

How to tackle racism
Conference for trainee
teachers a great success.

Tech for half a million pupils
Free access to Microsoft
Office, Minecraft and Teams.

Protecting young lungs
Guidance for schools to
tackle air pollution.

educateinwales

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‘We agreed to stick together’

THE school closure period was an extremely stressful time for education professionals during the coronavirus crisis.

When the Government announced a partial closure of schools, the NEU issued robust advice about unanswered questions.

One primary school head teacher, for example, declared that all staff were expected in every day, practising ‘social distancing’ while painting murals and updating displays. Staff were threatened with having their pay docked if they did not attend.

NEU members were determined to follow union advice. Máiréad Canavan, NEU executive member for Wales, was clear: only those staff who were on a rota to look after the children of key workers were to be in school; and those staff in the vulnerable category (or caring/living with someone in the vulnerable category) should work from home.

The school rep, Megan (not her real name), told Educate: “All members agreed to stick together and follow NEU advice. I believe members had the confidence to hold firm and follow NEU advice because it was something everyone felt strongly about – a life-or-death situation – and the steadfast support from the union was clear.”

Máiréad told Educate: “I reminded the head that schools are responsible for the



NEU executive member for Wales Máiréad Canavan at conference 2019

PHOTO by Carmen Valino

welfare of staff and are liable for negligence of staff members who fall ill or die under circumstances that could be mitigated.”

The head backed down, emailing all staff on the Sunday evening to say only come in to lock away electronic equipment. But still nothing about vulnerable members.

Megan said: “The vulnerable NEU members decided to stick together and did not attend school that Monday morning.”

The NEU then negotiated with the local authority to email all staff – which was “nearly word for word” the union’s advice regarding who should be working from home.

“This is the complete opposite to what our head teacher wanted,” said Megan.

“She threatened not to pay us, insisted that all staff go into school and, as a result, made a lot of staff worry themselves sick. They won’t forget how they were treated.”

“The positive is that we are a bigger and stronger union group than before.”

Máiréad added: “This has empowered our members – they know that they can say no, following NEU advice, and the union will back them up.”

■ For up-to-date union advice, visit neu.org.uk/coronavirus

Welsh Government funds free school meals over Easter

THE Welsh Government confirmed that free school meals would continue during the Easter holiday period due to the coronavirus crisis.

The NEU had been calling for this move in Westminster and Cardiff, and welcomed the announcement, which came with £7 million of attached funding.

David Evans, Wales Secretary for NEU Cymru, said: “Our members will be heartened to hear the Welsh Government is thinking of those most in need. Families need to be able to choose wisely about where to buy their meals, and not be restricted over which shops to use. This is really important, especially now, when shopping is restricted for everyone.”

SRtRC student-teacher conferences a huge success

MORE than 300 final year teacher training students discussed issues around racism at conferences organised by anti-racism charity Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC).

Following the success of previous years, and with financial support from NEU Cymru, student conferences have been held at two of the six teacher training universities in Wales – University of South Wales (Newport) and the University of Wales Trinity St David (Swansea) – with conferences at Aberystwyth and Bangor universities planned for June.

Students on BA (QTS), the Graduate Teacher Programme and PGCE courses learnt how to confront racism if it arises and how to teach pupils about racism during PSE lessons. They discussed the correct terminology to use, attended workshops on unconscious bias and how to use SRtRC resources with pupils.

For more information, visit theredcardwales.org



THOUSANDS of primary and secondary school pupils entered this year's SRtRC Wales schools competition, sponsored by the NEU. This year's special category was entitled 'Racism in the beautiful game', which saw pupils explore the issues of racism in football in categories from clothing design to creative writing.

(Pictured above) The year 9+ prize-winning entry from Shannon Locke at Ysgol Uwchradd Caerdybi in Holyhead. The overall winner was Lenka Mbaye from Borrass Park Community Primary School in Wrexham, whose poem "blew the judges away". Visit bit.ly/33eg9bm to see all winning entries.

'Buildings are falling down, there's nothing more to cut'



Union members on the picket line at Caerleon Comprehensive School in Newport

A SERIES of joint union strikes against job cuts have rocked a secondary school in Newport.

At Caerleon Comprehensive School in South Wales, members of the NEU joined with the NASUWT to close down the school on 27 February. This was their third day of action in protest at a restructuring which significantly cuts the number of heads of departments.

Máiréad Canavan, branch secretary of Vale of Glamorgan, told Educate the local authority must take responsibility for the disproportionate funding cuts at Caerleon.

"The members are very strong and very adamant," Máiréad said. "There's nothing more to cut in the school – the buildings are falling down. It's really a dire case, and members know something needs to be done."

"The union is fully supportive of the members in Caerleon and we are determined to support them in their continuing strike

action until we get a solution that is satisfactory to everybody, for the benefit of staff and children.

"Unity in action with our sister union is very important in this dispute. The members obviously see strength in numbers, and the pickets have seen big crowds every day."

The average per-pupil funding for Cardiff is £5,126, yet in Newport the average is £4,581. The cuts threaten class sizes to years 7, 8 and 9 and there is no guarantee of discrete additional learning needs classes at the school which is already in the lowest 18 per cent of schools in terms of pupil-staff ratios.

Further action planned for 10, 11 and 12 March was called off when union members at the school agreed to engage in meaningful discussions at the earliest possible opportunity. It is hoped that a solution can be found which does not disadvantage young people or NEU members.

Redundancies on hold this academic year

WELSH Education Minister Kirsty Williams has agreed with the NEU that all schools and local authorities should stop redundancy procedures this academic year.

The verbal agreement with NEU Cymru Wales Secretary, David Evans, came during a video conference meeting. David has been holding regular video conference meetings with Welsh Government officials since they decided

to close all schools due to the Covid-19 crisis.

The union has been discussing various important issues, including job cuts. Although many schools and local authorities correctly decided to postpone redundancy processes which must usually be completed before the end of May, some are continuing with the process.

We will update all members as soon as we get this agreement in writing.

Wales gives children and young people free access to MS Office

HALF a million young people will be able to improve their digital skills through the Hwb digital learning platform (hwb.gov.wales), which is free to all local authority maintained schools.

The Welsh Government is funding a national education licensing deal for all maintained schools to have access to programs including Word, Excel and PowerPoint in a bid to boost the use of technology among pupils and reduce costs for families and head teachers.

It will benefit around 467,000 young people in school, with all teachers and students being able to download and install the latest version of Office 365 ProPlus on up to 15 personal devices.

The agreement also allows teachers and students access to:

■ **Minecraft: Education Edition** to help schools across the country use the popular block-building game to teach subjects such as science, history and coding.

Find out about the free Minecraft training sessions at hwb.gov.wales

■ **Microsoft Teams**, bringing conversations, content, assignments and apps together in



one place to build collaborative classroom experiences. Microsoft Teams has a one-click set-up of Class Teams through Hwb. Teachers

can automatically create a Class Team with their students, providing a safe and secure classroom experience.

Government reveals details of curriculum 2022

THE details of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements were made available by the Welsh Government on 28 January.

NEU Cymru members will have just over two years to plan for first teaching of the new curriculum in September 2022.

The principles behind the curriculum have been welcomed but it is now critical that education professionals have the time and space to digest these new documents and plan how they can make the curriculum suitable for learners in their school.

It is also critical that the Welsh Government considers the impact on education professionals in terms of their wellbeing. There needs to be a thorough impact

“There needs to be a thorough impact assessment of workload.”

assessment of workload related to the new curriculum, and NEU Cymru will be asking the Welsh Government to conduct one.

The Government has advised the union that a survey of education professionals is planned. NEU Cymru is lobbying to

include questions on workload and the new curriculum, and to receive an undertaking that the Government will help mitigate the impact of the transition. The union is looking forward to working with the Welsh Government on the content of the survey.

The new curriculum can be found at hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/

What happens next?

September 2021 – schools prepare to teach the curriculum.

September 2022 – schools use the new curriculum (nursery to year 7).

2023 onwards – new curriculum rolled out to years 8 to 11 between 2023 and 2026.

Here to help

AS the largest education union, 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
- advice@neu.org.uk
- NEU Cymru office.

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A poster from the Clean Air Champions toolkit

Protecting pupils from pollution

GUIDANCE to help school staff tackle air pollution has been produced by the British Lung Foundation (BLF) and the NEU.

They want to highlight the health issues caused and aggravated by air pollution, especially to children's lungs, and provide guidance on the steps that schools can take to protect pupils. The initiative is supported by Living Streets, the UK charity behind the National Walk to School campaign.

NEU joint general secretary Mary Bousted said: "NEU members are hugely concerned at the impact of dirty air on the health of the children they educate.

"Schools cannot solve this problem alone, but we are delighted to publish this joint guidance which sets out practical measures which can be taken to protect children."

The guidance – which can be found at bit.ly/2TXRVOi – covers:

- key facts about air pollution and the impact on human health
- how to monitor air pollution
- a framework to develop an individual school travel plan
- community engagement tools to facilitate behaviour change
- advice on integrating air pollution education into the national curriculum
- how to provide health support to pupils affected by air pollution.

The BLF also produces a Clean Air Champions toolkit with resources and tips to help anti-pollution campaigns get off the ground. Visit blf.org.uk/clean-air-champions-campaigns-toolkit

Online courses continue for members

LEARNING is at the heart of NEU Cymru and we take pride in the training we provide for education professionals, local officers and workplace representatives.

At present, due to the current health crisis, the Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF) project will only provide online courses only for members. These courses have proved to be extremely popular and because of this, more

will be organised over the coming months to meet the demand. Visit bit.ly/2Jx1ZZR

Online courses already organised to date include Mindfulness and Google Classroom and the Google Package.

Check your email inbox for information on the latest training opportunities, like us at facebook.com/neucymrutraining or follow us on Twitter at [@neucymrutrain](https://twitter.com/neucymrutrain)