

## Chopping and changing



Christina McAnea, UNISON's national secretary for education and children's services, looks at what the new coalition government could mean for schools.

UNISON, with over 350,000 members in the education sector, faces one of its greatest challenges in recent years. The new government has wasted no time in focusing on education, chopping quangos and pushing through an Academies Bill with indecent haste.

The much-heralded policy to create "free schools" may be introduced without new legislation. This would pave the way for new education providers to establish schools within the state system and at taxpayers' expense.

UNISON believes "free schools" would result in more fragmentation within the school system, loss of democracy and accountability and an open season on staff pay and conditions. Evidence suggests that "choice" and multiple providers have a tendency to segregate pupils in terms of social cultural background, performance and ethnic background.

Before the general election in May, budget cuts were already in the pipeline and UNISON regions were reporting proposed job losses across education. We now face a new Department for Education (DfE) with an expenditure cut of £670m, including £311m

less to local authority children's services; £1m from the School Food Trust; £16m from the National College for school leaders, £47m from one-to-one-tuition, £60m from diplomas and other vocational qualifications and £40m from Every Child schemes such as Every Child a Writer.

Rumours abound about where the axe will fall next. For example, does Building Schools for the Future have a future? And will core school funding and areas such as Sure Start and 16-19-year-old funding, which are surviving this year, survive the next?

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The third annual school seminar went down a storm. For the full report see page 3.

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# UNISON SCHOOLS

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UNISON strongly opposes cuts to education; a public service which should deliver social justice and be the engine of economic recovery. We are also vehemently opposed to the Academies Bill (see below) and free schools and will be campaigning against them as well as defending jobs and services.

The new government has yet to reach a position on the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB) and so work is continuing with the employers and other unions. We will continue to negotiate the best deal possible and assess developments in government policy.

## Sweeping changes to Academies



*Thousands of new academies are planned.*

The new government lost no time in publishing the Academies Bill, which introduces sweeping changes to school ownership and management in England. UNISON has consistently opposed the establishment of academies, joining forces with other unions and the Anti-Academies Alliance.

UNISON has emphasised that there is no evidence that academies improve standards. There are good and “not so good” academies as there are among all other schools. We do know that they are more expensive than other schools, there is no accountability to the local community, they have complete freedom to set pay and conditions for all staff and are more enthusiastic about exclusions and separation from other local schools.

The bill takes the academy programme to another level, rushed through and completely removing the need to consult parents, staff or the wider community. Rather than targeting disadvantaged areas or failing schools, those deemed “outstanding” by Ofsted will be pre-approved to become academies, and will not even have to consult the local authority. The aim is to increase the number of academies from 200 to 2,000 in a much-simplified process. It would leave UNISON members facing much uncertainty and ultimately a wide variance in pay and conditions, as academies are not covered by the SSSNB.

UNISON swung into action as the bill was published and circulated a briefing to peers and MPs. Meetings with education unions are taking place at the TUC and as we go to press advice on possible amendments is being taken. Legal advice has also been taken on the impact on staff, TUPE implications and further guidance will be issued to branches shortly. We are encouraging branches and school representatives and especially staff governors to oppose turning their school into an academy.

- If your head has declared an interest in becoming an academy please contact your branch and let us know at [education@unison.org.uk](mailto:education@unison.org.uk)

## SSSNB – latest developments

The SSSNB (School Support Staff Negotiating Body) and its working groups have met regularly and developed five sets of school staff role profiles for wide consultation. These profiles which are due to be tested in 750 schools are:

- teaching and learning support
- specialist and technical support
- pupil support and welfare
- administration and Management and Facilities

However the process is delayed pending the government’s review of quangos and consultants.

UNISON is meeting with SSSNB employers to discuss working time, pay modeling and a pay and conditions handbook. The timetable for agreeing all of this has also changed and advice has gone out on this. The new timetable is

- Completion of testing of role profiles and job matching in schools and local authorities by 30 September 2010.
- Completion of negotiations on the pay and conditions framework by 14 December 2010.
- Trade Unions’ and Employers’ formal consultation on the agreement between December 2010 and February 2011.
- Submission of SSSNB agreements to the Secretary of State by 1 April 2011.

## Rarely Cover – survey results

Since September 2009, teachers do not need to cover lessons for absent colleagues except in emergencies. That has triggered the increase of teaching assistants (TAs) being asked to cover.

In spring 2010, UNISON conducted a survey of its members to find out the impact of the new ‘Rarely Cover’ policy on support staff. We received almost 400 responses from primary, secondary and special schools.

The majority (two thirds) of TAs responding to the UNISON survey are providing cover for absent teachers. But almost 40% of them have no access to lesson plans. That means that rather than supervising self-directed learning of pupils they are responsible for teaching the class they have been asked to cover. In fact, two thirds said they are actively teaching rather than supervising pupils in the classroom.

Cover is particularly high in primary schools with 35% of respondents saying that they cover classes for children under the age of seven. And it is clear that children at that age need to be taught rather than supervised. Yet only 27% of TAs



# Full to capacity, bursting with enthusiasm

## UNISON schools seminar report back

UNISON's third annual school seminar was held in April and was bursting at the seams with members and enthusiasm. More than 150 delegates, plus staff and guests met at the King's Fund in London to discuss a wide range of issues affecting schools.



UNISON general secretary, Dave Prentis, spoke about the recession-driven cuts, the price paid by public service workers for the greed of others and the dangers in a change of government. He spoke of the promise in the new SSSNB bargaining machinery for school staff and the danger of separating schools from local authorities. He pledged that UNISON would fight for better pay and conditions, strive to get school staff the recognition they deserve and defend education against cuts and privatisation.

Christina McAnea, UNISON's national secretary for education and children's services, followed with praise for activists and regions organising in schools. She



have the higher level teaching assistant (HLTA) status that demonstrates that they have the training and expertise to teach a whole class for short periods. Almost a quarter (22%) of TAs have insufficient training to supervise whole classes let alone teach a class.

The biggest concern for many is an obvious blurring of the role of cover supervisor and HLTA. One respondent spoke for many when she said: "The difference between what is expected of a cover supervisor and a HLTA is not clear. I am actively teaching from plans given to me and not just in class supervising. I think there has to be a binding distinction on what is expected. The role of cover supervisor has not turned out as I had imagined. On occasions I have felt out of my depth." We will be writing to the new education minister, Michael Gove, for an urgent meeting to discuss how to tackle these issues.

UNISON branch advice on 'rarely cover' arrangements for teachers and Implications for support staff, is available through branches (stock no 2795) or downloadable from [unison.org.uk/acrobat/18558.pdf](http://unison.org.uk/acrobat/18558.pdf)



spoke of the SSSNB and developments in Wales and Scotland and of the burden of unpaid overtime, which must be addressed.

Ed Balls spoke next in one of his last engagements as secretary of state for children, schools and families. He spoke of the Labour government's achievements and commitment to support staff as demonstrated by its support of the SSSNB.



Pay and conditions workshops followed and then Helen Mountfield QC gave a talk on legal aspects of school employment. There was then a choice of five workshops from administration of medicine and medical support to rarely cover and local social partnerships. The final session was presented by members from North West and Yorkshire and Humberside regions on their school organising and recruitment initiatives.



A recruitment re-enactment left the seminar laughing and proved that with great responsibility can come great fun. The feedback forms showed that the third school seminar was a very successful event.

1. Dave Prentis
2. Christina McAnea
3. Ed Balls takes questions from the audience
4. Ed Balls
5. Dave Prentis and seminar participants

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£96.17–£153.84	£5,001–£8,000	£1.22	£5.30	C
£153.85–£211.53	£8,001–£11,000	£1.52	£6.60	D
£211.54–£269.23	£11,001–£14,000	£1.81	£7.85	E
£269.24–£326.92	£14,001–£17,000	£2.24	£9.70	F
£326.93–£384.61	£17,001–£20,000	£2.65	£11.50	G
£384.62–£480.76	£20,001–£25,000	£3.23	£14.00	H
£480.77–£576.92	£25,001–£30,000	£3.98	£17.25	I
£576.93–£673.08	£30,001–£35,000	£4.68	£20.30	J
£673.08+	over £35,000	£5.19	£22.50	K

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