

SPECIAL CONFERENCE 2020

Resolution 1: Covid-19 and Safe Return

Conference congratulates our community of workplace reps and officers for their tremendous work ensuring schools and colleges remained open for key worker and vulnerable children throughout lockdown and putting safety at the heart of phased wider opening during the summer term and full re-opening in September.

Conference notes that the focus on health and safety during lockdown has increased the number of reps and strengthened the union by giving us bargaining leverage at many more workplaces.

The Union wants schools and colleges to be open for as many pupils as possible but achieving this safely depends on how effectively wider public health measures keep virus infection and reproduction (R) rates low.

Conference condemns the government's systematic failure to deliver the resources needed to open schools in a safe and sustainable manner.

Conference calls on the government and public health authorities to:

1. Very carefully consider the closure of, or restrictions on, other activities and services before closing schools;
2. Boost the effectiveness of local Test, Track and Isolate (TTI), including comprehensive sample testing in schools/colleges to ascertain how re-opening impacts on the safety of parents, grandparents and staff, with all findings made public;
3. Prepare more detailed contingency plans for possible local or wider school closures by being clear about the infection/R rate thresholds at which schools/colleges in an area should close or move to smaller class sizes, including detailed guidance and resources for blended learning provision;
4. Give detailed guidance to special schools on how to use individual risk assessments to protect pupils with Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and underlying health conditions with access to blended learning or remote learning where this is the only safe option for schools. Give detailed guidance to special schools on how to safely run provision for students who access their teaching only through a 1:1 or 2:1 staffing ratio and where these staff are unable to keep the student safe without physical intervention strategies;
5. Ensure measures are taken to allow schools to remain open safely and sustainably, including:
 - i. Investment in additional school buildings and 'Nightingale' schools to create more schools and smaller classes;
 - ii. Investment to increase teacher numbers, including incentives to re-recruit ex teachers and a major expansion of teacher training;

- iii. Fund local authorities to recruit, and train support staff to support schools and ensure wraparound pre and post school hours, which many families depend on, are available;
- iv. Ensure all children have computers and internet access to support their learning in the event of the need to move to 'blended learning' or any future lockdowns; and
- v. Much wider mass and regular testing, with results in minutes not days, and weekly testing of school staff.

Conference instructs the Executive to:

- a. **Establish a members' working group, which includes at least one special school representative, to look at strategies to develop blended learning;**
- b. **Call on workplace reps and officers to regularly review the safety of full opening in their schools and colleges and proactively respond to local outbreaks by:**
 - I. **Discussing safety concerns with members at every opportunity, utilizing digital tools to maximise member engagement;**
 - II. **Collectively raising safety concerns with school/college leadership, establishing formal JCNC arrangements wherever possible**
 - III. **Negotiating appropriate control measures that maintain the safety of staff, students, their families, and the wider community; and**
 - IV. **Sharing experiences and best practice, digitally when necessary, to spread wins and identify a bargaining calendar of wider concerns that can be addressed collectively across the academic year.**

Conference further instructs the Executive to put significant union resources into publicising these demands as widely as possible among members, parents, students and the wider public and put building this campaign at the heart of the union's work in the coming weeks and months.

Resolution 2: Winning in the Workplace after Covid-19

Conference affirms that the COVID-19 crisis demonstrates the importance and commitment of education staff. It has also highlighted problems caused by fragmentation of local strategic oversight, privatisation of services and supply staffing, imposition of PRP and a recruitment and retention crisis fuelled by unsustainable workload and poor pay. Covid-19 has had a particularly devastating impact on women's lives, and this is likely to worsen. Black and disabled women are disproportionately affected.

Conference notes women were already more likely to be in precarious and low paid work within education and therefore are at risk of job loss and less able to access statutory sick pay and viable pensions. Women have also been subject to pregnancy and maternity discrimination and have lost out on pay and promotion.

Conference believes that the legacy of the COVID-19 crisis must be that conditions in schools and colleges become better not worse for all our members, from NQTs, classroom teachers, support staff and supply staff to school and college leaders.

Conference notes the growth in the number of NEU reps alongside the impact they had in the workplace. In organising an assertive collective voice, positive gains were negotiated for members. This workplace strength was greatly facilitated by clear, coherent national campaigning that let members feel a vital part of a confident national union.

Conference notes the huge success of Districts in recruiting workplace reps throughout the crisis. Conference reaffirms its desire for 'a rep in every school' and encourages all Districts and Regions to develop plans to maximise rep recruitment.

Conference reaffirms that winning at the workplace is fundamental to the Union's strategy, endorses the work to embed a bargaining calendar and reaffirms its commitment to developing means of supporting workplace reps, members and local officers to win victories at school and college level on matters of pay, workload and working conditions.

Conference further notes the success in achieving new advisory pay scales for schoolteachers as a step towards mandatory national pay scales without PRP and agrees work must continue in pursuit of our policies on pay, workload, privatisation and education funding.

Conference instructs the Executive to:

- 1. Build on recent success to help secure implementation of national pay increases and pay scales in all workplaces, ensuring all school teachers are paid at least on the new national advisory scales, secure pay progression for all eligible staff this year, and continue to work to remove PRP including through agreements with MATs and a new non-PRP progression system in Wales;**
- 2. Campaign for gender impact assessments on all staffing restructures;**
- 3. Complete an audit of those leaving the profession and membership to analyse the impact of lockdown on specific groups of members;**
- 4. Support the Pregnancy & Maternity (Redundancy Protection) Bill;**
- 5. Develop and share good practice on strategies to address gender inequalities at work;**
- 6. Provide support and specific advice to school and college leaders to reduce their own workload which has grown during the COVID -19 crisis to unsustainable levels. Use this bespoke support as a means of retaining members as they move into leadership posts;**
- 7. Campaign to secure reviews of workload by all employers ensuring that already excessive workload does not increase;**

8. **Analyse successes in rep recruitment and develop, collate, and publicise strategies to support Districts developing a rep recruitment plan focusing on no rep schools with the largest memberships in prioritising rep recruitment and building union strength;**
9. **Support Districts to facilitate active rep networks that seek to develop coordinated activity across all employers as a key component of our aspiration for common national conditions;**
10. **Review how digital meeting tools could be used in large rural areas to counter travel time and geography being a challenge when organising;**
11. **Campaign for a fairer deal for supply teachers by appraising and updating all supply members of their rights under the Agency Workers Regulations and to provide training to Regions, Branches, Districts and Advice on assessing and handling AWR claims;**
12. **Build on recent success to help secure implementation of national pay increases and pay scales in all workplaces, ensuring all school teachers, including supply staff, are paid at least on the new national advisory scales, secure pay progression for all eligible staff this year, and continue to work to remove PRP including through agreements with MATs and a new non-PRP progression system in Wales;**
13. **Campaign and negotiate at national and local level for alternatives to agencies to bring supply teaching back in house and aim to achieve pay parity with directly employed staff and have access to TPS; and**
14. **Recognise the ongoing commitment of support staff, particularly evident during the COVID crisis, and campaign to end term-time only contracts for support staff.**

These key priorities, including developing greater professional unity, should be incorporated into an overall strategic plan, reviewed annually.

Resolution 3: Building a Fair Education System After Covid-19

Conference notes:

1. The effects of Covid-19 on education, public health, employment and social well-being are profound and uneven;
2. The impact of the pandemic is most strongly felt in working-class and black communities.

Conference congratulates school and college staff across the UK, for their work to support families, and young people's education, during the pandemic.

Conference believes that:

- i. The crisis exposed weaknesses in our systems of assessment and accountability;

- ii. The government's response demonstrated that policy-making is based on data not pupil need, and highlighted its distrust of teachers and leaders;
- iii. The exams grading fiasco exposed the fragility of a qualifications system assessed solely through timed exams and revealed systemic faults in the awarding process;
- iv. The government's intention of restoring SATs and a largely unmodified examination system in 2021 will:
 - a. Prevent schools from meeting students' needs, following the long period of closure;
 - b. Further disadvantage social groups whose access to educational resources means that they will be less well prepared for statutory tests and examinations;
- v. There are demographic groups of children, including Black, Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and other groups who sometimes attain less than their white and/or middle-class peers from Teacher Assessment;
- vi. The government was right to take Centre-Assessed Grades (CAG) for GCSE and A-level Grades, but that they should carry out an analysis of how different demographics of students benefitted or were disadvantaged by this.
- vii. The temporary changes made to EHC plans for SEND children to make them more 'flexible' during the Covid-19 crisis have had a huge impact on these children and on the rights of disabled people and that there should not be any extension of this; and
- viii. GCSEs, A Levels and BTECs are clearly unfit for purpose in assessing in any meaningful and fair way student learning and that an alternative urgently needs to be developed and established.

Conference welcomes the Union's campaigning alongside More Than A Score (MTAS) against Baseline, SATs and the phonics and times tables tests. Conference believes it would be wrong to reintroduce these tests and commits the union to seeking to prevent this happening.

Conference instructs the Executive to:

- I. Continue working with MTAS in its campaign on primary assessment;**
- II. Campaign for:**
 - A. The replacement of SATs in 2021 by a system of moderated teacher assessment;**
 - B. A mixed model for GCSE and A levels for 2021 including reduced content and moderated teacher assessment;**
- III. Call on headteachers and governors to refuse to require preparation for SATs, instead concentrating all resources on recovery;**
- IV. Call for a suspension of Ofsted inspections and performance tables for 2020/21 and develop a long-term alternative;**
- V. Call on Ofqual to carry out and publish research on the difference between CAG and the scaled GCSE and A-level grades for Black children, Girls vs Boys and Disabled children;**

- VI. Establish a high-level commission into exams drawing on research and international evidence to make proposals for a fairer, more inclusive, national process which validates pupil achievement, supports teacher professionalism and raises education standards;**
- VII. Seek to work with other education unions;**
- VIII. commission and produce a series of articles, pamphlets and other materials putting the case for an end to norm referenced GCSEs and their replacement by criteria-based assessment and an alternative to A Levels and BTECs and to organise meetings;**
- IX. Seek the support of opposition parties for these demands;**
- X. Develop our campaign to stop SATS along the following lines:**
 - 1. Producing materials including postcards, posters, pamphlets and videos to build the campaign, among members, parents and the wider public;**
 - 2. Declaring our ambition to ballot primary members, if necessary, on a SATS boycott if government seeks to impose them next year;**
 - 3. Investigating industrial action ballots around workload and other impacts of SATS preparation on members to reinforce this campaign;**
 - 4. Seeking others' experience on winning ballots despite government-imposed thresholds;**
 - 5. Building the basis for successful ballots by:**
 - i. Organising to build primary school organisation following the success in these areas during lockdown;**
 - ii. Urging districts to call members meetings and parent facing public meetings to build the campaign (virtually if needed);**
 - iii. Calling a series of national meetings along these lines; and**
 - iv. Reviewing progress early in 2021 and deciding if we can call a successful ballot to stop SATs - including calling a virtual special conference if needed.**