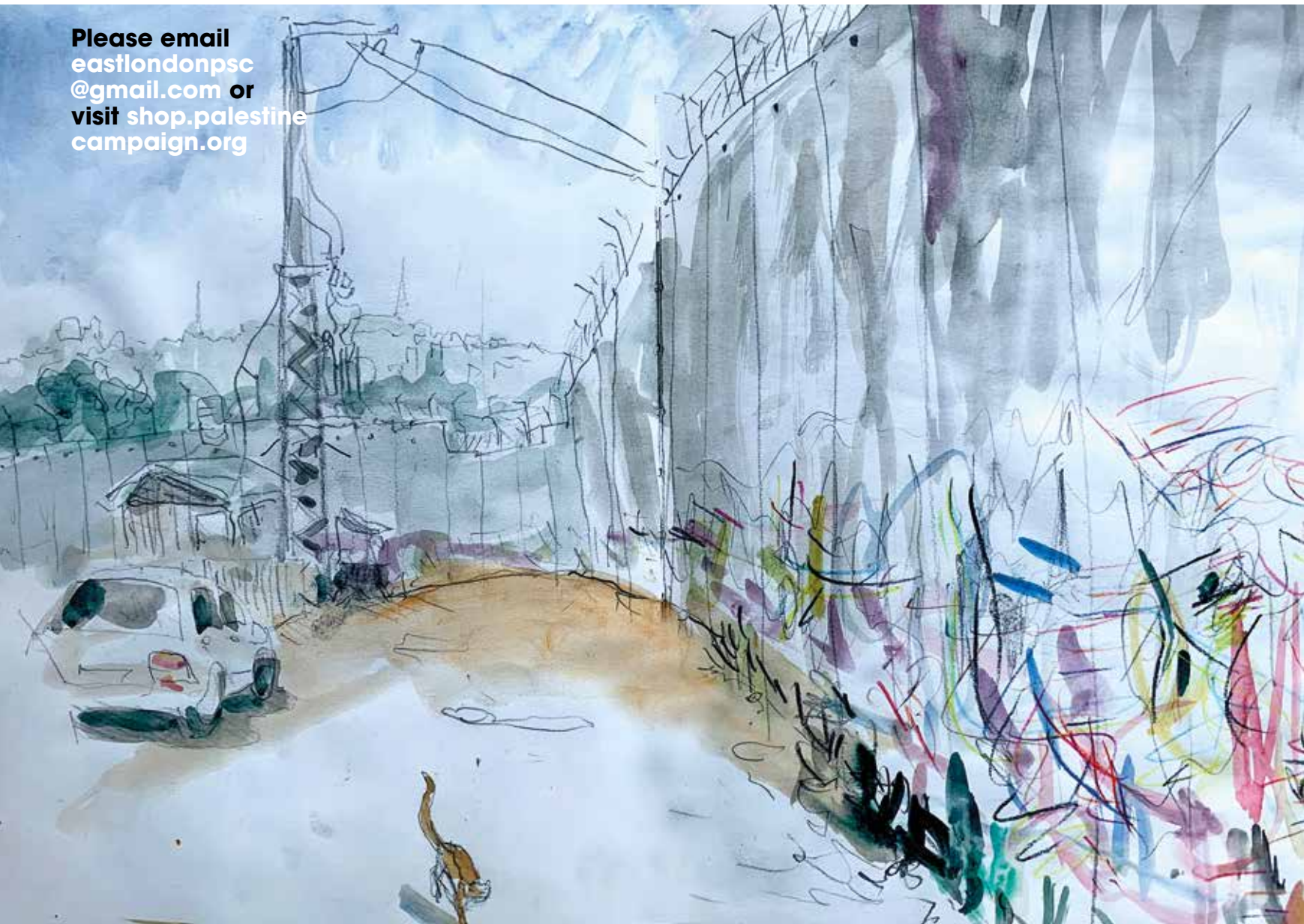




PHOTO by Laura Palmer

MORE than 3,000 young musicians performed two unforgettable nights of music in the biggest ever Music for Youth (MfY) Proms at London's Royal Albert Hall in November.

As in previous years, the NEU sponsored the event and gave away 50 pairs of free tickets to members.

Musicians of all ages, from celebrities such as Andrew Lloyd Webber and Nile Rodgers to emerging young talent,

came together to express their gratitude to the music teachers and mentors who inspired them. They sent heartfelt messages of thanks which were shared throughout the Proms using the hashtag **#ThankYourMusicTeacher**.

The hall was filled with energy and excitement as performers aged from eight to 23 from across the UK owned the iconic stage – from rappers to traditional Irish music, full-scale symphony orchestras to Japanese and Indian drumming groups.

Letter for support staff to request staggered back-pay

THE NEU has produced template letters for support staff who want to request their employer staggers any back-pay, following concerns raised by those receiving Universal Credit (UC).

This is to minimise the risk of members' future payments being reduced. UC can be affected by one-off backdated payments.

Templates for individual members and a separate one for reps and/or branches to make collective requests are available.

Any arrangement of staggered pay should only be initiated at the request of the employee(s).

The union is not recommending a specific time period for staggered pay. However, a period of three months should be suitable in most cases.

■ Contact your local branch. Visit neu.org.uk/district-branch-finder

Leadership survey 'paints a bleak picture'

LEADERS are working an average 57-hour week and around two thirds say their job negatively affects their mental health, according to research commissioned by the NEU.

Professor Ruth Lupton found that having to do more with less, plus an unmanageable workload, is taking a toll on school leaders.

Her research, which covers issues including workload, job satisfaction and pay, is based on some in-depth interviews and a survey of almost 400 leaders.

"Overall, these survey findings paint a bleak picture of the state of the education system," says Professor Lupton in her report, School leadership in current times – as school leaders see it.

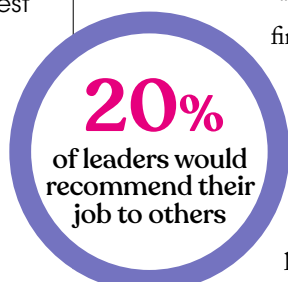
She adds that school leaders are facing an "extraordinary coincidence of pressures".

Her research found 80 per cent of leaders feel their workload is not acceptable and 83 per cent say they do not have enough time for strategic leadership.

Only 35 per cent are mostly satisfied with their job, which just 20 per cent would recommend to others.

"This research delivers powerful and important messages about the reality of school leadership that need to be urgently addressed by policy and decision makers," concludes Professor Lupton.

■ Visit neu.org.uk/latest/library/school-leadership-current-times



James Starnes is a computer science teacher and rep at Altrincham Grammar School for Girls in Greater Manchester. He is Trafford district secretary, vice president, and health and safety officer.

‘I’m a bit of a governance and procedure nerd..’

What do you love about your job?

I love being able to share my various nerdy passions with students, particularly cyber security. The best part is seeing that I’ve ignited a spark in some of them; the greatest example of this was bumping into a former student of mine at BSides Leeds, a cyber security conference.

What do you love about being in the union?

The people and the opportunities. I became a rep in my NQT year and added the role of health and safety (H&S) rep just as Covid hit. It was the driving force. I had been considering the role for a while but didn’t really have the impetus until the guano hit the fan.

After the dust had settled on the worst of that debacle, I fell back in love with the regulatory side of the role and why I’d considered it in the first place (I’m a bit of a governance and procedure nerd).

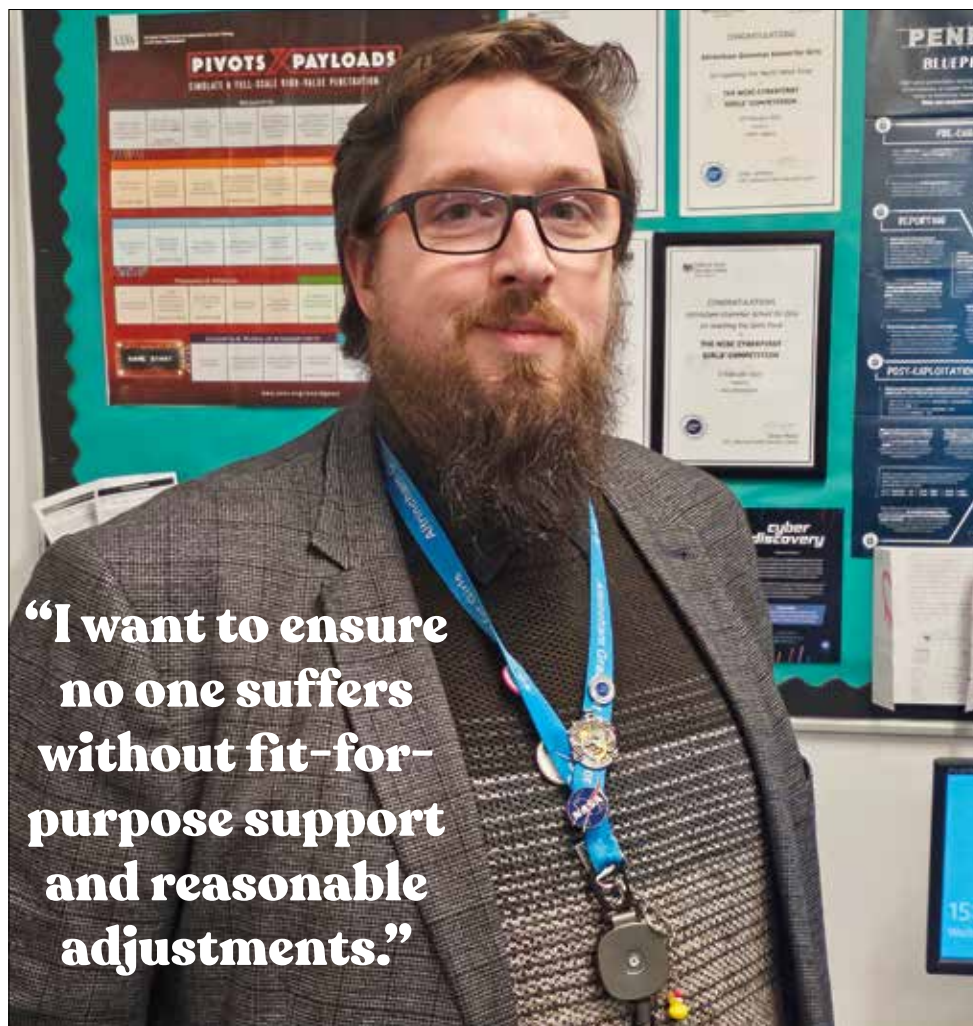
Being part of, and actively engaged with, a union is vital. There’s a great sense of community within the NEU and things such as our recent strike action only brought that community to the fore.

What have you been up to lately?

I’ve been getting back to the core of what representing a union means to me, getting stuck into training to be as effective as I can be and getting to grips with the branch and district roles I’ve taken on. A bit of a driving force is working to ensure “trapped time” is recognised, and keeping up with the reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) situation in Trafford.

What’s important to you right now?

Ensuring that reasonable adjustments are available for all, not only those with a specific accessibility need. I often make use of dictation, screen reading and colour overlays to support my dyslexia, but neurotypical folk can also make use of these to help in other ways.



James Starnes

I want to ensure that no one – staff, teachers or students – suffers without fit-for-purpose support. These are simple things to get right if everyone is willing.

What do you do on your day off?

Day off? It’s something I’m trying to get better at. I try and take some time with my wife, stepson and cat, usually over the course of a nerdy film or ‘helping’ my wife watch *Criminal Minds* for the 57th time. I’m still trying to get her to watch *The Lord of the Rings* though.

Tell us something we don’t know.

I used to work for BT as a 999 operator (shout-out to my former CWU comrades). It was a really interesting job from a people perspective, but also from the technical perspective of learning about how the country’s phone systems work.

I’m proudly dyslexic, something which I have never hesitated to let my students know. Showing that I can think differently or that I won’t be perfect with everything I write lets them know it’s OK not to be perfect all the time.

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Who loves children the most?

Parents step forward and say,
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we care for our children
more than we care for ourselves.'

Teachers step forward and say,
'We love the child the most
we educate children
so that they can play their part in the world.'

Doctors and nurses step forward and say,
'We love the child the most
because we save their lives
and nurse them back to health.'

'Not so,' said a voice from the shadows.

'Who's that?' they wondered.
'Who can love children more than
parents, teachers, doctors or nurses?'

'It's me,' said the voice
and from out of the shadows,
stepped War.

Words by Michael Rosen
Illustration by Dan Berry



Time for a revolution



Ken Jones, NEU head of policy, decries the decline of the arts in education and calls for fundamental change in the curriculum.

FOR more than a decade, the Government has been warned of the dire state of arts education in our schools. It has not acted and the crisis has deepened.

Now, artists and educators are coming together as never before to demand change. The programme they are calling for will transform our education system.

The Arts in Schools, an authoritative report from the Gulbenkian Foundation and A New Direction, was published in 2023. Subject associations in art and design, drama, music, languages, arts and dance are highlighting the damage inflicted on their subjects and calling for practical measures to give them the recognition they deserve. Meanwhile, with huge support from the cultural sector, the Cultural Learning Alliance is bringing together a formidable campaign.

Campaigning with arts unions

At its annual conference last Easter, the NEU became part of this growing movement. A resolution proposed by Victoria Jacquiss and Ralph Eriksen, joint members of the NEU and the Musicians' Union (MU), committed the union to campaigning with unions including the MU, the Writers' Guild and

Equity, for music and the arts "to take their proper and equal place in the curriculum".

In November, a roundtable convened by the NEU brought together unions and arts educators to take the measure of the current crisis and point to ways out of it.

Wherever they looked in state schools, participants in the roundtable saw the effects of austerity, past and present. Britain spends just 3.9 per cent of national income on education. This is the lowest proportion for more than 20 years and compares poorly with other developed nations, where the average is five per cent. In 2024/5, 99 per cent of secondary schools and 91 per cent of primary schools will face a cut in real-terms, per-pupil funding. Each year until at least 2028, real-terms funding will fall. Arts education will not thrive unless these cuts are reversed.

But it is not just a question of money. If a government set out to devastate arts education, it could scarcely do worse than those we have had since 2010. From teacher education to school buildings to exam systems, the story is one of decline. Teacher training targets for arts subjects are being missed by huge margins.

Michael Gove was Education Secretary from 2010 to 2014. His 2014 guidance for



'Squeezed into the corner of school life'

BAZ RAMAIAH is head of policy at Cultural Learning Alliance.

"Cultural Learning Alliance researches, organises and advocates for all young people to have access to a high-quality arts education, whatever their background.

"We provide our membership of 3,000 organisations and 6,000 individuals with the insights and tools they need to argue for system change.

"We know that many schools are managing to create a great arts education experience for their pupils in spite of the barriers to doing so, and we try to amplify their great practice

to inform and inspire. But the bigger picture is clear. Arts education has been damaged by a combination of real-terms funding cuts, failure over arts teacher recruitment, training and retention, and systems of accountability have gradually squeezed the arts into the corner of school life.

"The consequence is a generation of young people who have lost their fundamental right to experience the joy, value and opportunity for personal and skills development that the arts can provide."



in creative education



PHOTO by
Jadson Thomas

The NEU will campaign for music and arts to ‘take their proper and equal place in the curriculum’.

arts spaces said only that drama spaces should have blackout curtains ‘where necessary’. Dance should ‘where possible’ be taught in the main hall, dining area or gym. Labour’s Building Schools for the Future programme specified that new drama studios should include changing rooms, a workshop for set design and a lighting control room.

Gove was fond of talking about the poverty of schools’ aspirations for students. In reality, low aspirations were baked into his system. By contrast, the roundtable noted, schools in the independent sector were in no doubt of the value of arts education.

continued on page 25



‘Every year it gets harder’

JESS EDWARDS is a primary teacher in Lambeth, a music specialist and a member of the NEU executive.

“Teachers are doing all we can to keep provision going. So is the local music service, which does an extraordinary job on a limited budget.

“But every year it gets harder. One-to-one tuition is scarce. School music-making supported by specialist teachers is struggling. We can still put on joyous community events but after each one we ask ourselves, ‘can we keep this going?’

“In our classrooms we are hard-pressed. We have to use worn-down pencils even though children find it

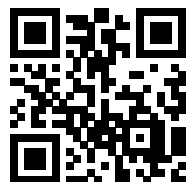
hard to draw with them. We use the cheapest brushes, so their paintings look scratchy. It doesn’t help when you can only give them A4 paper.

“And it’s not just the physical resources; it’s the teaching by video and PowerPoint. Sit, watch, do the activities. No working side by side with the teacher. No exploration. No experiment. Teachers themselves feel underskilled and unconfident. And there’s hardly any CPD to make up for this. It’s a system that lets the children down.”

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continued from page 23

In the London area, more than 50 independent schools had purpose-built drama facilities – between them, they had more theatres than the West End. Access to the arts in schools is unequal, and has become more so in recent years.

EBacc impacts take-up of arts

Looking at the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), the roundtable reached the same conclusions as Gulbenkian. EBacc has meant a reduction in the level of arts subjects, and therefore declining GCSE and A-level take-up. The fall in entry to arts subjects at GCSE between 2015 and 2023 was 35 per cent. The fall in entry to arts subjects at A-level between 2015 and 2023 was 16 per cent.

We have an assessment regime that does not work for arts subjects and a Government that does not care about that. We have policies that set arts subjects against science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects, despite everything Government is told by the creative industries.

The conclusion was inescapable. The arts, far from being viewed as a pinnacle of achievement and a means of human flourishing, had been steeply devalued.

Labour must oversee an arts revolution

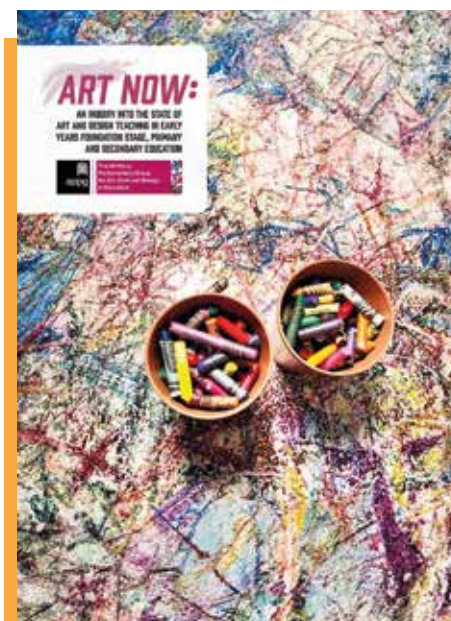
In the year ahead, the NEU will be part of a broad movement that makes the case for

There must be a fundamental change in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

change. Increased funding is essential. The problems created by the EBacc and SATs must be urgently addressed.

This is not all. The roundtable noted Labour’s pledge to review curriculum and assessment if elected. But what is required was not so much a ‘review’ as a ‘revolution’ – there must be fundamental change in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment so that the principles of creative education can be realised across the whole experience of school.

The roundtable was in complete agreement with what is said throughout the arts sector: we need a curriculum that enables all students to flourish in a society that values their potential. And arts education is vital to that.



■ **Art now: an inquiry into the state of art and design teaching in early years foundation stage, primary and secondary education**
tinyurl.com/mr3znuv9

■ **The arts in schools: foundations for the future (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation/A New Direction)**
tinyurl.com/3nndz9pw

■ **Cultural Learning Alliance**
culturallearningalliance.org.uk

‘Music education was an enabler’

ROGER WILSON is director of operations at Black Lives in Music. He is an instrumental teacher and lecturer, and recently has been dedicated in his support for the professional development of aspiring young jazz musicians.

“My own specialism is music, and I grew up in an era where music education was free. It was an enabler, and helped me to negotiate successfully the very acute challenges of growing up in a single-parent family in a socio-economically deprived part of London. The arts are an enabler, empowering tens of thousands of people every day to enjoy their lives and improve their wellbeing.

“But we seem to be in a phase that is seeing the systematic culling of a very important and highly undervalued aspect of human learning. Just in terms

of the effect of the pandemic on children and young people, and the seemingly magical healing powers of arts education in developing the concept of community and enhancing social skills.

“There can be no price easily attached to arts education that accurately reflects its impact on individuals and society as a whole. Yet the current curriculum fails to reflect the needs of the individual, nor does it celebrate difference. Arts education is as much an essential part of a child’s learning as any of the exalted ‘core’ curriculum subjects. Respect is long overdue for its legacy of



impact on the society in which we live, and in terms of the lives of so many people touched by its magical effect, and in so many ways.”

Feature



Elizabeth Pugh

Education is under attack on many fronts: a funding shortfall, low pay, crumbling buildings and a growing recruitment and retention crisis.

A perfect storm

Interviews by **Emily Jenkins**
Portraits by **Kois Miah**

EDUCATION is in crisis. Lack of Government funding is having a major impact on schools, children's learning and the recruitment and retention of teachers and support staff.

Through union action, teachers won their biggest pay rise in decades last year. However, in October the Government revealed it had made an accounting error, which means schools will lose £370m in 2024/25. On average, schools will now receive £45 less per pupil in primaries and £55 less per pupil in secondaries next year.

The real-terms cuts to funding and teachers' pay mean schools are struggling to recruit and retain staff, leading to higher workload for those who remain.

No one comes to interview

Elizabeth Pugh is a geography teacher in a London secondary. Elizabeth's school recently lost four teaching assistants (TAs) and is unable to replace them.

"It's either because the pay is rubbish, so no one applies, or the school doesn't actually advertise for all the roles because it's trying to save money," she says. Instead, more and more work is given to existing TAs "who are run off their feet".

And Elizabeth's experience is not uncommon. According to a recent NEU survey, 92 per cent of members believe

"More and more work is given to existing TAs who are run off their feet."

Elizabeth Pugh (left)

funding levels are not high enough to allow their school to employ sufficient numbers of teachers or other staff to support pupils' learning.

Suzanne Norman, a design and technology (D&T) teacher in Peterborough, says her secondary school recently saw two D&T members of staff and a food technology teacher leave. Again, the school has been unable to replace them.

More work therefore falls on Suzanne and her colleagues, and the D&T provision has had to be cut. Key stage 3 students now only get one D&T lesson per fortnight. "If they miss a lesson, they won't get another practical for maybe a month," she says.

Suzanne is not only taking on additional work and marking as a D&T teacher, but is also teaching food science, engineering

and art. She also taught computer science last year, despite it not being her specialism. Meanwhile, the school has had to cut some A-level courses, including product design, Suzanne's specialist area. "It's a real shame. Students are missing out. We would run it if we could staff it."

Suzanne says her school is very supportive, but her ever-increasing workload means she recently made the decision to go down to four days a week, "but even four days a week sometimes feels too much".

Educators are overwhelmed

Lindsey Porter is a social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) outreach teacher, who visits schools within her London borough. She sees first-hand how educators are struggling. "Teachers are overwhelmed. There's just not enough capacity." She believes education staff are doing an amazing job in the most challenging times, but that the funding crisis is having a real impact on teacher and support staff recruitment and retention: "People just don't want to do the job."

Students are also suffering. One area that Lindsey, Suzanne and Elizabeth are all concerned about is special educational needs and disability (SEND) provision. All three report an increase in the number of pupils with complex needs and mental health issues, particularly since Covid.

continued on page 28

Underfunding in schools NEU members have their say

"We are about to advertise for a maternity cover teaching role, but don't expect any applicants."

"Poor physical work environments, poor wages and increasing workload are forcing colleagues out of the profession."

"Eight teaching staff left in the summer and five have already resigned this term."

"I've been in education for 20 years, as has my partner. Because of the state it's in, we both want to escape."

"We are so short-staffed that we can't even hold SEND meetings as there is no one to cover. The workload is unbelievable. Many of us are looking for other jobs."

Feature

continued from page 27

But with fewer support staff and resources, and a lack of SEND provision, many students are falling through the gaps and are left to manage in mainstream settings without appropriate support. “There’s an epidemic of mental ill health and special learning needs and it’s becoming more and more complex. We’re just having to adapt as we go,” says Elizabeth, who qualified as a teacher five years ago.

With fewer support staff available, Elizabeth feels “split between 20 places”, as she tries to support all the children in her class. “I have students in my form with a range of complex needs, including autism, as well as a range of physical disabilities such as deafness and partial sight,” she says. This creates additional workload as she tries to make sure every lesson is accessible to the whole class.

SEND system is broken

Until last September, when she became an outreach teacher, Lindsey had worked as a SEND co-ordinator for more than 20 years and agrees with Elizabeth that there has been a substantial increase in the number of pupils with complex needs. In her opinion, the system for SEND children is “broken” and the situation is only getting worse.

“I’ve been working since the 1990s and

Underfunding in schools NEU members have their say

“We have had some job vacancies out for which we have not received a single application.”

“We have large class sizes, partly necessitated by budgets, and an absolute dire shortage of appropriate staff.”

“Workload is affecting mental health – I’m leaving the profession after ten years.”

“There were lots of staff and it was much easier to nurture children.”

Lindsey Porter (below)

it’s the worst I’ve ever seen it. When I started teaching there were lots of staff and it was much easier to nurture children.”

Spending on education has fallen by £43 billion since 2010. It is now six per cent lower than it was when David Cameron became Prime Minister that year. Primary class sizes are the biggest in Europe and secondary class sizes the largest since records began more than 40 years ago.

Leaking windows and roofs

It’s not just education provision that’s crumbling, as highlighted by the ongoing reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) crisis. “One of our biggest funding issues is the building,” says Elizabeth, who describes her school as “falling apart”. A surveyor from the Department for Education (DfE) described her school as “beyond end of life”, she says. However, when the school then applied to the Government requesting a rebuild, the answer was a resounding “no”.

“The DfE came back to us and said: ‘oh, the school’s fine’. So it isn’t being rebuilt,” says Elizabeth.

A recent NEU survey revealed that about two-thirds (65 per cent) of teachers and leaders feel investment in buildings has been inadequate, with many expressing despair over the condition of their school. “The smell from the mouldy, stained carpet is horrendous,” said one. “Classroom windows can’t be opened and the heat is unbearable,” said another. Hundreds of respondents reported leaking



Lindsey Porter

Suzanne Norman



windows and roofs, and significant cracks in the structure of the building. “We put buckets around our classroom,” said a primary teacher from Sheffield.

In November, a parliamentary Public Accounts Committee report, The condition of school buildings, described an “unacceptable and alarming” deterioration of school buildings. According to the DfE’s own report, schools in England face a repair bill of an estimated £11.4 billion.

Estimated 1% pay rise next year

Only 3.9 per cent of national income is being spent on education, compared to the OECD average of five per cent. And it is estimated that schools will only be able to afford a one per cent pay rise for staff.

Despite the 6.5 per cent pay rise achieved after strike action last year, teachers are still suffering a deep and lasting real-terms pay cut. According to a recent NEU survey, 56 per cent of teachers and leaders are “very” or “extremely” worried about keeping up with household bills and finances.

In November, ahead of the Government’s autumn statement, the NEU and sister unions ASCL, NAHT and NASUWT wrote an open letter to Chancellor Jeremy Hunt asking him to prioritise education funding. Sadly, the autumn statement included no such commitment.

“My school has had to cut A-level courses. It’s a real shame. Students are missing out.”

Suzanne Norman (above)

Despite this perfect storm – a funding shortfall, teacher and support staff shortages, crumbling buildings, stagnating pay – the Government has decided to put its head in the sand and carry on as normal, committing to more of the same.

In July last year, it passed the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023, a draconian piece of legislation that means teachers can be threatened with the sack if they don’t provide cover during a strike – even if they voted to go on strike.

Daniel Kebede, NEU general secretary, said: “The Government cannot stand the fact that the NEU passed the highly restrictive thresholds for strike action – not once, but twice – during the recent pay

dispute. It has now made the legislation even more severe.”

Only 50% of secondary trainees

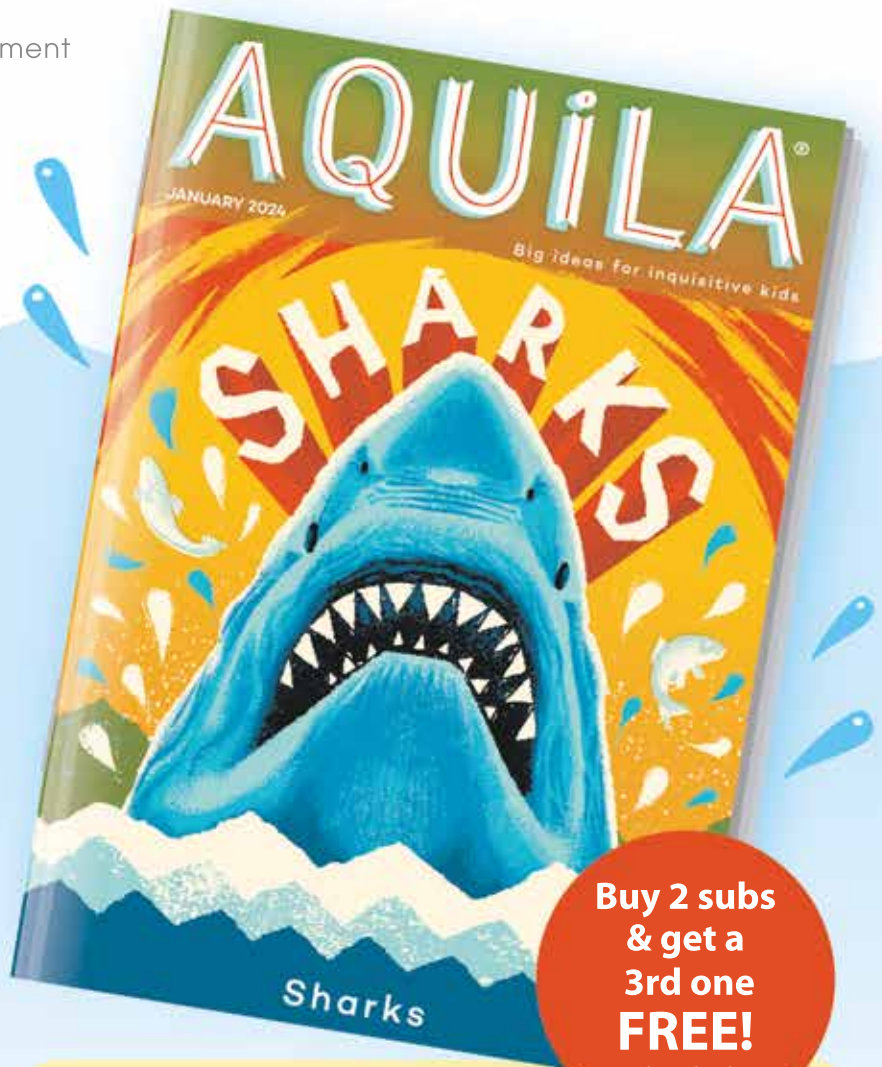
In December, the Government published its figures for initial teacher training recruitment in England for 2023/24, confirming it has recruited just 50 per cent of the secondary trainees it needs.

Daniel said: “Everyone who knows a teacher knows how hard they work, how intense the job is, and that few would recommend teaching as a career. Graduates have lots of options and they no longer consider teaching to be one of them. Children and young people deserve better; teachers love to teach but the circumstances they work in are unsustainable.

“These figures show beyond a shadow of a doubt that the teacher recruitment and retention crisis, already serious, is getting worse. It will not be solved without a fully funded, above-inflation pay rise, and urgent action to tackle sky-high workload.”

The NEU executive will meet in January to decide on the action the union will take to tackle the ongoing crisis. Full details in the next issue of Educate.

Sink your teeth into AQUILA's Sharks issue!



AQUILA Magazine is perfect for both the classroom and home-learning, providing a special place where creative kids can share their ideas and enthusiasm.

Award-winning editor, Freya Hardy knows why this magazine is so special to her 8 –14-year-olds readers and their parents:

“ AQUILA is a unique independent children’s magazine: over 30 years we’ve covered every topic, from puppets to Pompeii. We’ve made carrot ice cream and produced a ton of papier mâché. We’ve sent rockets into space (OK, just into next door’s garden), investigated quantum computers, interviewed volcanologists and even folks who design houses on the Moon.

But of course, our most important people don’t work at AQUILA HQ, the real VIPs are our readers. Some live in the countryside, with dogs, rabbits and chickens for company.

Some go to school, others do not. Some do gymnastics, or raise money for wildlife charities. Some (readers?) are scientists, mathematicians or engineers. Some write plays, or draw manga. Some send us envelopes full of sequins in the post (no letter, just the sparkles!).

Some AQUILA readers are 8 years old, and some are eighty, but they are all curious, compassionate, creative and FULL TO THE BRIM with BIG ideas. ”

Freya Hardy

BSME Awards: Youth Editor of the year 2021 & 2022

The excellent puzzles are a family affair, and the newsletter pages are a great place for children to share their ideas with other curious readers.

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blog.aquila.co.uk/educate

Feel Good Issue:

Coming up next in February, AQUILA explores happiness. What does it feel like and how do we find it? Discover the science of smiles, the Bliss Molecule and Elephant music therapy.



How CPD benefits you and your pupils



Jacqui O'Neill,
NEU national
professional
development
manager, explains
why continuing
professional
development

(CPD) is a must for every educator.

IN 2014 a review commissioned by educational charity the Sutton Trust found that, over a year, poorer pupils gained 1.5 years' worth of learning with very effective teachers, compared with 0.5 years with less effective teachers.

The two key factors with the strongest evidence of improving outcomes for children were a deep knowledge of subject coupled with the knowledge of how children learn. The report went on to say that for these factors to be in place, an environment of professional learning and support promoted by the school's leadership was needed, with teachers encouraged to be continual, independent learners.

Professionalism and retention

While it should surprise no one that the quality of teaching has a direct impact on learner outcomes, what is more challenging is for educators to feel supported in their professional learning and to find the time and energy to participate in development opportunities which keep their practice fresh, up to date and stimulating.

Without this it is easy to see why many educators become disillusioned with the lack of recognition of their professionalism and seek opportunities elsewhere.

Barriers to CPD access

Workload and the ongoing constraints on school budgets are the two most obvious barriers to accessing high-quality CPD. Punitive performance management systems can also stop staff requesting CPD in case it is seen as a failing. The NEU also knows that if you work part time, are a supply teacher or a



A pedagogy workshop at this year's new professionals and young workers' conference PHOTO by Kois Miah

member of support staff, then you can find it difficult to access training.

Value Education, Value Educators

The NEU believes that all education staff should have access to CPD at every stage of their careers, not only at national level, but at regional and district and branch level too.

Our CPD is held online or face-to-face and is designed to meet all our members' learning needs whether you are just starting out as a trainee, are a senior leadership member or a teaching assistant. Most courses are fully funded and scheduled to maximise accessibility.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders lead by example in promoting and engaging in professional development. This is why we run programmes specifically for our leadership members and those aspiring to lead.

The union is also committed to ensuring the increased representation of our Black members in leadership positions and runs a programme – Positioned for success – to help take steps towards this. One participant

last year described the course as having had “a transformative impact on my professional journey. It has empowered me to step forward, pursue leadership roles and achieve tangible success along the way.”

Dates for your diary

This year will see the continuation of our popular webinar programme, with CPD scheduled in early March aimed specifically at students, trainees and early career teachers. These sessions are open to non-members, so please encourage colleagues to sign up. Topics will include behaviour and classroom relationships, oracy, and a range of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) issues such as autism and dyslexia.

There will also be themed weeks on teaching and learning, behaviour, SEND, mental health and a series of webinars looking at child poverty and how to poverty proof the school day. In addition, we host a webinar every Wednesday on a key area relating to your professional practice.

The leadership programme will offer the accredited Developing middle leaders programme, run by the UCL Institute of Education, as well as a series of one-hour sessions on topics such as strategic thinking, coaching others and leading change.

Support staff can sign up for a range of fully funded, self-paced, accredited online courses covering areas such as ADHD, dyslexia and understanding anxiety.

- Visit neu.org.uk/learning/national-cpd for more details and to sign up.
- Follow us on X @NEU_CPD and on LinkedIn at NEU National CPD.
- If you sign up for an online seminar but can't attend, a copy of the recording is available to view for 14 days afterwards.
- See page 37 for more CPD.



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Whatever happened to doing the right thing?



Warwick Mansell is a freelance education journalist and founder/writer of educationuncovered.co.uk

I HAVE been writing about education policymaking in England for more than 25 years, and have long since come to the view that it is often dysfunctional. Two aspects have been underlined for me in recent weeks.

First, too often the system lacks moral leadership: a sense that those driving schools' policymaking should exemplify how to behave, for the young people whose interests they are supposedly serving.

Gillian Keegan sadly failed this test when she recently tweeted a comment purporting to show that standards in schools are higher than when Labour left power in 2010.

The post used Ofsted statistics, with the Education Secretary arguing: "As of today, 89 per cent of schools are now rated

Good or Outstanding, up from just 68 per cent under Labour."

This sounded convincing. But it could be a case study in how statistics can mislead.

Ofsted inspections of individual schools are not designed to act as a measure of national education quality. Outstanding schools, for example, were allowed to keep that rating by Michael Gove in 2012, with re-inspections of them only starting two years ago.

Ofsted can also focus more inspection attention on struggling schools. Although this is painful for these institutions, statistically it gives them more chance to improve than less frequently inspected schools.

Over the period, Ofsted's rating system also changed. The Satisfactory grade was replaced by Requires improvement. With the former carrying harsher repercussions for a school's reputation, there is a strong case that this fed into a sharp rise in schools rated Good or better.

Ofsted's design, then, can help boost numbers of positive outcomes but this in turn makes them unreliable as a guide to national quality. And that's leaving aside

that there might be non-political reasons for improvement, such as professionals' and students' hard work.

Any student seeking to use data similarly would be taken to task by their teacher. We should demand higher standards in terms of honesty and use of evidence, of politicians presiding over that teaching system and acting as role models to millions of young people.

Similarly, the revelation from the Covid inquiry that Gillian Keegan's predecessor-but-four, Gavin Williamson, opposed masks in schools principally because he "didn't want to give an inch to unions" also shows up a failure of moral leadership. What happened to simply doing the right thing?

The second point supports the first. English policymaking is far too driven by the needs and interests of politicians. Anyone who doubts this should read a blog by Jonathan Slater, former Department for Education permanent secretary, called Putting design front and centre (tinyurl.com/2uac92x8).

In it, Slater argues that, under the civil service, policymaking is too focused on "what the minister wants", rather than what service users need.

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Laying down a roadmap for future Black leaders

Dean with pupils (from left) Emma, Taevion, Da'shae, Sarah, Bonnie and Ha'Linh

PHOTO by Cal Byrne

Sally Gillen discovers what makes federation head teacher Dean Gordon (pictured) a class act.

WHEN he was asked to contribute to a book for aspiring Black leaders, federation head teacher Dean Gordon jumped at the chance.

"I've faced many struggles, and if people like me are willing to offer others a roadmap, it will definitely help them," he says.

Dean is among 18 contributors to *Letters to a young generation: igniting a passion in the next generation of Black school leaders*. He talks about his journey from a 27-year-old supply teacher, arriving in London from Jamaica in 2001, to foundation head teacher of two south London primaries. Along the way, there have been many hurdles and Dean has often been overlooked – sometimes literally.

He recounts his experiences of class trips to museums where staff have assumed a white teaching assistant to be the one in charge, and their embarrassed apologies when they are corrected. Only three years ago, a former executive head suggested to Dean his difficulty getting promoted could be because he is "too Jamaican". Dean says: "I was so shocked, and I didn't want to be rude to my boss, so I joked 'well, I wish I could be more Jamaican'. But the comment was clearly not on."

Two decades of knockbacks could have made giving up easy.

"I've been asked a million times why I have stuck at it," he says. "Well, I work in a community where there are a lot of people who are just like me. A lot are Black, from single-parent homes, and if I leave, there will be nobody to stand up or advocate for them."

Pay it forward to other aspiring heads

As one of only two Black male head teachers in Lewisham, where 46 per cent of the population are from Black and minority backgrounds, Dean is keen to see that number grow. It is why he is involved in *Leaders Like Us*, a programme run by the Church of England, and is mentoring two Black leaders working towards headship.

"It's important to have Black men in schools. I've been lucky to have been supported by some really good people and now I want to help others, to pay it forward."

At his schools – Grinling Gibbons and Lucas Vale primaries – many of the things he has done for the global majority children come from a commitment to promoting, supporting and empowering Black families.

"For me, the phrase 'representation matters' is massive," he explains. "For the kids to have a Black head teacher is important."

Six years ago, Dean implemented the Halo Code, which promises Black people the "freedom and security to wear all afro hairstyles without restriction or judgement". His was the first primary school in Lewisham to introduce it.

"When I had long hair I was just not seen as being important. I introduced the code so staff and children can come into school with their hair however they see fit. All I ask is that hair is clean. We want children to know they don't have to conform to anybody else's ideas; just be who you are and proud of yourself."

It's this approach that has earned Grinling Gibbons the gold race charter mark, and Lucas Vale a silver. Dean has also done a lot of work to make the curriculum reflective of the local community. During the 2021 lockdown, pupils began marking the anniversary of the New Cross fire in 1981, in which 13 young Black people died at a house party.

When most children were being home-schooled, Dean and eight pupils in year 6 marched along empty roads from the school to the house and the memorial. The following year more children joined the 18 January march, and last year pupils from secondary schools also took part.

Now Lewisham's director of education has approached Dean to produce age-appropriate lesson plans on the fire that can be used by schools across the borough. "We have met with some survivors of the fire," says Dean, "and have just asked the families if we can attend the church service in January."

"Ultimately, we want to see the New Cross fire on the national curriculum. We want to make sure it is never forgotten."

Starting a family?

Welcoming a new addition to your family is exciting but it can also be a time of work and financial worries so it's more important than ever that you have the protection of your union.

Did you know that members on maternity leave, shared parental leave, or adoption leave do not have to pay membership fees?

To find out more visit neu.org.uk/neu-membership-rates

If you have a question about your maternity or parental rights or pay, contact your local rep, the NEU AdviceLine or take a look at our comprehensive guide to maternity rights at neu.org.uk/maternity

Please note: subscription holidays for maternity, parental and adoption leave can only be processed in the current subscription year (1 September 2023–31 August 2024). We are unable to backdate requests for previous subscription years.



NEU329/1123

Planning your retirement?

For just **£20 per year** you can continue to enjoy the benefits of NEU membership by becoming a retired member.

To move to retired membership, please contact the membership team at membership@neu.org.uk or by calling **0345 811 8111**.

Remember, to retain access to union advice and assistance, you must maintain continuous full, retired or associate membership. You cannot let your membership lapse and then rejoin later. Only existing NEU members can transfer to retired membership. It is not possible to join as a retired member.



Retired members

NEU3230/1123

Pupil with severe dairy allergy

A CHILD in my class has a severe allergy to dairy products. How can I help ensure they are safe at school?

Every class is likely to have at least one child with a food allergy. The most common triggers for allergic reactions are peanuts and tree nuts, but other allergens include dairy, eggs, sesame, soya and fish. Anaphylaxis is the most severe allergic reaction and is potentially life-threatening if not treated quickly. Symptoms vary, but might include swelling in the mouth, itchiness, a skin rash, changes in heart rate and a drop in blood pressure.

Anaphylaxis is treated with adrenaline, most commonly in the form of an EpiPen. It is definitely manageable with precautionary procedures and support from staff.

A child's care plan should identify triggers, symptoms, day-to-day management of medication and food, and actions to take in a medical emergency. The care plan should be easily accessible to all staff. Everyone should know which children are at risk of severe allergic reactions and should be able to recognise symptoms of anaphylaxis and know what action to take.

Your school's medicines policy should include the treatment of anaphylaxis, and there should be sufficient numbers of staff trained in administering adrenaline. Adrenaline pens are straightforward to use, and it is not possible to give too large a dose. For teachers, administering medicines is voluntary, but support staff may have it in their job descriptions. If you have any concerns, you should raise them with your NEU rep.

■ Anaphylaxis UK (anaphylaxis.org.uk/education) and Allergy UK (allergyuk.org)



PHOTO by UfaBizPhoto

have a wealth of information about managing allergies at school, including resource packs and online training.

Negotiating KIT days

I'M on maternity leave and trying to organise a keeping in touch (KIT) day. My school says they can only do Tuesday – is this reasonable?

You and your school need to agree to the timing of any KIT days. You could ask your school rep to help secure days that are convenient for both you and your employer, to find a balance between your childcare needs and the school's needs.

KIT days enable you to attend training or work for up to ten days without bringing your statutory maternity leave to an end. You or your rep could make the case that KIT days are beneficial to you and your employer

in terms of maintaining contact and helping induct you back into work – for example, attending a training day with your colleagues, or to meet your class(es). This should encourage the school to be more flexible.

Your workplace's maternity policy will outline how payment operates for KIT days – most employers offer full pay, but it is not a statutory entitlement.

Contact us...

■ Please email your questions to educate@neu.org.uk

■ If your question is urgent, please call the **AdviceLine** on **0345 811 811**

CPD webinars for all NEU members

NEU members have exclusive access to our continuing professional development (CPD) webinars. Here are some of the courses coming up.

Shyness? Reluctance to talk? Or selective mutism?

Learn about the nature of selective mutism and strategies to help pupils. You will gain an understanding of the benefits these strategies can have on a pupil's level of participation, engagement and self-esteem.

10 January from 3.45–5.30pm

Support staff: understanding SEND and targeting support

Explore inclusive strategies for reading, writing and access; cognitive load theory and implications for support; behaviour as a communication; and sensory strategies.

17 January from 3.45–5pm

Developing your vision as a leader

The importance of establishing your vision as a leader. Reflect on your why, learn how to articulate your vision, mission, values, who you are and what you do.

24 January from 10.30–11.30am

Leadership horizons

Learn how to elevate leadership as a deputy or newly appointed head teacher. Discover personalised strategies, how to build confidence and explore the relationship between meaning, identity and purpose in transitions to leadership.

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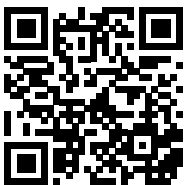
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Save the Children

The education we need for the future we want

INTERNATIONAL solidarity is fundamental to the NEU's strength because we have so much to learn from our sister unions globally.

Replace Ofsted, No Child Left Behind, Pay Up! – so many of our campaigns, policies and organising tactics have been shaped by lessons from around the world.

This is because so many of the challenges experienced in schools across the UK are experienced in classrooms the world over. For example:

- Almost every country in the world is experiencing a teacher **recruitment and retention crisis**. Children crammed into classrooms, unsustainable workloads and an undervalued profession are commonplace.
- **Investment** in public education is grossly inadequate. Educators are crying out for funding so that they can offer a quality and inclusive education in safe and healthy schools.
- **Covid** has scarred children's life chances: millions more are now out of school in the global south, while attendance has declined in the UK and in other global north countries.
- **De-professionalisation** is widespread, with standardised curricula and teaching methods being pushed by companies such as Oak National Academy in the UK and Bridge International in Africa and Asia.
- Globally, unions also face the creeping advance of **artificial intelligence (AI)** in education. It's clear that big tech wants to use AI to privatise, commercialise and profit from education. But we also know that investing in public education is the best investment that we can make in our children's futures.

Connected globally in our struggle

Fortunately, neither the NEU nor any other education union has to face these challenges alone.

The NEU plays an active role in Education International (EI), the global federation of 383 trade unions representing more than 32 million teachers and education support personnel in 178 countries and territories. We can draw strength from the shared knowledge, expertise and skills among our sister unions in EI to rise to the challenges we face collectively and to find common solutions.

EI recently launched Go Public! Fund Education, a campaign that brings together



EI recently launched a campaign calling on governments globally to spend more on public education

education unions at global level to fight for fully funded, inclusive, quality public education systems and resist budget cuts, austerity and privatisation.

Funding, labour rights, workload, pay

The campaign represents an urgent call for governments globally to spend more on public education, a fundamental human right and public good, and to invest more in teachers, the single most important factor in achieving quality education. Achieving this means guaranteeing labour rights and ensuring good working conditions for teachers and education support staff, as well as manageable workloads and competitive salaries for both teachers and education workers. It also means valuing and respecting teachers, ensuring they are central to decision-making, and trusting their pedagogical expertise.

Access to quality education is a fundamental human right. It is also critical to meeting the biggest challenges of our time, from eradicating poverty, tackling gender

inequality and achieving social justice, to fighting climate change. Teachers are central to this vision of a better, fairer future.

Reversing the global teacher shortage

Teachers are the heart of education. Every student has the right to have a well-supported, qualified teacher and a quality learning environment. Yet in many countries, teachers are leaving the profession they love, and fewer young people are aspiring to become teachers.

In 2019, even before Covid had worsened the situation, UNESCO estimated that the world needed more than 69 million new teachers by 2030. We know that the shortage only continues to grow, and that urgent action is imperative at global level.

As David Edwards, general secretary of EI, has said: "Ensuring teachers everywhere are well-trained, well-supported and well-remunerated is the only way to reverse the teacher shortage and start building the education workforce we need for the future we want."

What's hot and what's not

Jon Biddle, English lead and NEU rep at Moorlands Primary in Norfolk, is passionate about fostering a love of reading for pleasure. Here he shares ideas and tips for schools to try.

KEEPING track of what's on the class bookshelves and in the school library is always a challenge for a busy teacher or English lead, especially as so few primary schools are able to employ even a part-time librarian.

There are a large number of questions that need to be considered. Is there a good selection available to choose from, including poetry, graphic novels, picture books, non-fiction and magazines? Is the stock up-to-date and does it feature a diverse range of authors, illustrators and characters? Do books regularly get culled and taken out of circulation when they stop being read or become outdated?

Although it takes time, culling the bookshelves is something that needs to be done regularly. Pretty much every year there's still at least one or two cases of a book called *Stranger Danger*, written by a certain 1970s TV presenter, being unearthed in a school library somewhere in the UK. This is something that shouldn't be happening and could potentially be quite traumatic.

Clear the clutter to reveal the gems

At a wider level, our children deserve access to the best books available. If those titles are squashed between a science book called *Will Humans Ever Visit the Moon?* (it exists, we had a copy in my NQT school) and a battered copy of *The Industrial Revolution*, which appears as if it was actually published during the Industrial Revolution, they're not going to be easy to find.

Over recent years, I've tried to include our school Reading Champions in this sorting process. Each half-term, we put out three large sheets of paper on the floor, labelled Amazing!, Hmmm... and Goodbye (or something similar). The children then look through a couple of the classroom shelves and add the books to the relevant pile.

The books that end up on the Amazing! pile are the ones they feel should be promoted



'Books with a buzz around them' are put in the Amazing! pile by class members

more in the classroom, books that there's a classroom buzz around or that they think everyone should be aware of. The Hmmm... books are the ones that could come off the shelves for a while and go into storage, because they've already been enjoyed by most of the class or because they're no longer being enjoyed regularly. The Goodbye books are the ones which perhaps are in poor condition or which haven't been read over the past few months.

Class ownership of their own books

Before the shelves get refilled, the selections are discussed with the rest of the class to make sure that they agree. I try and involve different pupils alongside the Reading Champions so they all have ownership over the books in their classroom. I really wouldn't recommend sorting all the books in the

classroom at the same time; I tried it once and it quickly descended into chaos. This year, our Reading Champions have also started to visit other classes lower down the school to help them organise their books.

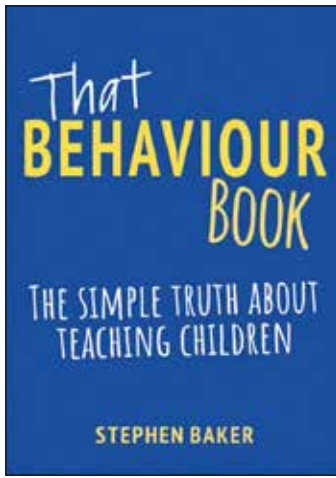
I'm always impressed at how well-informed the pupils are, seeming to know exactly what's hot and what's not. "Nobody has picked this one up all year." "We definitely need a set of these for the other classes, they'll love them as much as we do."

It's not a perfect system, and certainly no substitute for an experienced librarian who could curate the books effectively. But it helps me keep track of what books and authors are popular and provides a clear idea about where we need to improve the reading offer for our pupils. Just don't do all the books at once. Please.

Read more ideas from Jon next issue

 @jonnybid

That Behaviour Book



A WONDERFULLY written book designed to invoke reflection and provide answers to the questions every teacher asks at some point in their career. The book is a mixture of anecdotes and practical strategies for child-centred behaviour management.

The Takeaways at the end of each chapter are particularly useful at summarising key ideas and presenting them in accessible ways. Additionally, each chapter includes a Now try this section, which is a powerful tool for reflective practice.

That Behaviour Book is great for new and experienced staff alike.

James Ball

That Behaviour Book: The simple truth about teaching children, by Stephen Baker. Crown House. £17.99.

The Happy Tank

KINDNESS coach John Magee teaches key stage 2 children how to improve their mental health and wellbeing in six weeks, by being proactive and following the activities provided in his excellent self-help guide. Strategies consist of breathing exercises, reflection time, kindness goals and using positive affirmations. There are blank sections where readers can make personal notes about influential people, such as Greta Thunberg.

Parents or carers can use this handbook at home with their children, and it is ideal for educators in primary school to use as part of a whole class or school approach to improving mental health.

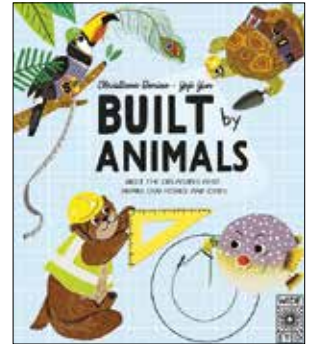
Cindy Shanks

The Happy Tank, by John Magee. Illustrated by Sarah Lawrence. Bloomsbury. £7.99.



Built by Animals

THIS non-fiction text, ideal for upper key stage 2 pupils, explores the wonderful animal kingdom and the amazing skills they have. Chapters in the book cover construction, materials, shapes, energy and water; looking at how a wide range of animals produce features of the natural world and how they have inspired humans to replicate them.



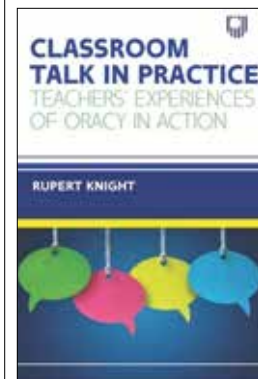
The book is narrated by a beaver and children will be amazed by the stories and ingenuity.

An easy-to-follow contents page, engaging illustrations and interesting facts make this a book you want to keep going back to.

Sian Collinson

Built by Animals by Christiane Dorion and Yeji Yun. Wide Eyed Editions. £14.99.

Classroom Talk in Practice



THIS evidence-based study of oracy within the classroom examines the how, why and who of students' talk within the classroom. By examining real-life lesson-based examples from a

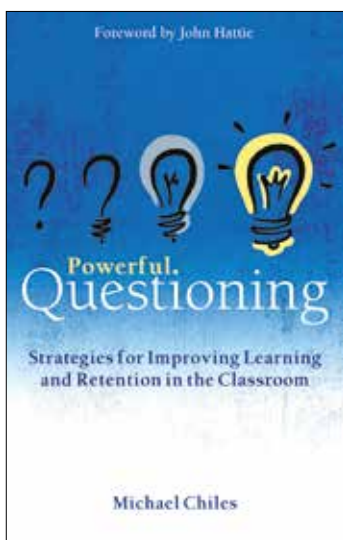
diverse range of schools and settings, the author demonstrates the benefits of structured oracy and offers advice to teachers on how to develop their own classroom practice.

Readable, informative and reflective, Knight's guidance is refreshing as it places the emphasis on individual teacher judgement, rather than being prescriptive. Suitable for teachers of any subject and at any stage of their career.

Katrina Reilly

Classroom Talk in Practice: Teachers' experiences of oracy in action, by Rupert Knight. McGraw Hill. £24.99.

Powerful Questioning: Strategies for Improving Learning and Retention in the Classroom



BASED on extensive research, personal experience and case studies, Michael Chiles' book provides teachers with useful strategies to enhance their questioning skills.

The author delves into the reasons behind why questions are asked, their purpose and how to promote a questioning culture during lessons even when children face barriers such as shyness or fear of failure.

He explains how different types of questions (including high order and low order) can be used to check understanding and assess future learning.

Each chapter also includes activities for educators to reflect on their own teaching and questioning styles. An informative book.

Cindy Shanks

Powerful Questioning: Strategies for improving learning and retention in the classroom, by Michael Chiles. Crown House Publishing. £14.99.

Letters

Essential role of TAs

I WAS not surprised to read that teaching assistants (TAs) are leaving their jobs in high numbers (Educate, November/December, page 16). Pay for TAs is insulting considering the essential role they perform.

I am a teacher, so I can tell you with authority that TAs are in no way auxiliary. They are not a nice extra little bonus, but foundational proponents of children's educational, emotional, social and psychological development.

I have a number of students in my classes across all year groups who are thriving as a direct result of the intervention of their assigned TAs. A good TA can do things even the best teachers cannot. As they work very closely with one or a few students, they get to know their learning styles in great depth, how to talk to and encourage them, understand when they are going to struggle and provide a feeling of safety and security through the consistency of their presence.

In my school, there is a TA who has been with us for over a decade. I am not too proud to say that many of my students

would be performing significantly less well without her presence in the room.

This TA is, frankly, incredible and indispensable. But her like is so rare because the salary simply does not attract TAs of such high calibre, and when it does, we cannot hope to retain them.

“TAs are not a shiny button on the school blazer of education.”

My school is lucky enough to have other TAs of similar quality. The TA who supported my intervention with my challenging year 10 class has made significant strides towards ensuring their success. But what happens when the TAs come to retirement, even if they decide to remain in the role that long?

The understanding of the essential nature of the role of the TA must change. They are

not a shiny button on the school blazer of education – they are the stitching that keeps the buttons on, the arms attached and the two halves together. When you pay for cheap thread, it frays and breaks, and the whole garment falls apart at the seams.

The Government needs to recognise this and make provisions for a significant pay increase as soon as possible.
Name and address withheld

Why we shouldn't sugarcoat workload

I WOULD like to thank Daniel Kebede for the article he wrote on tackling workload (Educate, November/December, page 11). He correctly articulated the pressures of increasing workload and how this is negatively impacting the mental health of teachers.

He talks about the physical and mental intensity of daily teaching work. I would like to expand on this idea as a disabled mathematics teacher.

During my time as a Teach First trainee, I worked in a Yorkshire-based secondary school which was part of a large academy trust. I loved my school and

enjoyed the training even though it was incredibly hard work.

But there was one thing about my school that got on my nerves – the chocolate bars put into the pigeonholes of staff with a small certificate when they were seen by senior leadership to have gone above and beyond.

“My above and beyond is the regular daily tasks of a teacher.”

This could include things such as supporting a new colleague or running extra revision sessions. On the surface, this seems like a very nice way to reward staff and make them feel appreciated, but as a disabled educator I saw the reward system quite differently.

As a disabled teacher, my above and beyond is just the daily tasks and regular responsibilities of a teacher. Ensuring I have resources for every lesson, dealing



Teacher's pet Chip

Chip is the treasured family member of Christine Shelton, a retired teacher from Loughborough.

Christine says: “During lockdown my sister adopted a dog called Chip. I used photographs of him to inspire my Reception class to write.

“The children wrote their own Chip books. After retiring, I returned to school with an adventure story I had written about Chip that the children adored.”

If you have a treasured pet you'd like to show off, email a high-resolution photo with 50 words about what makes them so special to educate@neu.org.uk

Please write The editor welcomes your letters but reserves the right to edit them.
Write to Letters, Educate, NEU, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD or email educate@neu.org.uk

Please note we cannot print letters sent in without a name and postal address (or NEU membership number), although we can withhold details from publication if you wish.

with administrative duties, calling parents, attending numerous weekly meetings, being in a classroom for the full teaching day, as well as the many other essential duties of a teacher, pushes me to my absolute physical limit. I end every day in pain.

I would love to run extra revision sessions or a club at break times or after school because these experiences enrich the lives of students, but due to my physical disability I cannot.

As a disabled educator, I sacrifice my mental and physical health to meet the workload requirements of the profession. I do not wish to downplay the workload expectations placed on able-bodied staff, as most also work outrageous hours and struggle to meet increasing demands. But for those of us with a disability, it is significantly worse.
Name and address withheld

How ToDs can help

I WAS reading some old Educate magazines and came across a letter (January/February 2023, page 42) written by L James, who thanked Polly Button for her article Hands up! (September/October 2022, page 50). Both detail the difficulties deaf/hard-of-hearing young people experience every day in schools and nurseries.

I thought I might add my voice to the effort to support all deaf young people to access education right from the start and help them achieve on a par with their peers.

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) provides information and support nationally for deaf children and their parents. However, there is another, more local, layer of support you can turn to when you have a deaf child in your class and require some support – your council's hearing support service.

Peripatetic qualified teachers of the deaf (ToDs) are teachers who have gone on to study



Charlotte Carson at the April 2023 Belfast strike rally

Star letter

Five minutes to register for a lifetime of participation in our democracy

TO honour the 100-year anniversary of the suffragette movement securing some women's right to vote, I am calling for 21st century suffragettes.

Many young people do not know that they can register to vote as soon as they receive their national insurance number at 16 years old. While they cannot vote until they are 18, research shows that if they are on the electoral register and vote in their first election, they are much more likely to become lifelong voters and participate in democracy.

I want my students to know that their voice matters, their opinions matter and when they turn 18, they should cast their vote. I can think of no better way to mark the struggle and sacrifice that took place a century ago than to encourage the next generation to use their right to vote.

To be a part of this historic movement:

- Sign up for the 21st century suffragettes initiative and send it to your students.
- Prepare your assembly or meeting. Highlight the power of young voices in shaping the future. Get in touch with me if you need some inspiration.
- Get students registered on the electoral roll. During morning registration or your assembly, guide students through the simple online registration process – it only takes five minutes.
- Spread the word and inspire others. Encourage students to share their experiences – use social media, posters and word-of-mouth to amplify your message.

Join the 21st century suffragettes and be part of history. Let's empower the youth to exercise their right to vote and shape a brighter future for all.

Charlotte Carson, NI equality officer, Belfast

deafness, hearing equipment, social and emotional development, and language and communication specifically surrounding deaf/hearing-impaired children. We are usually involved at the point of diagnosis of deafness, which may occur just after birth. This means that, by the time a child reaches school age, the family has usually had some form of support from a ToD/hearing support service.

Parents of babies who are diagnosed early are often the most useful people to ask for advice; not only have they been trained by their ToD, but they also have first-hand experience of how to support their child. They are usually happy to help and work with the ToD to assist the school/nursery.

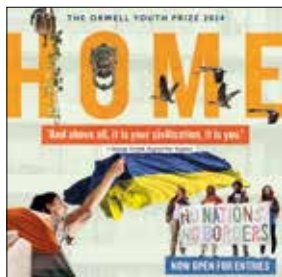
Teachers, if you have encountered a child with hearing loss, please get in touch with your

council's hearing support service (it may have a different title) for advice. The child's ToD will often be happy to visit the school to offer some training, so you and your staff feel more confident, have some knowledge of how to support the child with their hearing equipment and learn some important deaf awareness strategies.

Seanne Grant, ToD, Doncaster

Noticeboard

What is the meaning of home?



A PLACE?
A person?
Our planet?
The Orwell Youth Prize is challenging young people to think critically and

creatively about what home means to them – a concept that might seem increasingly under pressure from the cost-of-living and housing crisis, the plight of refugees and climate chaos.

The competition is open to everyone in years 7-11. Entries can take any form, including poetry, stories, journalism and game design. Resources and guidance are available online.

Draft entries submitted by 1 April will receive personalised feedback. The closing date for final submissions is 6 May.

■ Visit orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-youth-prize

Resources for local field trips



EDUCATION charity the Field Studies Council has made its online digital hub free to schools for 2024.

The online content has been updated with student-friendly resources for the fieldwork topics in 14-18 geography and 16-18 biology and environmental science. Educators can access workshops, GIS story maps and teacher CPD content.

Digital learning officer Amy Bandaranayake said: "Many schools are under pressure financially and it might not always be viable to organise residential trips. By making our resources accessible to all schools, it means more teachers can have the confidence to deliver quality fieldwork lessons at school or in local green spaces."

■ Visit field-studies-council.org/digital-hub-plus

Free digital CPR training for 11-16s



CLASSROOM RevivR is a free, interactive tool launched by the British Heart Foundation which teaches students the lifesaving skills of CPR and defibrillation.

The interactive resource, aimed at 11- to 16-year-olds, has been designed with busy educators in mind. All students need is a mobile device and something to perform

compressions on, like a cushion. Educators who register will gain access to an online portal, with a 45-minute lesson plan and PSHE-accredited resources covering the difference between cardiac arrest and a heart attack, how to make an emergency call, and how to use a defibrillator and perform CPR. Students will receive live feedback on their technique, thanks to innovative technology.

■ Visit bhf.org.uk/classroomrevivR

Supporting children to express themselves

MY Voice Matters is the theme of Children's Mental Health Week, which takes place from 5-11 February.

Charity Place2Be is asking educators to support children to express themselves and be heard, which can help lead to higher levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Educators can download free resources for primary and secondary students, including top tips from young people about what they need at school, assembly ideas and classroom activities, as well as information about a series of films produced by Young BAFTA.

■ Visit place2be.org.uk

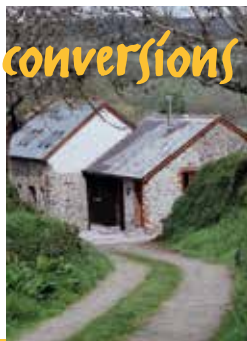


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2024

THE **SRtRC** SCHOOL COMPETITION IS **NOW OPEN** FOR ALL SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND

The SRtRC School Competition is free to enter, open to young people of all ages and abilities and is a great follow-on activity to educational work about racism.

We want to encourage participants to think about racism and produce their own work about this serious issue. Young people are welcome to produce work in any medium – artwork, creative writing, song, film, music, as well as football boot and t-shirt designs.

If it's about tackling racism, we want to see it!

REGISTER YOUR SCHOOL TODAY
[THEREDCARD.ORG/COMPETITIONS](https://theredcard.org/competitions)

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THIS impressive photo was captured by Melanie Caiazza, a secondary school English and film studies teacher from Kent.

Melanie says: "My family visited the Grand Canyon in Arizona over summer. The weather was not in our favour, but we kept driving despite the heavy showers.

"We were greeted with this amazing sight of a rainbow over the south rim section of the canyon. This is one of my favourite pictures from our trip. It is full of dramatic natural beauty but is also a reminder of hope."

Why not send a picture to us at educate@neu.org.uk. It should be large and high resolution, accompanied by 50 words about its subject. We send a £20 book token to each featured so don't forget to include your address.

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CLASSROOM confidential

Many years ago, when teaching in a school for children with severe learning difficulties which had Ofsted in, I was working one-to-one with a child who had Tourette's.

The head walked in with the Ofsted inspector and introduced me as the speech and language teacher. He then said to the child: "Would you like to say hello, Andrew?" to which Andrew replied, very clearly: "F... off!"

The head and the inspector made a swift departure and I was forever grateful to 'Andrew' for saying what we had all wanted to say so many times.

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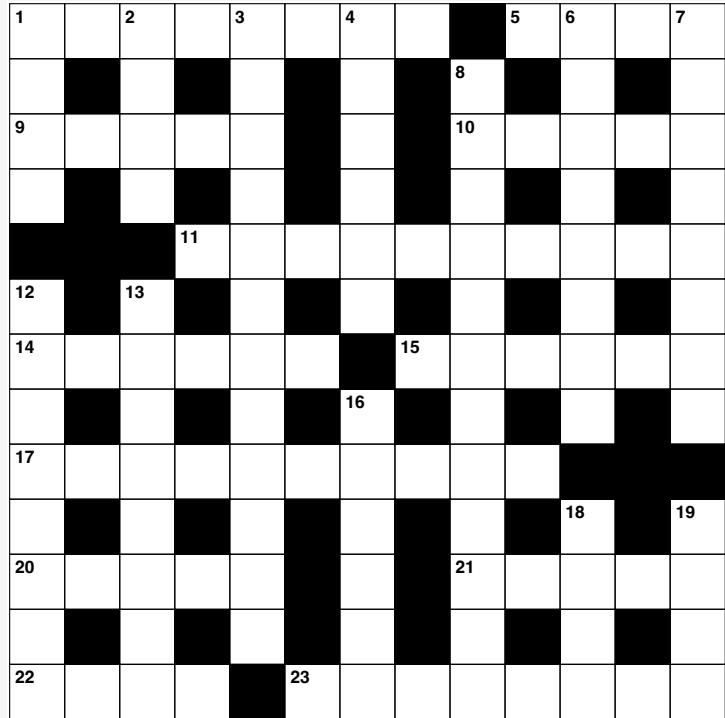
Quick crossword

Across

- 1** National emblem of Ireland (8)
- 5** ___water: solution of calcium hydroxide in water (4)
- 9** Grandson of Noah in the Old Testament (5)
- 10** ___ Berry: star of Catwoman (5)
- 11** US tennis player who won Wimbledon in 1975 (6,4)
- 14** Leather shoe shaped like a moccasin (6)
- 15** Enzyme that breaks down fats (6)
- 17** Paul ___ : comedian in The Fast Show (10)
- 20** Espresso coffee with steamed milk (5)
- 21** Zac ___ : US actor in High School Musical (5)
- 22** ___ Simone: US singer and jazz musician (4)
- 23** Andrew ___ : English former cricketing all-rounder (8)

Down

- 1** John ___ : actor who played Sam Tyler in Life on Mars (4)
- 2** Simple single-celled plant (4)
- 3** Swiss tennis star (5,7)
- 4** Close-fitting bell-shaped hat (6)
- 6** Enrique ___ : Spanish singer (8)
- 7** ___ Scrooge: Dickens character (8)
- 8** Actor who starred in Two and a Half Men (7,5)
- 12** Desmond ___ : actor who played Q in James Bond films (8)
- 13** Lewis ___ : Formula One driver (8)
- 16** ___ Kombat: video game franchise (6)
- 18** Film set during the 1979 Iran hostage crisis (4)
- 19** The French State Railway Authority (1,1,1,1)



Answers at bottom of page 49

Sudoku

Sudoku solutions will feature on this page next issue.

			9	1				
1	3	8	5		2			
		2						5
	1		6		5	7	4	
	2		8	9	1		6	
	6	5	2		7			1
	8					4		
			7		9	5	8	1
				8	6			

Easy

		5					9	
2			7		6		1	
7			9					
		3	6	4				
	4			8			5	
				9	5	3		
					3			1
	9		1	4				3
	8					6		

Medium

		2		3				
4				5				3
3					6		9	4
7							4	5
5	1	4						3
6		9		8				5
	3				6			8
						9		6

Difficult

Last issue's (Nov/Dec 2023) sudoku solution

(from left: Easy, Medium and Difficult)

2	5	4	7	3	9	1	8	6
1	9	8	4	2	6	7	3	5
3	7	6	5	8	1	9	2	4
6	4	7	3	1	8	2	5	9
8	2	3	9	5	4	6	1	7
9	1	5	2	6	7	8	4	3
7	8	2	6	4	5	3	9	1
5	3	9	1	7	2	4	6	8
4	6	1	8	9	3	5	7	2

1	5	6	4	9	8	3	7	2
7	8	4	2	6	3	9	5	1
2	9	3	5	7	1	8	6	4
5	2	7	8	3	4	1	9	6
6	3	1	7	5	9	4	2	8
8	4	9	1	2	6	7	3	5
4	7	2	3	1	5	6	8	9
3	6	8	9	4	2	5	1	7
9	1	5	6	8	7	2	4	3

5	8	4	3	7	6	2	9	1
1	2	6	9	4	5	8	7	3
3	9	7	8	2	1	6	5	4
6	3	5	7	9	2	4	1	8
8	7	2	1	5	4	3	6	9
4	1	9	6	8	3	5	2	7
9	5	1	4	6	8	7	3	2
2	4	3	5	1	7	9	8	6
7	6	8	2	3	9	1	4	5

Prize crossword



Across

- 9** Initially liberal arts studies ruined through lack of energy (9)
- 10** Push south to Sussex seaside resort (5)
- 11** As part of oral, I celebrate young literary heroine (5)
- 12** Tact might be mad policy! (9)
- 13** Graduate gets new agent – powerful businessman (7)
- 14** Verse is complicated, so swots up (7)
- 17** Print a book containing forbidden subject matter (5)
- 19** Stifle joke? (3)
- 20** Enthusiasm embodied in teaching us today (5)
- 21** Transmitted from Ryedale, perhaps (7)
- 22** For physical health I'm abandoning new feminists (7)
- 24** Germanic literary hero is upset – for example, cooked in oil! (9)
- 26** Bachelor of Arts – thus Latin is fundamental (5)
- 28** Subject? Article on yours truly! (5)
- 29** Take lesson differently, omitting tibia finally from collections of bones (9)

Down

- 1 & 13** False alarm involving friend from our old university? (4,5)
- 2** Posing a question, like Charles? (6)
- 3** Regional variation in my study of rocks and crystals (10)
- 4** Scottish university ended uniform confusion (6)
- 5** Classic children's game involving flag and rope (8)
- 6** Capital starts off school library overhaul (4)
- 7** Sticky substance makes mess also (8)
- 8** Openly resist heartless Dingle family (4)
- 13** See 1 down

1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8
9										10				
11						12								
13										14		15		16
17		18				19				20				
21										22			23	
24				25						26				27
28						29								

The winner and solution of this prize crossword will feature on this page next issue.

- 15** Get leaves mixed, including first of brassicas – cabbages and sprouts, for example (10)
- 16** Small alcoholic drinks appear regularly in school test (5)
- 18** One who has faith that there's a sort of evil in ale? (8)
- 19** Get solid result from the most pious (8)
- 22** Unusually gifted, such a child can't sit still! (6)
- 23** London station gets us into public school (6)
- 24 & 25** Releases groups of pupils without charge (4,4)
- 27** Ready money? College head has change (4)

Send your completed crossword, with your contact details, to: January/February crossword, Educate, NEU, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD, or email a photographed copy to crossword@neu.org.uk. Closing date: 31 January.

Last issue's (November/December 2023) prize crossword solution

Across 8 STIRLING 9 OLIVER 10 CRAM 11 UNI 12 THESIS 13 NOUGHT 15 SOBRIETY 17 STREAMS 19 REVERSE 22 SWAN LAKE 24 FUTILE 25 SANDAL 27 HID 28 WATT 29 GENIUS 30 NARRATOR **Down** 1 START OUT 2 PROM 3 MINUET 4 AGAINST 5 PORTABLE 6 DIME 7 HERIOT 14 GREEN 16 INEPT 18 MEATLESS 20 SOLUTION 21 METHANE 23 WHALES 24 FEDORA 26 DAIS 28 WEAK

Congratulations to last issue's winner – Anne Vincent from Inverness

This issue's quick crossword solution (p48)

Across 1 SHAMROCK 5 LIME 9 MAGOG 10 HALLE 11 ARTHUR ASHE 14 LOAFER 15 LIPASE 17 WHITEHOUSE 20 LATTE 21 EFRON 22 NINA 23 FLINTOFF **Down** 1 SIMM 2 ALGA 3 ROGER FEDERER 4 CLOCHE 6 IGLESIAS 7 EBENEZER 8 CHARLIE 9 SNGC 10 ARGONAUT 11 MORTAL 12 SHEEN 13 LLEWELYN 14 HAMILTON 15 ARGO 16 SHEEN

Final word



Angharad (centre) with members of her school's Feminist Society

Empowering educators to tackle gender inequity

GENDER stereotypes harm everyone. They place us into binary boxes, impacting the way we develop, learn and view ourselves.

Before a child is born, their biological sex has determined how society will define them. From gender reveal parties to gender-assigned toys and clothes, already society is making assumptions about a child's characteristics. These gendered expectations will also determine how a child is treated by society.

As a consequence of these expectations, both male and female aspirations are limited. As children progress through school, teachers may start to see male students dominating the classroom and female students being left behind or responsible for managing the behaviour of their male counterparts. There is also a change in the subjects they choose to study, especially science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects.

Underrepresentation in STEM subjects

Gender Action (GA) was launched in 2018 in response to the underrepresentation of women and girls in STEM subjects. We work to empower educators to tackle gender inequity in their schools, offering free one-to-one training to teachers to challenge sexism and stereotyping.

It's our job to help teachers create an action plan for their school and enable them to combat sexism using a whole-school approach. Alongside the representation of girls in STEM, we take an intersectional approach to tackling other forms of sexism, including the impact on boys and men.

Not only should there be greater representation of women and girls in STEM subjects, but there should also be greater representation of men and boys in traditionally 'feminine' vocational (health and social care, childcare, nursing and teaching) and A-level (English, modern foreign languages and the arts) subjects.

This gender gap continues to widen in the workplace. Women enter sectors with lower pay (healthcare, education and administration) and less security (fixed term, temporary and zero-hours contracts), alongside managing household and caring responsibilities. Maternity leave, single parenting and part-time work impact their career progression, prospective wages and pension, creating the gender pay gap.

GA's six key areas for tackling sexism

At GA we focus on six key areas, which can apply in schools, universities, youth clubs and workplaces:

- education and training
- student voice
- curriculum and learning
- progression and jobs
- language
- community.

Some educators will get support from colleagues, senior leaders and students; while for others, the journey can feel lonely and challenging as your passion for social justice may not be considered a priority. This can make it difficult, but GA is able to offer you guidance.

Taking a whole-school approach ensures that everyone, including senior leaders, governors and the school community, will be actively involved in tackling sexism.



Fact file

Angharad Morgan is Gender Action's programme co-ordinator, a Newcastle-based social sciences teacher and vice-chair of the NEU's women's organising forum. Visit genderaction.co.uk

bett

● A Hyve Event

ExCeL London
24 - 26 January 2024



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Saving with Teachers Building Society still helps teachers buy homes

In the 1960s accessing personal financial services was very different than it is today – a truth that led to our founders creating the only mutual Society dedicated to the education profession.

You may have been aware that single women and men in relatively low paying jobs like teaching found it hard to get a mortgage to buy a home in the sixties and early seventies, because high street lenders thought teachers –like you –were unattractive lending prospects.

Our founders didn't think that was right or fair. In fact, they were so firm in their belief that any young teacher (regardless of gender) who wanted to buy a home should be able to achieve that dream that they decided to set up a new building society to do things differently. And so Teachers Building Society was born, offering equality of lending regardless of gender ahead of the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act.

Like all building societies we use the collective value of deposits to fund mortgage lending, but unlike other building societies, saving with us directly supports teachers in buying a first home. And teachers need our help to buy a home now as much as they did in the 60s. Access to financial services might be easier, but the cost of living, house prices, inflation and a whole host of other factors make getting on the ladder as hard as ever.

The more you save, the more mortgages we can offer

So, just like in the 60s we're asking NEU members to support us. Back then, union members trusted us with their savings, enabling us to offer young teachers with smaller deposits a mortgage.

Today we're asking you to consider doing the same. To consider trusting us with your savings so we can help even more teachers buy homes. We think knowing you're helping younger teachers (instead of lining shareholder pockets) is something you can feel really proud of (and if you know a young teacher who does need help finding a mortgage, please do send them our way).

www.teachersbuildingsociety.co.uk



**Achubwch y chweched dosbarth
Galw am gadw safleoedd
Ceredigion ar agor.**

**Addysgu'r athrawon
Gwersi Cymraeg am
ddim i addysgwyr.**

**Problemau ymddygiad
Ysgol yn cyflwyno polisi
newydd ar ôl streic.**

addysgu yng Nghymru

**Rhifyn 75
Tymor y gwanwyn 2024**



Cynhaliwyd Cynhadledd Cymru yng Ngwesty'r Marriott yn Abertawe



Jeremy Miles yn annerch y gynhadledd

Trafod â'r Llywodraeth – blaenoriaethau'r gynhadledd

DYLAI athrawon cyflenwi sydd ar gontractau tymor byr neu dymor hir gael eu trin yr un fath gan Lywodraeth Cymru a'u talu ar yr un gyfradd. Dyna farn pumed cynhadledd yr undeb yng Nghymru.

Cafwyd cynnig yn galw ar Lywodraeth Cymru i sicrhau bod pob athro cyflenwi yn cael yr un tâl, waeth am ba mor hir mae'n gweithio mewn ysgol. Roedd hwnnw ymhlith nifer o'r materion a drafodwyd yn y digwyddiad a gynhaliwyd yng Ngwesty'r Marriot, Abertawe, fis Hydref.

Trafodwyd cyfanswm o 26 o gynigion dros y deuddydd, gyda'r pynciau'n cynnwys trechu tlodi plant, hiliaeth yn y gweithle, presenoldeb disgyblion, a'r argyfwng cyllido ysgolion a cholegau yng Nghymru.

Cadeiriwyd y gynhadledd gan Phil Clarke, uwch is-lywydd yr NEU, a'r siaradwr gwadd oedd Jeremy Miles, Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg.

Yn dilyn cynnig gan gangen Caerdydd, trafodwyd presenoldeb gwael mewn ysgolion

“Rydyn ni'n edrych ymlaen at weithio gyda Llywodraeth Cymru.”

a cholegau, ac effaith hynny ar ddeilliannau myfyrwyr a llwyth gwaith athrawon. Galwodd y cynnig ar Lywodraeth Cymru i roi mwy o arian i helpu myfyrwyr absennol sy'n sefyll arholiadau i ddal i fyny â'u gwaith. Galwodd hefyd am arian i benodi mwy o staff arbenigol ac i roi cymorth ym maes iechyd meddwl a sgrinio er mwyn mynd i'r afael yn effeithiol â phresenoldeb gwael.

Roedd cynnig gan ganghennau Bro Morgannwg a Sir Ddinbych yn tynnu sylw at yr argyfwng cyllido mewn ysgolion a cholegau. Roedd yn erfyn ar Lywodraeth Cymru i

flaenoriaethu cyllid a buddsoddiad mewn addysg yn ddiymdroi, gan amcangyfrif fod myfyrwyr yng Nghymru yn cael £700 yn llai y flwyddyn na disgyblion yn Lloegr.

Galwodd cangen Sir Benfro am gydnabod Covid hir fel cyflwr meddygol yn gyfreithiol o dan y Ddeddf Cydraddoldeb, er mwyn gwarchod aelodau rhag gwahaniaethu ar sail anabledd. Bydd yr undeb yn mynd ati nawr i sefydlu grŵp strategaeth er mwyn datblygu canllawiau i reoli a chefnogi aelodau sydd â Covid hir.

Dyweddodd Stuart Williams, swyddog polisi NEU Cymru, ei bod hi'n bwysig bod aelodau'n gallu penderfynu pa faterion i'w codi gyda Llywodraeth Cymru: “Rydyn ni wedi cael cyfeiriad polisi clir a fydd yn llywio ein trafodaethau â Llywodraeth Cymru yn y dyfodol, ac rydyn ni'n edrych ymlaen at weithio'n agos gyda'r Llywodraeth i roi sylw i'r materion hyn. Materion yw'r rhain y cytunodd y gynhadledd yn unfrydol arny'n nhw.”

■ Bydd y gynhadledd nesaf yn cael ei chynnal fis Hydref.

'Teithiau 40 milltir yn ôl a blaen' i fyfyrwyr chweched dosbarth

DYLAI cyngor Ceredigion a Llywodraeth Cymru lobio San Steffan am fwy o gyllid i ysgolion y sir, er mwyn i bob chweched dosbarth allu aros ar agor. Dyna neges yr NEU.

Mae'r cyngor wedi lansio astudiaeth ddichonolrwydd i edrych ar y posibilrwydd o gau pob chweched dosbarth, gan greu un 'ganolfan ragoriaeth' yn eu lle. Dyma un o bedwar opsiwn a gyflwynwyd i gyfarfod o gabinet y cyngor fis Tachwedd: **1** parhau â'r sefyllfa bresennol lle ceir chweched dosbarth mewn chwech ysgol

2 datblygu'r ddarpariaeth ôl-16 yn y chwe safle presennol

3 darparu addysg ôl-16 mewn rhai ysgolion a darpariaeth agos mewn un neu ddau o safleoedd

4 sefydlu un ganolfan ragoriaeth, gydag amrywiaeth o bartneriaid, mewn un safle addas neu ragor.

Bydd astudiaeth ddichonolrwydd gwasanaethau ysgolion a gydol oes y cyngor yn canolbwyntio ar opsiynau 2 a 4 i gychwyn. Dywedodd y cyngor mai nod yr adolygiad oedd edrych ar ffyrdd o gynnal a datblygu safon eithriadol yr addysg a gynnigir i

ddisgyblion yng Ngheredigion.

Ond yn ôl Kath Edwards, ysgrifennydd cangen ac ardal NEU Ceredigion, roedd gan yr aelodau bryderon garw. "O dan y cynigion hyn, byddai disgwyl i rai fyfyrwyr wneud taith yn ôl a blaen o 40 milltir. Byddai'r rheini heb eu hariannu, ac ar ffyrdd gwael lle nad oes digon o drafnidiaeth gyhoeddus," meddai. "Mae hyn yn creu rhwystrau mawr i addysg, yn enwedig i fyfyrwyr o gefndiroedd economaidd is.

"Mae angen i ddarpariaeth chweched dosbarth fod yn lleol, ac mae'n gywilyddus nad yw'r arian hwn ar gael."

26 TGAU newydd i Gymru

BYDD cymwysterau TGAU newydd, sydd wedi'u 'gwneud i Gymru' ac yn cyd-fynd â'r Cwricwlwm newydd i Gymru, yn cael eu haddysgu o fis Medi 2025.

Yn ôl Cymwysterau Cymru, dylid cytuno ar fanylion terfynol y 26 cymhwyster erbyn mis Medi, gan roi blwyddyn academaidd i ysgolion baratoi at eu cyflwyno.

Mae pecyn o adnoddau addysgu a dysgu hefyd yn cael ei baratoi i helpu gyda'r newid. Bydd y cymwysterau TGAU newydd yn cynnwys cymhwyster gwyddoniaeth cyfun, uno Cymraeg iaith a llenyddiaeth a Saesneg iaith a llenyddiaeth, a TGAU Cymraeg Craidd yn lle Cymraeg ail iaith.

■ Blog #TGAU wedi'u 'gwneud i Gymru'

Canllawiau am risgiau fepio



MAE lechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru wedi cyhoeddi canllawiau i awgrymu sut y gall disgyblion ddysgu am risgiau fepio, a hynny fel rhan o elfen lechyd a lles y cwricwlwm newydd.

Mae'n anghyfreithlon gwerthu dyfeisiau fepio i neb dan 18 oed yng Nghymru, ond yn 2021/22, yn ôl arolwg gan y Rhwydwaith Ymchwil lechyd mewn Ysgolion, roedd un o bump disgybl ym mlynnyddoedd 7 i 11 wedi rhoi cynnig ar fepio. Dywedodd pump y cant o fyfyrwyr ysgolion uwchradd eu bod yn fepio o leiaf unwaith yr wythnos.

■ Ewch i tinyurl.com/msnmajrc

Dyddiadau dysgu i'ch dyddiadur

HYFFORDDIANT I GYNYRCHIOLWYR

Mae cyrsiau sylfaen ar gael i gynrychiolwyr eu mynychu am dri diwrnod mewn bloc. Mae'r cyrsiau wedi'u trefnu, yn ddibynnol ar niferoedd, ar y dyddiadau canlynol.

Cyrsiau sylfaen

7-9 Chwefror – cwrs tridiau, Caerdydd **NEUCymru-reps-training-Foundation-7-9feb24.eventbrite.co.uk**

6-8 Mawrth – cwrs tridiau, Bangor **NEUCymru-reps-training-Foundation-6-8mar24.eventbrite.co.uk**

Cyfraith cyflogaeth

24 Ebrill – Casnewydd **NEUCymru-reps-training-Employment-Law-24apr24.eventbrite.co.uk**

7 Mai – Llandudno **NEUCymru-reps-training-Employment-Law-7may24.eventbrite.co.uk**

Mynd i'r afael â materion cyflogau

18 Mawrth – Caerdydd **NEUCymru-reps-training-Tackling-Pay-18mar24.eventbrite.co.uk**

Delio â dileu swyddi

24 Ionawr – Prestatyn **NEUCymru-reps-training-Redundancy-24jan24.eventbrite.co.uk**

Cynrychiolwyr yn y sector annibynnol

Cadwch olwg ar eich e-bost i weld y cyfleoedd hyfforddiant diweddaraf. Hoffwch ni ar Facebook yn facebook.com/neucymrutraining, dilynwch ni ar X yn [@neucymrutrain](https://twitter.com/neucymrutrain) ac ewch i neu.org.uk/learning-and-events

26 Ionawr – Casnewydd **NEUCymru-reps-training-Independent-26jan24.eventbrite.co.uk**

Llwyth gwaith a lles - Gweithdy penodol i Gymru

11 Ebrill – Wrecsam **NEUCymru-reps-training-Workload-wellbeing-11apr24.eventbrite.co.uk**

Egluro gwaith achosion - gweithdy penodol i Gymru

21 Mai – Abertawe **NEUCymru-reps-training-Demystifying-casework-21may24.eventbrite.co.uk**

Os oes gennych chi ddiddordeb mewn dod yn gynrychiolydd yn y gweithle, anfonwch e-bost i cymru.wales@neu.org.uk - mae gan gynrychiolwyr hawl gyfreithiol i gael hyfforddiant a bydd yr NEU yn cefnogi unrhyw gynrychiolydd sy'n ei chael hi'n anodd cael amser i ffwrdd o'r gwaith i fod yn bresennol.

RHAGOR O GYRSIAU DRWY WULF

Mae cyrsiau hefyd ar gael drwy brosiect Cronfa Ddysgu Undebau Cymru (WULF) ac mae rhestr sy'n cael ei diweddarau'n gyson o'r pynciau i'w gweld yn eventbrite.co.uk/o/national-education-union-cymru-training-10916965546 gyda gwybodaeth am sut i gofrestru.

Croesawu siaradwyr Cymraeg adref

Wrth i Lywodraeth Cymru geisio cyflawni'i nod o gael miliwn o siaradwyr Cymraeg yng Nghymru erbyn 2050, mae cynlluniau wedi'u creu i annog pobl sy'n gweithio yn y sector addysg i ddysgu'r iaith.

GALL fod yn anodd recriwtio athrawon sy'n siarad Cymraeg ac athrawon sy'n gallu addysgu drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg.

Ond fel rhan o ymgyrch Cymraeg 2050, mae'r Ganolfan Dysgu Cymraeg Genedlaethol, sydd wedi'i lleoli yng Nghaerfyrddin, wedi creu cyrsiau penodol – y cyfan yn rhad ac am ddim – ar gyfer y gweithlu addysg, boed yn athrawon, cynorthwywyr addysgu, staff cymorth neu benaethiaid.

Ac mae'r cynllun yn llwyddo – yn y chwe mis cyntaf, mae 450 o athrawon a darpar athrawon wedi ymuno â'r gwersi rhad ac am ddim.

Gall y dulliau dysgu amrywio, o ystafelloedd dosbarth rhithwir, ar-lein, i addysgu wyneb yn wyneb neu astudio unigol. Mae cyrsiau sabothol dwys hefyd ar gael.

Meddai Meinir Ebbsworth, cyfarwyddwr strategol y ganolfan: "Rydyn ni'n cynnig amrywiaeth eang o gyfleoedd i ddysgu Cymraeg ac i helpu dysgwyr i fod yn fwy hyderus wrth ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg, a hynny ar wahanol lefelau.

"Gall ein gweithlu addysg wedyn ddylanwadu ar y defnydd o'r Gymraeg a'r cyfleoedd mae hynny'n eu rhoi i bobl ifanc yn eu cymunedau ac yn y gweithlu."

Mae'r ganolfan hefyd yn datblygu cwrs hyfforddi Dysgu Cymraeg 35 awr, sydd i ddechrau fis Medi. Bydd modd i fyfyrwyr ddilyn hwn wrth hyfforddi i fod yn athrawon.

Esboniodd Meinir mai'r nod oedd sicrhau cysondeb yng nghynnwys y cyrsiau sy'n cael eu



Cyngor i ddysgwyr gan yr athro Jonathan Davies, yn y llun: "Dyfal donc a dyr y garreg' meddai'r hen air, ac mae hynny'n wir wrth ddysgu Cymraeg."

cynnig gan ddarparwyr hyfforddiant.

"Ar ôl i athrawon gael swyddi amser llawn, bydd ganddyn nhw sylfaen wedyn i ddatblygu eu Cymraeg," meddai. "Byddan nhw'n gallu troi eu sylw yn ôl at yr iaith unrhyw bryd – gan gamu ar y bws ac oddi arno pan fydd hi'n gyfleus."

Mae Jonathan Davies (yn y llun), athro o Gasllwchwr ger Abertawe sy'n gweithio mewn ysgol gynradd yn Greenwich yn Llundain, wedi bod yn dysgu Cymraeg gyda'r ganolfan ers 2021. Mae bellach yn bwriadu dychwelyd adref i ddefnyddio'i sgiliau iaith rhugl.

Mae eisoes yn addysgu dysgwyr eraill ar-lein o Lundain, ac yn dychwelyd i Abertawe

bob wythnos i gynnal gweithdy ymgysylltu i ddysgwyr ifanc. Mae'n ystyried gwneud cais i ddilyn gradd PhD gan edrych ar y gwahanol ffyrdd o addysgu Cymraeg fel ail iaith mewn ysgolion cyfrwng Saesneg, er mwyn i ragor o blant allu gadael yr ysgol yn fwy rhugl.

Mae nifer o gynlluniau wedi'u lansio ar lefel israddedig i annog myfyrwyr naill ai i aros yng Nghymru i gwblhau eu hyfforddiant athrawon, neu i gadw mewn cysylltiad a chynnal eu sgiliau iaith os ydyn nhw'n gadael i hyfforddi rywle arall.

Esboniodd Rebecca Williams o'r Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol yng Nghaerfyrddin, sy'n rhoi cyfleoedd i bobl hyfforddi ac astudio drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg: "Mae cyfran mor uchel o siaradwyr Cymraeg yn gadael Cymru i gael addysg uwch, ac rydyn ni'n credu ei bod hi'n werth cadw mewn cysylltiad a rhoi gwybod iddyn nhw pa gyfleoedd – fel lleoliadau gwaith i athrawon – sydd ar gael iddyn nhw yng Nghymru."

Mae'r rhaglen Cadw Cyswllt wedi cael ei chyflwyno ers blwyddyn ac eisoes mae tua 100 o bobl ifanc yn dilyn ar Instagram, a nifer tebyg ar e-bost.

Llywodraeth Cymru yn cynnig cymhellion ariannol

Mae Llywodraeth Cymru yn cynnig grant o £5,000 i'r rheini sy'n astudio i ddod yn athrawon uwchradd cyfrwng Cymraeg, ynghyd â bwrsariaeth 'gadw' gwerth £5,000 i gynnal y gweithlu.

Mae'r Cynllun Pontio, sy'n helpu athrawon ysgolion cynradd sy'n siarad

Cymraeg i ddod yn athrawon uwchradd mewn ysgolion cyfrwng Cymraeg, hefyd wedi'i ehangu i gynnwys athrawon uwchradd sydd wedi gadael y proffesiwn ers pum mlynedd neu ragor ac athrawon sy'n dymuno dychwelyd i addysgu yng Nghymru o Loegr a gwledydd eraill.

Yma i helpu

FEL yr undeb addysg mwyaf, gall NEU Cymru roi gwasanaeth heb ei ail i'w aelodau. Mae ein ffin profesiynol yma i ddefnyddio' u harbenigedd er mwyn helpu ein rhwydwaith o gynrychiolwyr gweithle ac ysgrifenyddion rhanbarthau a changhennau.

Os oes gennych chi broblem yn y gwaith neu i gael rhagor o wybodaeth am ein gwasanaethau i aelodau, cysylltwch â'r canlynol:

- cynrychiolydd eich gweithle
- ysgrifennydd eich cangen
- Adviceline
- Swyddfa NEU Cymru.



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Uwch Swyddogion Cymru:

Debbie Scott, Daniel Maney

Uwch Swyddog Polisi Cymru:

Mary van den Heuvel

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rhysiorwerth@hotmail.com



Aelodau'r NEU a NASUWT ar y llinell biced fis Hydref

Delio â thrais gan ddisgyblion i osgoi rhagor o streiciau

GOHIRIWYD streic mewn ysgol yn Sir Fynwy yn hwyr y llynedd ar ôl i'r rheolwyr gymryd camau i fynd i'r afael ag ymddygiad treisgar a sarhaus gan rai myfyrwyr.

Aeth aelodau NEU Cymru a NASUWT yn Ysgol Gyfun Cil-y-Coed ar streic fis Hydref ar ôl pryderon dros ymddygiad rhai disgyblion tuag at y staff ac "arferion rheoli niweidiol".

Yn ôl Debbie Scott, uwch swyddog NEU Cymru, teimlai aelodau nad oedd yr ysgol yn delio â'r problemau ymddygiad a oedd yn effeithio ar iechyd, diogelwch a lles aelodau a'u disgyblion.

"Mae nifer o aelodau'r NEU wedi gorfod cymryd amser i ffwrdd o'r gwaith oherwydd bod y problemau ymddygiad hyn yn eu rhoi o

dan straen, ac mae'r ysgol wedi gorfod cyflogi nifer o athrawon cyflenwi. Mae hyn yn costio arian a fyddai fel arall yn cael ei wario ar addysg y disgyblion," meddai Debbie.

Ychwanegodd fod yr aelodau wedi gweithredu er budd y disgyblion yn ogystal â'r staff, gan fod nifer o ddisgyblion wedi dychryn ac yn anhapus oherwydd ymddygiad plant eraill. "All athrawon ddim addysgu, ac all disgyblion ddim dysgu, mewn amgylchedd lle mae pethau'n tarfu a lle mae trais."

Serch hynny, gohiriwyd streic a gynlluniwyd fis Tachwedd ar ôl i gynlluniau ymddygiad newydd gael eu cyflwyno, ac roedd yr undebau o blaid y rheini. Mae'r aelodau'n gobeithio y bydd hyn yn cael effaith, ond mae'n bosibl y cyhoeddir mwy o ddiwrnodau streic os na fydd y gwelliannau'n para.

'Sicrhau'r canlyniadau gorau i aelodau'



MAE un o gyn-drefnwyr rhanbarthol Undeb Cenedlaethol yr Athrawon wedi'i benodi yn un o uwch swyddogion Cymru.

Mae Daniel Maney

(yn y llun uchod) wedi ymuno â swyddfa NEU Cymru yng Nghaerdydd ar ôl gweithio am chwe blynedd i undeb llafur Prospect fel swyddog trafod telerau, a hynny yn y sectorau cyhoeddus a

phreifat ledled Cymru, gan gynnwys yn y byd addysg.

Bydd Daniel yn brysor yn cefnogi swyddogion lleol gyda'u gwaith a'u hamcanion bargeinio, ac yn cynorthwyo i gynllunio a darparu'r rhaglen hyfforddiant genedlaethol.

Meddai Daniel: "Rwy'n edrych ymlaen at weithio gyda phob un ohonoch chi, fel y gallwn ni gyflawni'r canlyniadau gorau gyda'n gilydd i'n holl aelodau ledled Cymru."

Save our sixth forms
Call for more funds to keep
Ceredigion sites open.

Teaching the teachers
Free lessons for educators
to learn Welsh.

Behaviour problems
School puts new policy in
place after strike action.

educateinwales

Issue 75
Spring term 2024



Conference Cymru took place at the Marriott Hotel in Swansea



Jeremy Miles addressing conference

Conference decides on priorities for WG talks

SUPPLY teachers on long- or short-term contracts should be treated equally by the Welsh Government and paid at the same rate, the union's fifth conference Cymru agreed.

A motion calling on the Welsh Government (WG) to ensure that all supply teachers are paid equally, irrespective of the length of time they work in a school, was among the many issues raised at the event held at the Marriott Hotel, Swansea in October.

A total of 26 motions were debated over the two days with topics including tackling child poverty, racism in the workplace, pupil attendance, and the crisis in funding for schools and colleges in Wales.

The conference was chaired by NEU senior vice-president Phil Clarke and the guest speaker was Jeremy Miles, the Minister for Education and Welsh Language.

“We look forward to working with the Welsh Government to address issues we agreed on.”

Poor attendance in schools and colleges, and its impact on student outcomes and teacher workload, was debated in a motion from Cardiff branch. It called on the WG for more funding to help absent students taking exams to catch up, to hire additional specialist staff, and to provide mental health support and screening to tackle poor attendance effectively.

A Vale of Glamorgan and Denbighshire branch motion highlighted the funding

crisis for schools and colleges. It urged the WG to prioritise educational funding and investment as a matter of urgency, estimating that students in Wales receive up to £700 per annum less than pupils in England.

The Pembrokeshire branch called for long Covid to be recognised in law as a medical condition under the Equality Act to protect members from any disability discrimination. The union will now set up a strategy group to develop guidance managing and supporting members with long Covid.

NEU Cymru policy officer Stuart Williams said it was important members could decide which issues they wanted to raise with the WG: “We have received a clear policy direction that will guide our future discussions with the WG, and we look forward to working closely with them to address the issues that were unanimously agreed by conference.”

■ The next conference will be held in October.

'40-mile round trips' for students under sixth form plans

CEREDIGION council and the Welsh Government should lobby Westminster to increase funding for schools in the county so that all its sixth forms can remain open, says the NEU.

The council has launched a feasibility study to look at the possible closure of all six sixth forms, to be replaced with a single 'centre of excellence'. This is one of four options put forward to the council's cabinet meeting in November:

- 1 maintain the current situation of sixth forms in six schools
- 2 develop the current post-16 provision at the existing six sites
- 3 provide post-16 education in some schools and close provision at one or two sites
- 4 establish one centre of excellence, involving a range of partners, at one or more suitable sites.

The feasibility study by the council's schools and lifelong services section will focus on options 2 and 4 initially. The council said the aim of the review was to look at ways to

maintain and develop the exceptional standard of education offered to pupils in Ceredigion.

But Ceredigion NEU district and branch secretary Kath Edwards said members had serious concerns. "Under these proposals some students would be expected to make unfunded round trips of 40 miles or more on poor roads with inadequate public transport," she said. "This places serious barriers to education, especially for students from lower economic backgrounds.

"Sixth form provision needs to stay local and it is shameful that the funds are not there."

26 new GCSEs for Wales

NEW 'Made-for-Wales' GCSEs, complementing the newly introduced Curriculum for Wales, are to be taught from September 2025.

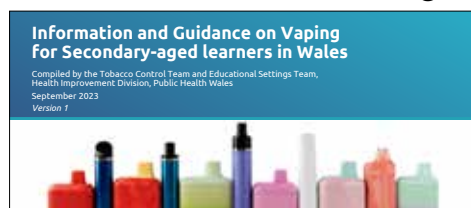
Qualifications Wales says final details of the 26 qualifications should be agreed by this September, giving schools an academic year in which to prepare for their introduction.

A package of teaching and learning resources is also being prepared to support the change.

The new GCSEs will include a combined science qualification, the merger of English language and literature and of Welsh language and literature, and a Core Cymraeg GCSE replacing Welsh second language.

■ Made-for-Wales blog [#GCSEs](#)

Guidance on risks of vaping



PUBLIC Health Wales has issued guidance suggesting ways in which pupils can learn about the risks of vaping as part of the health and wellbeing aspect of the new curriculum.

It is illegal to sell vaping devices to anyone under 18 in Wales but in 2021/22, a survey by the School Health Research Network found that a fifth of year 7 to 11 pupils had tried vaping. Five per cent of secondary school students said they vaped at least once a week.

■ Visit tinyurl.com/r4255emf

Learning dates for your diary

TRAINING FOR REPS

Foundation courses are available for reps to attend for three days in one block. The courses have been arranged, subject to numbers, on the following dates.

Foundation courses

7-9 February – three-day course, Cardiff [NEUCymru-reps-training-Foundation-7-9feb24.eventbrite.co.uk](#)

6-8 March – three-day course, Bangor [NEUCymru-reps-training-Foundation-6-8mar24.eventbrite.co.uk](#)

Employment law

24 April – Newport [NEUCymru-reps-training-Employment-Law-24apr24.eventbrite.co.uk](#)

7 May – Llandudno [NEUCymru-reps-training-Employment-Law-7may24.eventbrite.co.uk](#)

Tackling pay issues

18 March – Cardiff [NEUCymru-reps-training-Tackling-Pay-18mar24.eventbrite.co.uk](#)

Dealing with redundancy

24 January – Prestatyn [NEUCymru-reps-training-Redundancy-24jan24.eventbrite.co.uk](#)

Reps in the independent sector

26 January – Newport [NEUCymru-](#)

[reps-training-Independent-26jan24.eventbrite.co.uk](#)

Workload and wellbeing – Wales-specific workshop

11 April – Wrexham [NEUCymru-reps-training-Workload-wellbeing-11apr24.eventbrite.co.uk](#)

Demystifying casework – Wales-specific workshop

21 May – Swansea [NEUCymru-reps-training-Demystifying-casework-21may24.eventbrite.co.uk](#)

If you're interested in becoming a workplace rep, email cymru.wales@neu.org.uk – reps are legally entitled to undertake training and the NEU will support any rep who has difficulty getting time off work to attend.

MORE COURSES THROUGH WULF

Courses are also available through the Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF) project and a regularly updated list of topics can be found at eventbrite.co.uk/o/national-education-union-cymru-training-10916965546 with information on how to register.

If you would like the union to consider organising a particular course, email Lisa Williams at lisa.williams@neu.org.uk or Beth Roberts at beth.roberts@neu.org.uk

Check your email inbox for information on the latest training opportunities. Like us on Facebook at facebook.com/neucymrutraining, follow us on X at [@neucymrutrain](https://twitter.com/neucymrutrain) and visit neu.org.uk/learning-and-events

Welcoming Welsh speakers home

As the Welsh Government strives to meet its goal of a million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050, initiatives are in place to encourage people working in the education sector to learn the language.

RECRUITMENT of Welsh-speaking teachers and those able to teach through the medium of Welsh can be difficult.

But as part of the Cymraeg 2050 campaign, the National Centre for Learning Welsh, based in Carmarthen, has set up specific courses – all free – designed for the education workforce, whether teachers, teaching assistants, support staff or heads.

And it is proving to be a success – in its first six months some 450 teachers and prospective teachers joined the free lessons.

Methods of learning can vary, from online virtual classrooms to face-to-face teaching or self-study. Intensive sabbatical courses are also available.

Meinir Ebbsworth, the centre's director of strategy, said: "We offer a wide range of opportunities to learn Welsh and to enable learners to be more confident in their use of Welsh across the levels of competence.

"Our education workforce can then influence the use of the Welsh language and the opportunities it offers young people in their communities and in the workforce."

The centre is also developing a 35-hour Learn Welsh training course, due to start this September, which student teachers can follow during their teacher training.

Meinir explained that the aim was to provide training providers with the same course content to achieve a level of consistency.

"Once teachers have full-time posts, they



A tip to learners from teacher Jonathan Davies, pictured: "There's a Welsh saying: 'Dyfal done a dyr y garreg' – persistent tapping breaks the stone."

will have a basis to develop their Welsh," she said. "They can re-engage in it at any time – they can get on and off that bus as they want."

Jonathan Davies (pictured), a teacher from Loughor near Swansea who works in a primary school in the London borough of Greenwich, has been learning Welsh with the centre since 2021 and now plans to return home to use his now fluent language skills.

He already teaches other learners online from London, and returns to Swansea each week to run an engagement workshop for

young learners. He is thinking about applying to do a PhD in exploring different ways to teach Welsh as a second language in English-medium schools so that more children can leave school with a better level of fluency.

Several initiatives have been launched at undergraduate level to encourage students to either stay in Wales to complete their teacher training, or to keep in touch and maintain their language skills if they leave to train elsewhere.

Rebecca Williams of Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol in Carmarthen, which creates opportunities to train and study through the medium of Welsh, explained: "Such a high proportion of Welsh speakers leave Wales to study higher education, we think it's worth keeping in touch and letting them know what opportunities – such as teacher work placements – are available for them in Wales."

This Cadw Cyswllt (keep in touch) programme has been running for a year and already has around 100 young people following on Instagram and a similar number on email.

Welsh Government offers financial incentives

The Welsh Government offers a £5,000 grant to those studying to become Welsh-medium secondary teachers, and a £5,000 'retention' bursary to maintain the workforce.

Its Cynllun Pontio scheme, which supports Welsh-speaking primary

school teachers to become secondary teachers in Welsh-medium schools, has also been extended to include secondary teachers who have been out of the profession for five years or more and teachers wishing to return to teach in Wales from England and other countries.

Here to help

AS part of the largest education union in Europe, NEU Cymru can offer members an unrivalled service.

Our professional team is here to provide expertise to our network of workplace representatives and district and branch secretaries.

If you have a problem at work or want to know more about member services, contact:

- your workplace representative
- your branch secretary
- Adviceline 0345 811 8111
- NEU Cymru office.

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NEU and NASUWT members on the picket line in October

Pupil violence tackled to avert further strikes

STRIKE action at a Monmouthshire school was postponed late last year after moves by management to curb violent and abusive behaviour by some students.

Members of NEU Cymru and NASUWT at Caldicot Comprehensive School took industrial action in October following concerns over the behaviour by some pupils towards staff and “adverse management practices”.

Debbie Scott, NEU Cymru senior Wales officer, said members had felt the school was not dealing with the behaviour problems which were affecting the health, safety and welfare of members and their pupils. “A number of NEU members have had to take time off with stress

due to these behaviour issues, and the school has had to employ a number of supply teachers. This costs money that would otherwise help the pupils’ education,” Debbie said.

Members took the action for pupils as well as for staff, she added, as several pupils had reported that they felt intimidated and were unhappy due to the behaviour of other children. “Teachers cannot teach, and pupils cannot learn, in an environment where there is disruption and violence.”

However, strike action planned in November was postponed following the introduction of new behaviour initiatives which the unions supported. Members are hoping this will have an effect, but more strike days may be announced if improvements are not sustained.

‘Achieve the best outcomes for members’



A PAST regional organiser for the former National Union of Teachers has been appointed as a senior Wales officer.

Daniel Maney (pictured above) has joined the NEU Cymru office in Cardiff after working for six years with the Prospect trade union as a negotiating officer in both the

public and private sectors across Wales, including in education.

Daniel will be supporting local officers in their work and bargaining objectives, and assisting in the planning and delivery of the national training programme.

Daniel said: “I am looking forward to working with all of you so we can together achieve the best outcomes for all our members across Wales.”