

Presidential reflections on the Easter conference

Over the Easter weekend I joined seven of my colleagues from the Gloucestershire NUT Executive at the NUT annual conference in Cardiff. The Gloucestershire Association was clearly well represented at the conference, which is made up of members from Associations from all over England and Wales. The main purpose of the conference is for the delegates to vote on motions, which have been brought by both the National Executive and local Associations. Any delegate is allowed to speak for five minutes, for or against the motion and then a vote is cast. Motions voted for are then adopted as policy for the next year. The process can be difficult to follow for the uninitiated, but as this was my second conference it all made much more sense to me this time. This really is democracy at work and there is a strict protocol to be followed.

We saw many articulate and informed points of view expressed as well as some passionate speeches, but the debates were all conducted in an atmosphere of respect. The debates raised awareness of many issues, including the fact that casework for members is on the rise and teacher mental health is a real problem in the profession, which the NUT is highlighting. The conference reinforced its position that a teacher should 'rarely cover' from September 2009 (only in exceptional circumstances) and voted overwhelmingly to boycott SAT's at Key Stage 1 and 2, following several moving speeches, which highlighted the stress these tests put pupils under unnecessarily.

I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and look forward to representing this Association as past-President at next year's conference in Liverpool. Perhaps you would like to join us?

Dave Hampson
President

Are you a new teacher struggling to manage on your main scale pay? The NUT is looking for stories to send home the message to Government that below inflation pay increases are causing suffering for young teachers. Send in your story and it may be used in our national campaign materials. Entries may be anonymous but we would need to have your details (not attributable) for verification.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE ASSOCIATION NUT CONTACTS

If your District isn't listed then contact the
Association Secretary.

Members can make contact with all the Officers
listed below through the Association's website

Members requiring assistance should continue to contact
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jpemberthy@glosnut.co.uk

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Cheltenham District Secretary:

Ian Morgan: 01242 578 793

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Update your membership: 0845 300 1666

Know someone who wants to join? 0845 300 1669

National Union's website: www.teachers.org.uk

Local Association website: www.glosnut.co.uk

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Gloucestershire NUT Association

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Secretary: John Pemberthy Tel: 01594 560 105

MEMBERS' ARTICLES/LETTERS WELCOMED



NEWSLETTER OF THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF TEACHERS ~ MAY 2009

National speaker to address our GENERAL MEETING on the 'rarely cover rule' Wednesday June 10th 7.15 pm University of Glos (Oxstalls Campus) Room LC202

This is your chance to meet Kevin Courtney, NUT National Executive member and prospective candidate for Deputy General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers and find out how to negotiate implementation of the new rule in your school (find out more about Kevin inside).

Please note there will also be a vote on our nomination for the post of National Vice-President.

Can't make the meeting? Then let us know your views via www.glosnut.co.uk

Directions to the meetings can be found on the meetings page.

New Divisional Secretary pledges to fight to protect teacher's conditions of service

I am honoured to have been elected to take over from Andy Johnson as Divisional Secretary of the Gloucestershire Association of the NUT. I wish Andy all the best in his retirement and am grateful that he will be continuing to work for the association as my deputy and giving us the benefit of his long experience. This means that I will be able to spend more of my time negotiating for improved working conditions for our members.

We have many challenges facing us in the coming months with radical changes to pay progression now linked to the professional standards for teachers, our continuing battle to ensure full implementation of the workforce reform legislation to ensure our members have their entitlement to a reasonable work-life balance, implementation of the new 'rarely cover' rules with no detriment to existing levels of non-contact time and now the SATS campaign to rid ourselves of the KS1 and KS2 tests.

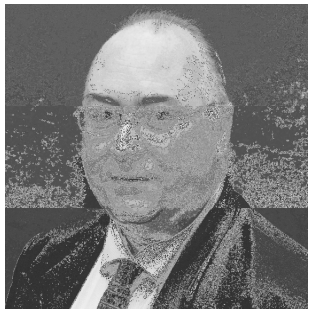
The duties of the Divisional Secretary include responsibility for conducting negotiations with the Local Authority and giving feedback on educational issues and local initiatives. An important aspect of this is working with the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group to protect member's interests. I intend to give this a high priority as we continue our campaign for full implementation of the workforce reform regulations and seek to reduce unnecessary and stressful levels of workload.

As a fully accredited and trained casework officer for over 5 years, I understand the importance of using the latest technology to support our members in times of difficulty and will be modernising our services to give a faster response and service when required. From September, both Andy Johnson and myself will be available to assist members in need.

I also intend to reinforce our position as the largest teacher union in Gloucestershire and Europe by making recruitment and communication a key element of our work in the coming year.

I have invited some of the NUT's leading speakers to address our General meetings over the coming months and look forward to seeing you there. If you can't make the meeting please feel free to e-mail me with your views.

John Pemberthy
Divisional Secretary

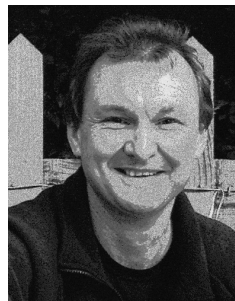


John Pemberthy
Divisional Secretary

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Kevin Courtney, our guest speaker at the June General Meeting is a passionate defender of teacher's professional practice and conditions of service. He spoke at conference on the new regulation that teachers should only rarely cover colleagues from September 2009.



"I'm NUT branch secretary in Camden and a member of the National Executive. Trust in teacher professionalism has been under attack for the last two decades. It's this that's leading to the increase in workload; far too much workload is about accountability not teaching. We need to reassert our professionalism and demand our voice be heard. Our union needs imaginative campaigning to engage the enthusiasm and energy of members. We also need to look for allies outside our own union – in the NASUWT and ATL and amongst support staff, parents and governors. It is possible to win real changes – and make teaching the best job in the world again."

If your school is experiencing workload related problems or you are concerned about implementation of the rarely cover rule from September, why not come to our General Meeting on 10th June?

GLoucestershire NUT SAVES MEMBERS £10,000 IN INCOME TAX RELIEF

Did you know that you can claim tax relief on your union subs? Following our announcement in the January newsletter, dozens of members contacted me to request a certificate of subscriptions paid for the past 5 years. Tax relief can be claimed for this figure with an average of £300 saved per member. Email me at jpemberthy@glosnut.co.uk stating your membership number and the school where you work (if applicable).

You can claim for previous years' as well as this year's by writing to the Tax Office at:
Inland Revenue, Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1QL. (tel: 08453 667 840).

CONFERENCE NEWS

The Association was represented at Conference by Geoff Davies, Mike Davis, Dave Hampson, Andy Johnson, Ian Morgan, John Pemberthy, Claire Price and Dave Sutherland.

Conference was chaired by Martin Reed, most ably, with good humour, geniality and courtesy. The entire Conference was conducted in a spirit of unity and mutual support.

Conference debates are organised into sections, with the sections and the motions within them prioritised by the votes of

Listed below, in alphabetical order, are the titles of some of the resolutions carried.

- Anti-Racism
- Casework for Members
- Cuts in Funding for Post-16 Education
- Defending Public Services
- Democracy in Education
- Early Years Education
- Eradicating Poverty
- Impact of Economic Crisis
- No Cover and a Qualified Teacher in Every Classroom
- Ofsted
- Opposition to Academy and Trust School Status
- Primary Workforce Classroom Protocol
- Pupil Referral Units and Exclusion
- Salary Policy
- SATs, Testing and League Tables
- Teacher Mental Health
- Teachers' Rights
- Testing and Assessment - Joint NAHT/NUT Campaign
- Workload, Pay and Class Sizes

THE END OF SATS IN SIGHT?

One of the key debates over the recent conference season was on a joint motion from the NUT Executive and the National Association of Head Teachers who debated an identical motion at their conferences for endorsement by the members. The NUT passed the motion unanimously whilst the NAHT passed it with a 94% majority despite a speech before the debate by Ed Balls asking them not to do so. Between them the two unions account for the majority of teaching staff in England's primary schools and they want to see the government finally agree to scrap the unpopular KS2 SATs and National Curriculum assessment at KS1.

Research evidence overwhelmingly shows that these tests undermine children's learning through skewing the curriculum and encouraging teaching to the test. Stress to children and teacher's also presents a problem due to their high stakes nature.

John Pemberthy commented, "We know that parents, teachers and students want to see the back of these tests – it is time the government gets the message and acts. Headteachers and teachers are determined to boycott the tests next year if nothing is done to abolish them. The government should trust teachers to assess children's progress without the unnecessary stress and bureaucracy of external testing, marking and publishing of almost meaningless league tables which do not reflect the circumstances of individual schools".

National executive member, Hazel Danson, who moved the SATS boycott motion at conference, has been invited to address a General Meeting in Gloucester this Autumn and details will be published in the September newsletter.

Local Association website: www.glosnut.co.uk

Important Changes to Threshold applications from Sept. 2009

ACT NOW: All teachers at M6 on 1st September 2008 must apply now to progress to UPS1 with their pay increase taking effect from 1st September 2009. They will be the first cohort (round 9) required to undergo rigorous new checks to ensure they are meeting all the professional standards. They can download the application form from www.teachernet.gov.uk. Applications must be with their Headteacher before 31st August 2009.

Revised threshold standards originally came into effect on 1 September 2007 but no information was given about how to apply them. According to the new guidance notes, all applications in Round 9 will be assessed against these revised standards which are known as the post-threshold standards, and are set out in Annex 1 of the STPCD.

As these changes are, in typical DCFS fashion, buried in the small print of their regular publications, many Headteachers will not be aware of these changes. Although no teacher should be disadvantaged by the failure of the school to follow procedures, in practice this is an argument that often has to be made at the appeal stage to Governors and is best avoided.

The main change is that Heads must ensure that all core and post-threshold standards are met before approving pay progression to UPS1. We would expect that Heads will use their discretion to accommodate teachers in round 9 and round 10 who will not have evidence of meeting these standards as part of their performance management but schools are expected to develop rigorous systems for auditing staff and building support for them to meet the standards through professional development and the PM objectives. OFSTED will be monitoring the effectiveness of this process in future.

From 1st September 2009, Headteachers will only be allowed to use the evidence of the past 2 PM review statements in reaching their decision. At this point teachers will no longer need to provide separate evidence in support of their threshold application (their 'portfolio'). All teachers reaching M4 in September 2009 will need to address the standards formally through performance management. Those on M5 and M6 will need to have special arrangements made to meet the requirements.

Summary of the main changes:

- * These changes impact every point on the pay spine with a new emphasis on whether teachers are meeting the professional standards expected for their stage
- * Teachers will still have to formally apply for threshold but only by notification as only the past 2 PM reviews are admissible as evidence
- * In future, teachers will be asked at M4 whether they wish to be considered for threshold. If they do then a pre-audit against the C + P standards must be done and those not met must become PM objectives.
- * Only Heads (not reviewers) can decide if standards have (not) been met but the decision must be evidence based and teachers must be advised in writing if there are standards they have not met. Heads must ensure all C + P standards have been met before approving Threshold applications. There will be a right of appeal.
- * Heads will have site discretion to decide what the meeting of the standards 'looks like' in their school but must apply this consistently across all staff.
- * Current M5 teachers will apply (if they want to) in September 2009 for threshold which, if approved, will be paid from September 2010. As they will not have the evidence of meeting standards as part of their PM reviews, the Head must ensure that an audit is performed in that 12 month period or the application period can be extended but pay will not be backdated.
- * Given the requirement that UPS1 teachers must be assessed only using the evidence of the past 2 PM reviews combined with the requirement to ensure they have met all the C + P standards, it will be necessary to ensure that schools have identified and noted in advance where they are not being met and put in place support for meeting the standard as well as incorporating it in the PM objectives part b. Professional Development (part a. being pupil progress).

Other implications:

The definition of capability will now be the ability to meet all of the professional standards relevant to the pay stage of the teacher (Q, Core, Post-Threshold, Excellent or Advanced). The Head will have the responsibility to ensure that post-Threshold teachers are continuing to meet C + P standards and will need to have a system for doing so.

OFSTED will be sampling teaching and learning through increased lesson observation and will be testing the school's assessment of teachers' ability to meet the standards and their system for identifying and supporting teachers who are not meeting the standards.

Pay Policies will need to be amended:

The STRB expects that there will be greater use of double increments or withholding of increments based on evidence of standards.

These new regulations from WAMG mean that a focus on meeting the standards will be at the heart of decisions on pay. Many had assumed that the changes amounted to a slimming down of the process to remove the need for a portfolio of evidence - which is the picture WAMG want to present BUT the reality is that there is a radical change to pay progression on every point of the pay spine as the 2006 PM regulations are now being used to put the professional standards at the centre of the process. One Head has said "I wouldn't want to be an underperforming teacher under the new regime as they will be ruthlessly exposed". Whilst most Heads will not be this callous, OFSTED and budget constraints will put great pressure on Heads to implement the changes.

Not only might some members miss out on pay rises because they haven't realised the paperwork implications (nor will many schools have) but some Heads have focused on the potential of the new system to drive capabilities (including UPS teachers) or fund increments for some by withholding them for others. In addition, the OFSTED maxim that satisfactory is not good enough will apply to teachers as well as schools as their new lesson observation regime will focus on school's systems for assessing teacher's performance against the standards. If schools can go into special measures because of a satisfactory OFSTED, what does this mean for teachers who 'only' rate satisfactory? This will put pressure on our policy of not giving lesson observations an OFSTED rating as schools will be required to show how they are assessing a teacher's T & L.

I have asked for an urgent meeting with the Local Authority to discuss how these changes might be written into a new model pay policy emphasising the positive elements of support by schools for professional development.

John Pemberthy

For a free checklist of workload tasks and NUT advice, e-mail jpemberthy@glosnut.co.uk. Please say whether you are the school rep. If there is no rep in your school would you be prepared to be the named individual who receives information from the NUT to display in the staffroom?

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