

# Printout

into   
Irish National Teachers' Organisation  
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann

May 2015



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# May Day: Despite the recent storm

Industrial action on the part of a trade union is legitimate action when it involves the balloting of the membership to seek a mandate for the proposed action. INTO engaged in such a ballot and INTO members endorsed, by significant majorities, the Northern Committee's call to participate in strike action and action short of strike. By engaging in a balloting process, which is clearly defined and required under law, INTO members are protected from the threats implied in the letter received by school principals and the chairpersons of school governors during the week of April 30th.

This letter from the Employers coupled with other direct attempts by DE to break the industrial action, both by letter and email, illustrate that INTOs action short of strike is having a significant and meaningful impact on the functioning of not only the employers but the DE. Such impacts are part of INTOs purpose in taking industrial action; to cause those who devised where the cuts were to be made and those who administer them similar real difficulties such as INTO members are experiencing in their daily efforts to carry out their work. The second objective arising from this is to ensure that DE



**GERRY MURPHY,**  
*Northern Secretary*

and the employers are moved to consider more imaginative and radical solutions than simply reducing the numbers of teachers they employ or cutting frontline services. INTO is interested in contributing

to a meaningful debate with these bodies on the findings of these imaginative and radical solutions.

INTO is however concerned that offers of talks from the employers and DE are being accompanied by veiled threats and strong arm tactics. The loss of the data in the area of assessment has clearly prompted withdrawal symptoms amongst some in DE causing them to act irrationally. How else can the bolting on of a precondition around the supplying of assessment

data after two runs at applying for the DSC Signature Project on Shared Education be described? Such an approach suggests that their commitment to shared education is less than total when they are seeking to exploit a willingness on the part of schools to engage in this progressive project as a lever to fracture union action on assessment.

Whilst all of this is going on, the effects of the cuts continue to play out across the system. The PMLP tutors, 84 hardworking

professionals, have had their employment effectively terminated with such indecent haste that INTO was forced to lodge claims with the Office of Industrial Tribunals on their behalf. The Language teachers employed in schools under the Signature Project, some 230 qualified teachers, are in an employment limbo as everyone awaits the outcome of the deliberations of the OFM/DFM, the funding body with responsibility for this project. Adding further misery is an ever increasing deficit developing in the area of support for special educational needs. Principals and SENCOs are being forced to make decisions as to who should receive support and who should not. These are decisions that should be made by properly trained personnel who are better placed to assess immediate need and anticipate further developmental support for these most vulnerable young people. Whilst in the new Education Authority, contract variations across the staff, many of whom are INTO members, are being dealt with in summary fashion without recourse to established procedures.

INTO is across all of these various and complex issues. Northern Office and Northern Committee members are striving to protect employment and terms and conditions of members in the face of ill considered and short term budgetary imperatives. INTO will continue to provide effective representation to members in all parts of the education service who are under threat from cuts to service levels and employment. Unfortunately for our members

## Committee Information

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# clouds INTO's resolve remains high

and all those employed across the education sector, the return of a Conservative government in London does not bode well for the future. Rumours that the Tories intend foisting another budget out of sequence in June 2015, if true, will do little to improve the industrial relations climate.

Industrial action is set to continue. Should the Tories impose further cuts, as appears likely, then the resolve of INTO members will be essential in maintaining an effective and coherent opposition to this lunacy. INTO members have been to the forefront of the trade union campaign of opposition to the cuts to date and in the face of the Tory neo-liberal agenda will be called upon to maintain their resolute stance for the foreseeable future.

**In recognition of INTO's stoic opposition to the cuts, INTO took up the ICTU offer of leading the May Day March and despite heavy rains we did have a great turnout which amply highlights the resolve that the INTO has and can draw on for the future.**



# Dealing with allegations of abuse

The Department of Education has recently issued a circular to all schools on dealing with allegations of abuse. The document has been the subject of significant work at which INTO was at the forefront. The circular is comprehensive and sets out the steps to be taken when an allegation of abuse is received by a school.

Two important issues have been dealt with in the new circular. The first is the use of precautionary suspension. In the past there has been a rush to suspend when the allegation is received. The circular stresses that suspension should be a last resort and makes clear that no one should be suspended without being informed in writing, within 24 hours of the suspension, of the details of the allega-

tions made against them. Furthermore the circular makes it clear that it is acceptable for a suspended teacher to associate with their colleagues, providing the details of the allegations are not discussed.

With regard to informing the complainant of the progress of their complaint, the circular makes it clear that they are only entitled to be informed that the complaint is being progressed and whether or not it is upheld. It is not permitted to provide complainants about potential disciplinary or other action that may be considered after a complaint is investigated.

The second important development that INTO highlighted was the issue of allegations against substitute teachers. In the past, such teachers were immediate-

ly suspended and removed from the active NISTR register. INTO considered this an unacceptable treatment of an individual and was contrary to the principles of natural justice. In the new circular substitute teachers who are suspended will remain on full pay. In addition INTO has advised DE that any arrangements between NISTR and DE must now be negotiated with INTO and other teaching unions to ensure that the rights of substitute teachers are fully protected.

INTO advises all members and school representatives to familiarise themselves with the new circular and to ensure that they attend training when it becomes available. A copy of the agreed circular is available for download from the INTO website.

## Why your mental health is important

Too many members contact the Northern Office in serious distress indicating that they cannot cope with the demands of teaching and that their working lives are intolerable. INTO will endeavour to work with the individual to discuss and resolve their concerns. However, for many their mental health has been damaged. This article looks at the importance of good mental health.

Mental health strengthens and supports our ability to:

- have healthy relationships
- make good life choices
- maintain physical health and well-being
- handle the natural ups and downs of life
- discover and grow toward our potential

Many research studies have shown that when people receive appropriate mental health care, their use of medical services declines. For example, one study of people with anxiety disorders showed that after psychological treatment, the number of medical visits decreased by 90%, laboratory costs decreased by 50%, and overall treatment

costs dropped by 35%. Other studies have shown that people with untreated mental health problems visit a medical doctor twice as often as people who receive mental health care. Excessive anxiety and stress can contribute to physical problems such as heart disease, ulcers, and colitis. Anxiety and stress can also reduce the strength of the immune system, making people more vulnerable to conditions ranging from the common cold to cancer.

Psychological problems also increase the likelihood that people will make poor behavioural choices which can contribute to medical problems. Smoking, excessive alcohol or drug use, poor eating habits, and reckless behaviour can all result in severe physical problems and the need for medical services.

INTO will continue to highlight the importance of good mental health for teachers and where individual members are suffering stress or anxiety we urge them to contact their GP or avail of CareCall in addition to discussing with INTO how their issues may be resolved effectively.

## THAW strategy – still frozen

The Teacher Health and Welfare strategy is a comprehensive assessment of issues that impact on the overall health, safety and welfare of teachers. These range from healthy eating to issues such as bullying and harassment and lone working. The document has been under discussion for a considerable period of time through the agreed negotiation arrangements.

Despite the significant work that has gone into the strategy and its proposed implementation, at the recent meeting representatives of Management Side indicated further concerns about the strategy. This is a significant issue which will result in further delays to the publication of the document and a timeframe for its implementation in schools.

INTO has made our concerns known about this delay. Given that it comes after, INTO revealed that the total cost of stress to the teaching profession was in excess of £27M, INTO is seriously questioning delaying the implementation of the strategy. As an Organisation we have highlighted the cost of one particular aspect of the strategy and shown that the rate of increase in work related stress outstrips the overall rise in reported stress absence.

INTO will continue to prioritize this issue and ensure that the THAW strategy is unfrozen and made available to all schools as quickly as possible.

# The right to ask for flexible working

If you are the parent of a child, then you have the right to ask for flexible working if your child is:

- under 17
- under 18 and disabled.

You must also have worked for your employer for at least 26 weeks and must be responsible for your child on a day to day basis. If you are caring for an adult, you also have the right to ask for flexible working.

Flexible working can include working part time, working school hours, working flexitime, home working, job sharing, shift working, staggering hours and compressing hours (where you work your total number of agreed hours over a shorter period).

Although you have the right to ask to work flexibly, your employer doesn't have to agree to it. However, they must give your request serious consideration and have a good business reason if they decide not to agree. In refusing the decision you are entitled to be provided with a copy of the business case.

You can make one request to work flexi-

bly each year. This must be in writing. You should say how you think the change in your working pattern will affect your role in the school and how this might work in practice.



TONY CARLIN,  
*Senior Official*

## Retired or retiring soon?

Then like most teachers your friends include colleagues and former colleagues. Furthermore teaching was more than just a workplace. Your involvement in education went well beyond time spent in the classroom.

If you wish to maintain contact with the fast changing worlds of education and trade union activism and if you seek opportunities to connect with those with a similar background and range of interests then the INTO Retired Teachers' Group wants your input. You will have opportunity to form and influence the goals and direction of the group from its inception.

Interested? Contact Northern Office for more details.

## Funny student answers

Be afraid; be very afraid, these are answers given during exams by students who will, in the future, be running the country.

Monotony means being married to the same person for all your life.

Use the word "judicious" in a sentence to show you understand its meaning – Hands that judicious can be as soft as your face ...

What is Britain's highest award for valour in war? – Nelson's Column.

What's a Hindu? – It lays eggs.

Name the four seasons – Salt, mustard, pepper, vinegar.

What guarantees may a mortgage company insist on? They'll insist you're well-endowed if you're buying a house.

What is artificial respiration commonly known as? – The Kiss of Death.

What are steroids? – Things for keeping the carpet on the stairs.

I always know when it's time to get up when I hear my mother sharpening the toast."

A major disease associated with smoking is premature death.

Mushrooms always grow in damp places and so they look like umbrellas.

Momentum: What you give a person when they are going away.

Planet: A body of earth surrounded by sky.

Rhubarb: A kind of celery gone bloodshot.

To remove dust from the eye, pull the eye down over the nose.

For a nosebleed: put the nose much lower than the body until the heart stops.

For drowning: climb on top of the person and move up and down to make Artificial Perspiration.

For head cold: use an agonizer to spray the nose until it drops in your throat.



The process of flirtation makes water safe to drink because it removes large pollutants like grit, sand, dead sheep and canoeists.

Dew is formed on leaves when the sun shines down on them and makes them perspire.

A super-saturated solution is one that holds more than it can hold.



# Hats off to our school reps

To the ordinary members of INTO in schools, the most important activists within the INTO tends to be their school Representatives. They are the people that, in times of trouble, members turn to for immediate answers and usually because of the training offered and the wealth of information contained both in the Rep's file and the website, most low level school issues can be sorted at a local level.

Generally speaking, in schools with good industrial relations, the principal realises the value and standing of the position of school Representative within the school and sees the role of Rep as a crucial link between management and staff. When controversial issues arrive in the staffroom, the Reps, wearing their union hats, are drivers who steer a path to resolution. An example of the high value placed on the consultative role of a school Rep is clearly seen within the TNC 2011/8 Workload Agreement in the model school cover policy where it states that the principal will carry out an annual review of the cover policy in consultation with the recognised trade unions' Representatives in the school and will update the policy when required.

Being a Rep means that you are the direct link between your school and head office. You are the person tasked with recruiting new members of staff into the union, keeping Head Office updated regarding staff changes, disseminating information that comes from Head Office to the INTO members in the school, handling the initial stages of complaints and the individual grievances of members, representing the collective and individual interests of INTO members both in school and to Head Office and ensuring the implementation of all directives from Head Office and locally negotiated agreements.

While this may seem a daunting task, potential Reps should remember that most schools have accredited school Reps who both enjoy and manage the job without difficulty. As well as ordinary school members, the Northern Committee of the INTO also realises and appreciates the incredible role carried out by school Reps and therefore keeps the support system for Reps to the fore of its agenda. This translates to accredited school Reps having agreed protections and facilities, in the workplace, to carry out their role.



## School Reps are entitled to ...

- Time off with pay for duties as school Representative i.e. to undertake representation, consultation, negotiation;
- Use of a centrally located, assessable notice board;
- Private use of the school telephone;
- Provision of a room on school premises for INTO meetings;
- Reasonable use of a school computer, duplicating and photocopying equipment;
- Access to documents and school policies concerned with pay, conditions of service, and the Employing Authority's advice and guidance to Boards of Governors.

To help them perform their role, Reps have access to resources such as ...

- Regular Head Office bulletins for display on trade union notice board;
- Copies of Printout and Intouch;
- Flyers and electronic bulletins concerning up to the moment issues.

However, one of the most rewarding aspects of union members at a school is the union meeting held on school premises. This provides union members with an

open forum to be heard in a less formal manner than staff meetings and it is a perfect environment for Reps to gauge the collective feelings regarding whole staff issues. It is here that decisions affecting members can be aired and acted upon.

All accredited Reps are entitled to leave with pay for union business on the following scale:

- 5-30 members (Including Rep) – 1 period per week
- 31-60 members (Including Rep) – 2 periods per week
- 60 + members (Including Rep) – 3 periods per week
- One day in each two school year cycle to attend union sponsored training courses.

In addition to this, school Reps are reminded that as a recruitment promotion, Reps who invite a colleague to join INTO are entered into a prize draw. 1st Prize £100- 2nd Prize £50. And every new member recruited in the new 2015/16 term will earn school Reps a £10 voucher.

**TOMMY MCGLONE**, *Trade Union Official*

# INTO Art competition 2015

*“Good painting is like good cooking; it can be tasted, but not explained”*

Maurice de Vlaminck

The INTO Art Competition is open to members across the north who wish to submit their work for judging and to be considered for the first prize of £800. Entries are reviewed by a selection panel constituted from within the INTO and the professional art world.

Members can submit up to three, original, 2 dimensional works, painted in the past five years. Full details can be found in the members area of the INTO website.

The Competition is intended to showcase members’ talent – anyone considering entering is encouraged to seize their brushes and have a go! The creation of a “Highly Commended” category is a reflection of the high standard of work submitted.

The 2016 competition will be launched this autumn in Printout and also on the INTO website.

Thanks to all those who participated this year; members are at the core of the competition.

Members with ideas about or feedback on the competition are invited to submit comments to [infoni@into.ie](mailto:infoni@into.ie)



**Olivia Conlon, Belfast west branch, won the 2015 competition with her oil painting, “Where Does the Time Go?”. Olivia’s work will hang in Northern Office with the other winners and become part of a growing collection of paintings drawn from the artistic talent within INTO.**



**This year’s highly commended entry was “Oisín” by Sean McErlean, Lisburn branch.**



Giants Causeway: Annette Convery



Grannie: Seán McErlean



Portbradden: Peter McAllister



Eoin: Sean McErlean



Moonlight, Tullynawood Lough:  
Liam O'Manacháin



Forever Frank: Peter Cush



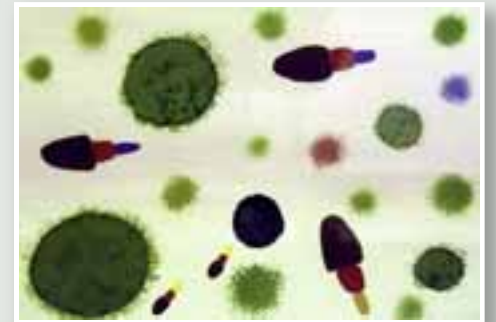
School Bully: Tuathan McAughey



Untitled :Tony Dougan



Blue Guitar: Caroline Sadlier



Untitled :Tony Dougan



Siesta: Caroline Sadlier



Farmer: Annette Convery



Nude, Morning Light: Caroline Sadlier



Blue Tory: Peter McAllister



Into  
The Deep:  
Gemma  
Kelly



Green Tory: Peter McAllister



# School Reps Conference

Annmarie Conway Chair of Northern Committee (NC) welcomed INTO school representatives to the first INTO school rep conference in The Manor House Hotel Enniskillen. The event ran from the evening of Friday 15th to lunch time Saturday 16th May. Most of the reps would have attended rep training over the years however it was the intention of the NC and organising sub-committee that this two day event would equip the reps with more INTO knowledge, but fundamentally the conference would serve as a thank you for all the hard work the reps do in their schools on INTO's behalf.

In arranging this event the NC sub-committee hoped that delegates would have the opportunity to network with the other school reps in an relaxed setting, although the conference was informal, the agenda was packed ... after all there is no such thing as a free lunch. On the Friday

evening delegates were briefed by The Northern Secretary on the current position with regard to industrial action before dinner was served and delegates participated in the INTO "Root and Branch" quiz, where rep's knowledge of INTO structures and clientele amongst other topical items such as the muppets and movies was tested! The Quiz winners, "Cocktails at Madison's," were rewarded a much deserved case of wine.

The conference resumed on Saturday morning with more serious matters, beginning with Recruitment and Participation; registration on members area; making contact and networking; courses offered to INTO members; concluding with a brief on pensions.

The chair concluded the event on

Saturday by thanking the delegates for giving up their time, not only to attend the event but for all the time they give to INTO and to the members in general. The Chair continued by encouraging reps to keep up the good work and attend their branch and district meetings, praising the reps for being the life blood and all that is good about this union. The Chair also commended NC for their foresight in coming up with the idea of a rep conference in particular the organising sub-committee, Seamus Hanna, Mark Mc Taggart and Dorothy Mc Ginley. Annmarie also extended a special word of thanks to northern office staff, the officials and the northern secretary for all the work, support and organisation that made the first Rep. Conference possible and such a success.



*Left: Annmarie Conway presenting a gift to Frank Quinn marking the end of his term on Northern Committee*

*Left: Eleanor Gallagher, Mount Lourdes Grammar School, Enniskillen, the winner of the School Rep draw 2015, being presented with a voucher from Annmarie Conway, Chair of Northern Committee*



# Boogaloo and Graham go to Hollywood

*INTO member Ronan Blaney describes the excitement of Oscar nomination and winning a BAFTA*

Michael Lennox, the director of BOOGALOO AND GRAHAM called me back at the beginning of November. It was late. I was working at my desk.

'I've just got this email', he said. He sounded excited.

'Go on', I said. Michael gets excited about Nicolas Cage movies and the width of camera lenses. I wasn't on the edge of my seat.

He started to laugh. He was laughing all the way through the following sentence, 'It's from the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences and it says we've been short-listed for an oscar'.

I must have taken a few seconds. 'Away and [expletive deleted]!' I said. But at the same time I started to google. Sure enough, there it was, breaking news in 'The Hollywood Reporter', the list of Live Action Short Films shortlisted for the 87th Academy Awards.

And that was the start of it!

Well ... the start of it was way back when I used to stay up far too late writing short-stories. I don't think it was for any particular reason other than I liked doing it. Of course, there was the thought I would gather these stories together, get them published, and win the Pulitzer Prize. But that didn't seem likely judging by the rejection letters I received when I was foolhardy enough to submit a story to a magazine, letters making clear that my contribution to the field of literature was about as welcome as an Irish speaking gay muslim at a "certain party" conference.

Then, finally, finally, I did get a story published in a small magazine called 'Wrightlines'. And I was actually paid for it, a whole twenty-five pounds. I photocopied the cheque below the congratulations letter from the editor, part of which read, 'It can only be good for a magazine like ourselves to publish work by such a talented writer as yourself'. No words of love were ever sweeter. The editor undoubtedly wrote that same reply to every writer whose story he published but I didn't care. It was all the incentive I needed and I had the photocopy framed and hung it over my desk where it still hangs to this day.

After that, I graduated to writing radio plays, then short films, then features. In between I won some things, got an agent, actually had a film made which was listed in 'Empire' magazine as one of the top ten worst films of 2012. That was the year



*'Top of his class!' Ronan Blaney and BAFTA*

*Right: still from Boogaloo and Graham movie.*



« My sister rented in the Hollywood hills during Oscar week, a magnificent hippie-style pad . . . just up from Charlie Chaplin's old place and across the road from where Cary Grant used to live »»

'Argo' won the Oscar for Best Picture so you can judge how bad mine was. It was a story about a werewolf who only kills virgins. Like the day I bought a Boomtown Rats album or once taking a girl on a first-date to a late-night showing of 'The Texas Chainsaw Massacre', it seemed a good idea at the time.

Then came BOOGALOO and touching down in LAX and seeing the look on the cop's face at Passport Control when I told him my reason for visiting America ... and doing an interview with the BBC below the Hollywood sign ... and taking a whizz beside Benedict Cumberbatch ... and sharing a lift with Nicole Kidman and Stephen Fry and Jay out of 'The Inbetweeners' ... and getting my picture taken with Clint Eastwood ... and ordering a drink in downtown Los Angeles and looking in the mirror behind the optics and seeing Robert Duvall standing beside me ... and winning a Bafta and asking the guy who was escorting us back-stage if there was anywhere I could

go for a smoke and him pointing to a door and me going out that door to find myself standing in the middle of the street with people passing and then stopping to gape at this bewildered looking man with a baf-ta trophy in one hand and a fag in the other ...

Myself and Michael Lennox kept telling each other we had to quit using the word 'surreal'. But there is no other word to describe the experience. My sister rented in the Hollywood hills during Oscar week, a magnificent hippie-style pad – screw the expense, she said – just up from Charlie Chaplin's old place and across the road from where Cary Grant used to live. The Friday night before the big event, she had a barbecue and at one point we found ourselves standing shoulder to shoulder looking down into the valley and the never-ending lights of the city of angels and without a word being said we started to giggle, just giggling helplessly at the mad, unforgettable ... *surreal* brilliance of it all.

# The INTO – a union for school leaders and teachers alike

At this time of year, some of our Principal colleagues are looking forward to retirement, after many years of dedicated and distinguished service in leading our schools. I wish them all the best and that they can enjoy many happy and healthy years in retirement, while looking back at their careers with pride and accomplishment.

This means there will be new appointments made to lead those schools-some from existing principals moving to a new challenge or, in many cases, vice principals or teachers, being given the opportunity to lead and manage a school and providing a continuation of giving the children the best education possible.

For those teachers, who have become Principals for the first time, it can be a daunting but exciting prospect. In ways, many of us, when first appointed, are really unsure of what we have let ourselves in for. But the sense of pride and achievement, when becoming a principal for the first time, is one that I will always remember.

On speaking to some newly appointed Principals, some have asked me the question 'Which union should I be in now?' Some have told me that they thought that they had to join a union dedicated only to Head Teachers. I have told them that this was not the case. I will try to outline my reasons for being a member of the INTO, as a Principal, and how I think it has been an advantage to me in leading my school.

When I was first appointed principal, I didn't give it much thought. I stayed with the INTO, without considering any other union, but now I realise I did so for 3 reasons.

## A teacher, first and foremost

Firstly, I have been a member of the INTO since the day and hour, many years ago, I walked into the Ranch (St. Joseph's Teacher Training College, Trench House). Secondly, even after being a principal for many years, I am still a teacher, first and foremost. Thirdly, I was aware that the INTO also has structures and support mechanisms for those in leadership positions and that the INTO is not only a trade union but also a professional organisation whose remit is also to ensure that the children, under our care, receive the best possible opportunities to fulfil their educational potential. In other words, the INTO is there to uphold every teacher's terms and conditions of service and that members are treated fairly, justly and with respect. But it is also there to ensure that educational standards are raised

to the best of our abilities with the resources at our disposal.

To me, both as a teacher and a principal, this is the strength of the INTO. The INTO is on the side of both the teacher and the principal because the ethos of the organisation lends itself to both the rights of the teacher but also, for the rights of the child, in that, they have the right to attend a school where the leadership of the principal and, indeed, all staff members means that they get the highest quality of education.

## Supporting fellow teachers

As a member of the PDC for District 1 (Principals and Deputies Committee), one of the national committee of the INTO, I, along with Mario Gribbon, Principal rep for District 2, consistently argue for the rights of the classroom teachers. We recognise

**INTO's boycott of the Assessment arrangements means that teachers now have more time to dedicate to planning and preparing the highest quality of teaching and learning in their classrooms**

that the best assets and our ultimate resource is our staff. If our teachers' rights are protected and given the support they need, then they can get on with what they do best-teaching the children in their classrooms. All that teachers want are the resources and time to ensure that they can teach high quality lessons in a consistent way so that the children get a fair deal. That is all teachers want – a fair deal.

An example of this is our present dispute with the Department of Education regarding Assessment. The contentions with the End of Key Assessments are not just a union issue. They are a leadership issue as well. Why? Because the vast majority of principals fervently believe that End of Key Stage Assessments are not fit for purpose. They are not fit for purpose because they were set up as an accountability tool for comparison purposes for the Department, rather than a mechanism for schools to raise educational standards. Educational standards are raised when schools become self-evaluating within their own context and when schools use

many forms of self-evaluation that relates to the identification of under-achievement. Self-Evaluation tools such as classroom observations, monitoring children's workbooks, reviewing planners and, above all, the professional judgement of the teachers who work with the children every day of the week. Schools do of all these things very well. We do this because we know the setting and context of the school, the children's backgrounds, we communicate with their parents and targets are set accordingly.

Generic End of Key Stage levelling and the pressures involved have led to an abuse of such processes and diverts from our schools' main aims in life-that is to add value to the children skills and knowledge so that they are ready for modern adult life. Schools have been under too much pressure to reach certain levels, where, in some cases, results being 'distorted' for the fear of negative consequences from the Department or, indeed, the loss the confidence of parents.

The INTO's boycott of the Assessment arrangements means that teachers, now, have more time to dedicate to planning and preparing the highest quality of teaching and learning in their classrooms and giving more time for Assessment for Learning. It means that teachers can now devote their expertise in meeting the individual needs of the children in their classrooms. This has been argued over the past few years by the Principals of the INTO and, indeed, the majority of all Principals. However, it has been the INTO who has led this fight, on behalf of the teachers, in persuading the Department that a better system is needed.

## Lines of communication

As a Principal in the INTO, I have also believed that if the Principal of the school and the teachers are in the same union, that many potential issues can be resolved before they become a major problem. I believe that, as Principal, I can communicate with all my staff in a way where the teacher respects my position as Principal of the school and that I, also, respect their position as a valued member of staff, with one thing in common-that we are both teachers and both members of the INTO. In other words, there is mutual respect. A breakdown of relationships tends to happen through a lack of communication, understanding of the other person's point of view or an erosion in respect for each other. I believe that, as an INTO Principal,

teachers can approach me with a trust and respect that I will listen to them and listen to their concerns and vice versa that they will listen to me, in my position as Principal, with respect. I believe that this commonality is an enormous strength in leading a school and managing people and that it heads off more severe relationship problems 'at the pass'. Therefore, any misunderstanding or disagreements will never get to the union's attention and problems can be solved professionally and satisfactorily in-house.

There are occasions in schools when Principals have needed to show more understanding and empathy to their staff, especially in times of ill-health, times of bereavement, teachers struggling in their own personal lives and with the stresses of the job. Sometimes, teachers need to have the same understanding of the principals who may, themselves, be struggling with their own personal circumstances and stresses of the job. It is a two-way street and that there is a need to support each other. After all, we are all human and need to look after each other's well-being.

There are occasions, although a tiny minority, when a teacher is not carrying out their duties in meeting the children's needs. I have heard arguments that the INTO will always defend these teachers in all circumstances. First and foremost, these teachers need support and support mechanisms should be provided. Yes, it is the remit of the INTO to cater for their members' rights. However, if a teacher is not carrying out their duties, then it is the INTO's responsibility also to look after the rights of their other paid up INTO members who have to deal with the consequences and the 'fall out' of the teacher not doing their job. It is my be-

lieve that the INTO examine every case on its merits in a fair and supportive way to all at the school. It is also my belief that the children and parents who are affected in such circumstances be strongly considered by all involved.

At present, we are on industrial action short of strike. This is needed to ensure that the children are afforded the resources needed to raise their educational standards and that they can be no cut-backs to the services that we provide. The resources provided by the politicians in Stormont and the cutbacks in real terms should be challenged at all costs.

**INTO supporting principals**

At a recent Principals' Forum, Principals stressed to the INTO leadership that any short of strike actions should not be implemented that may affect the children's education. It was also stated that there was a need for some meetings to reduce workload and that a total ban on covering for absent colleagues would lead to a strain on school budgets that, ultimately, lead to possible redundancies. The INTO listened to Principals and have allowed one staff meeting every fortnight and classes to be covered for the first day of illness, depending on the size of school.

We, the staff of the schools and the Principals of the schools, have been striving to raise standards over many years. However, increasingly, there has been a complete desecration of advisory support for teachers and co-ordinators alike. This needs to be rectified as soon as possible. Maybe the new Education Authority will make that a priority in their re-organisation. Principals also have no structures for support and advice from the employers or EA. What is

needed is a dedicated CASS (Curriculum Advisory Support Service) for teachers and co-ordinators and a LASS (Leadership Advisory Support Service) for Principals. A team of experienced Principals, who have the trust and confidence of school leaders to help deal with the issues and stresses of everyday school life should be made available as soon as possible. This will improve educational standards and help in promoting good working relationships within schools in order to raise standards.

At present, Principals support each other by talking to other Principals and in fact, the only other organisation that I can seek advice from is the INTO. Maybe the INTO would consider a dedicated adviser for Leadership? Only a thought!!

As Principals, we lead our schools for the good of all our children and for all our staff. The INTO is our union and it upholds our rights and terms and conditions of our contracts. It is also there to ensure that the children's rights are upheld and that educational standards are raised. The INTO has been there to support me, both as a teacher and a Principal and there has never been any conflict of interest with the INTO in supporting me in leading my school. In fact, the INTO has been there to support me in my leadership role and has done so very well. It has also been there to advise me on how best I can support my staff in helping them to provide the best possible education for the children in our schools. In my opinion, the best union a Principal or a teacher can be in.



MARTIN SHORT, PDC, District 1.

**Anti-riot Police use tear gas and rubber bullets against protesting teachers in Brazil**

Plans by the regional Parana government in Brazil to introduce extreme cuts to teacher and other public sector workers' wages and pension values brought 20,000 protesting teachers to the Parana state parliament in Curitiba. The local authority, dismissing the teachers' claims, responded to the protest by sending riot police into the peaceful crowd. Local television showed police firing rubber bullets and stun grenades at tightly packed groups of cowering teachers in an effort to prevent the striking teachers from reaching the state parliament buildings.

After the attack, over 150 teachers were treated for their injuries in a makeshift first aid centre set up close to the state parliament. The Curitiba mayor Gustavo Fruet openly criticized the security forces for their handling of the protest.

The demonstration in Curitiba marked the third day of their strike in opposition to a new bill

aimed at taking money from the pockets of the already low paid teachers in Brazil to fund the pensions of retired teachers. This pension reform which was passed on the day of the protest will

result in 33,000 retirees moving from a pension fully paid for by the local government to one jointly paid for by serving teachers.

If you can't beat them... beat them!



# INTO Northern Conference

Conference 2015 took place at the Radisson Roe Resort & Hotel, Limavady on Friday 27 and Saturday 28 February.

Over 150 members attended Northern Conference as delegates to discuss the current issues in education. This year some of the issues being debated included the proposed education budget cuts, assessment, pensions, inspections and conditions of service. Without a doubt it was the education budget that dominated the clár and indeed the delegates' discussions.

The Chair, Annmarie Conway welcomed delegates and guests to the beautiful surroundings of the Roe Valley, complimenting the local branch, Limavady and Dungiven, for all the help and assistance they had given in the run up to conference. Annmarie also commended the invited Minister of Education Mr John O'Dowd in his and his department's willingness to engage with the unions and teachers over the last number of years on work such as Computer Based Assessments, end of Key Stage Assessment, GCSE and A levels and the Review of the Common Funding Formula. These issues, it was stressed, although all not fully resolved, demonstrate a willingness by the Department to engage with those at the chalk face, in a constructive manner. The Chair commended the Minister further in saying that it could be argued that the Minister listened to the 23,600 responses to the Draft Education Budget issued in December, and indeed helped others to hear, so that more money was found, re-allocated and redistributed into the Education Budget. "This is still, not enough," the Chair warned, "for what is expected of the education system," but affirmed that, "the Minister and the department have shown an understanding of the difficulties and anxieties parents, teachers, classroom assistants, principals and trade unions have regarding the meagre Education Budget."

The Chair concluded her address to the Minister and delegates making reference to the late Seamus Heaney warning the Minister "just as the

*Education Minister John O 'Dowd Pictured with Sacred Heart Senior Choir who sang so beautifully at the opening of Conference. The choir were accompanied by College staff, Head of Music/Choir Mistress Kelly O' Doherty, Head of Year/Pianist Mrs Sinead Rodgers, and Vice Principal Mrs Celia Mc Ginn. Also pictured is Chair of Northern Committee/Head of Drama Sacred Heart College Annmarie Conway.*



*John Kelly, the new SEELB Post-Primary Northern Committee Rep*

'Tame cat/turned savage,' in Heaney's poem Storm on the Island so too could the normally reserved and tame teaching force turn savage faced with such a vicious attack on our education service."



# INTO Northern Conference





*Mr Seamus Agnew and Mr Sean Robb from Agnew, Andress, Higgins Solicitors*

*Staff table: Tony Carlin, Nuala O'Donnell, Tommy McGlone, Christine McDonnell and Trevor Leonard.*

# INTO Northern Conference 2015 Dinner – Friday Presentations

At the conference dinner on Friday evening the Art Competition Winner was announced as Olivia Conlon, Belfast West Branch, with Work in oils 'Where Does the Time go?' There was also Branch Presentations by Limavady/Dungiven Branch given to Mrs Mairead McNulty, for 34 years' service & commitment to Branch; Mrs Joan Guthrie, current Chairperson, for 30 years' service & commitment to Branch, and Mrs Helen McGee, current Vice-chairperson, for 25 years' service & commitment to Branch.

At the close of conference on Saturday Annmarie Conway made a short address to Conference before handing over to Mark McTaggart the Incoming Chairperson of INTO Northern Committee.



*Northern Secretary, Gerry Murphy and incoming Chair, Mark Mc Taggart present Annmarie Conway with a painting by Omagh artist Gerard Bradley.*



*Olivia Conlon, Belfast West Branch, 2015 Art Competition Winner*

**"I enjoy oil painting as a hobby, however teaching full-time and being a mother to three boys, does not leave me with very much free time. Our job involves giving so much to others and I think it is important for busy teachers to take the time to develop themselves. I sat at home talking myself out of entering this competition and it was my husband and a work colleague who finally gave me the confidence to enter. I am so proud that my painting will be part of the INTO collection and I think all budding artists should give it a go!"**



# Northern Ireland Teachers' Pensions Scheme (NITPS) Pension Board

Nuala O'Donnell, INTO Senior Official, has been appointed as one of four employee representatives on the new NITPS Pension Board. The new public body comprises one third scheme members, one third employers and one third to cover Chair, Public Service Pension Schemes and the Department.

The role of the Pensions Board is to ensure the effective administration of the NITPS by close scrutiny of the level and quality of service provided for the membership and employers by the administrator and other service providers (e.g. Capita (IT system provider); OHS (scheme medical advisors) and the Government Actuary's Department).

The NITPSPB will provide assurance to the Accounting Officer (Permanent Secretary), members and employers about the effective financial management of the NITPS, including contribution collection, financial

forecasting, and debt management; that beneficiaries receive the benefits to which they are entitled under the rules of the scheme and production of annual scheme accounts.

The NITPSPB will oversee the development of processes and systems to incorporate any new statutory requirements. The NITPSPB will monitor audit delivery plans.



**NUALA O'DONNELL,**  
*Senior Official*

There are four scheme member representatives, selected from nominations put forward by unions; and other NITPS member representative bodies included on the NITPS consultation list. At least one of the member representatives must be a current member of the scheme. The four member representatives are: Nuala O'Donnell, INTO, Justin McCamphill, NASUWT, Rosemary Barton, UTU and Graham Agnew, NASUWT, who is the current scheme member.

The names of the four employer repre-

sentatives, selected from nominations put forward by employer organisations on the NITPS consultation list have not yet been released.

The NITPSPB will have two DE representatives, each at Director level, one from the policy area that manages the scheme (Education and Workforce Development Directorate) and one from either Finance Directorate or Planning and Performance Directorate which performs an Audit function for the Department.

The appointment of the independent chair is currently in process. An interim chair, Barry Jordan has been appointed in the meantime.

Members of the NITPSPB will represent the interests of all of the scheme's beneficiaries, the participating employers and the Accounting Officer and not simply the interests of the organisation that nominated them.

A workshop for all public sector pension board appointees, lead by the Government Actuary's Department in conjunction with the Pensions Regulator, took place on Tuesday 14 April 2015 in La Mon Hotel & Country House Belfast.

The first meeting of the new NITPS Pension board will take place on Wednesday 3 June 2015.

*Meet the maker*

Eimear Maguire is the artist behind Dollybirds Art. She works from a studio in North Belfast with views of the Cavehill from her window. Her creations are inspired by our native birds that cross her path; ones she meets personally on her daily walks or in the garden. Each Dollybird has a story or evokes a special memory. They are created with the intention of capturing the beauty and personality of each little bird, allowing everyone to bring a little bit of nature's magic indoors.

DESIGNED & MADE IN IRELAND

[www.dollybirdsart.com](http://www.dollybirdsart.com)

# Engage children with like never before

*Franz Schlindwein introduces Izak9 and describes how it helps*

My research and experience has shown that two of the main reasons why children in upper primary school are most likely to disengage from mathematics are that their learning has become more solitary and isolated and they no longer learn through play. Maths, for these children, has become tedious, repetitive and boring. They may experience solitary worksheets and time spent alone at a computer screen along with fewer and fewer methods by which they can physically interact with mathematics and with each other. Few genuine collaborative learning opportunities are available to them and these are vital to kindle any enthusiasm for mathematics.

As a former head of mathematics with extensive experience of working in the Primary School sector as a teacher, parent and school governor, I decided that I wanted to create resources that could offer a variety of opportunities to all the stakeholders involved in both the teaching and learning process. My priorities were initially to devise a method which would engage pupils of all abilities and preferred learning styles and provide a stimulating and rewarding shared learning environment for peer learning, this would help raise attainment by ensuring that every child is seen, heard and recognised. They could elevate thinking skills, build confidence, raise attitudes and dispositions to mathematics and improve communication skills.

In addition to the benefits to pupils, we wanted to provide support mechanisms to teachers that could help accelerate children's learning by honing such techniques as formative assessment, positive teacher intervention, inclusivity in the classroom, collaborative learning and effective questioning.

As a result of working together with universities, schools, parents, product and web designers, font and graphics specialists, 3D animators, programmers, precision engineers and manufacturers and Invest NI (our UKTI in NI), the unique and innovative active learning device we have designed is called Izak9. Not only is Izak9 proving to be a highly effective teaching and learning tool for use in the classroom, it is also lead-

ing the way as a method by which to deliver the highest quality interactive CPPD training for teachers. We have also been using it to rave reviews with parents and children to deliver numeracy/maths based family evenings in schools.

### **So, how does Izak9 work?**

Izak9 consists of a system of 27 colourful and captivating cubes. These cubes combine to form a 3x3x3 structure as shown. When deconstructed, this larger cube can be separated into 3 colour coded groups of 9 cubes each set of which can be used by a group of 4-5 children. Normally 2 sets of Izak9 cubes are in use by a class of children at any one time, thus facilitating classes of up to 30+ children if required.



The physical cubes are used in conjunction with a suite of HD animated e-learning materials, which can be accessed either by projector at the front of the room or by tablet devices. The children are set tasks by two 3D animated characters – Abacus and Helix. These two affable robots use an identical set of virtual cubes to facilitate the tasks and the associated questioning. The teacher can use the animated content as he or she sees fit, depending on the ages and ability range of the children in the class.

The idea is that children of all abilities and preferred learning styles can work together in groups and, using a combination of the physical and the virtual, access a variety of stimuli across many levels. Each task involves Abacus and Helix asking the children to construct a wall of cubes according to a given set of instructions. Once children have arranged the cubes in a way

that provides a solution to the task posed by our two friends, they display the arrangement of numbers as a vertical wall. This ensures that every group's solution can be shared with all the children in the room. This is the first part of the task. The essence of what happens next goes back to Plutarch and 'children are fires to be lit, not vessels to be filled.'



### **Rotation of team captain – responsibility and social interaction**

Pupils work together in groups on the tasks posed by Abacus and Helix. For each task, a different team captain is chosen. This is to ensure that every child gets the opportunity to lead a task as well as the opportunity to take direction from others. Izak9 is a capacity building device and the development of these interpersonal skills is very important, especially for the more solitary, academic learner who will often traverse the path through school life avoiding any prospect of having to articulate his or her thoughts, mathematical processes or problem solving strategies to others. Izak9 offers this type of learner a lot of stretch in this regard.

### **Plan, Do, Review and Make Sense – elevation of thinking skills and building for the future**

The PDRM evaluative loop is integral to the most effective use of Izak9. Pupils' thinking skills are elevated by the clear sense of purpose by which they can go about solving an Izak9 task together. It doesn't matter how long children spend on each section of this loop, as long as the planning stage is done well. Once pupils have a Plan in

# mathematics

## *to develop reasoning*

place, they Do the task, Review the team effort and then, stand back, take a good look and ask 'Does our answer make sense?'

This cycle not only very quickly becomes embedded in how children go about solving all the Izak9 tasks, it also becomes a methodology for approaching any task, either in or out of the classroom.

### **Formative assessment – assessment for learning**

The fact that pupils have a physical product, a shared learning environment, animated stimuli to focus them between tasks and a PDRM methodology by which they can operate together, means that there are abundant formative assessment opportunities for the teacher. He or she can clearly see how children are learning, who is responding to what stimuli, who is communicating effectively, what particular areas of mathematics the children are excelling at, what areas it is obvious that they will need support with and who is having a positive influence on the group. All these scenarios and many more are accessible to the teacher.

### **Effective questioning**

During the construction phase of each task and once a wall of numbers, colours and shapes has been built by the children, the teacher can discuss with children their various approaches taken to solve the task. When this phase is finished, he or she can then either use the banks of questions available via the software or devise questions themselves based on topics they may be currently addressing. There are selections of question by type (video, audio, written) available as opposed to simply different mathematical topics and degree of difficulty. For example, with a wall of yellow circles (the pupils are directed by Abacus and Helix to build a wall of yellow circles) the teacher could open a discussion on the properties of primes and do some associated number work. He/she may want to offer a more open ended task, such as: If we use this selection of numbers and the number operations of addition and sub-

traction, can we generate more prime numbers? Children can work together on this task and come to conclusions in their own groups, which they can then share.

The key here is for teachers to develop the ability to not only ask open and closed questions, but to be able to pivot and adapt the lesson according to the responses of children. This can be challenging but the rewards can be enormous since children will still associate this learning as emanating from themselves and not from the teacher, giving them ownership and responsibility for the positive nature of the outcomes. For example, when asked to find the sum of the numbers in the circles displayed on the wall of multiples of 3 (below), children have given us many different methods by which they have achieved an answer of 75. One method in particular was very advanced for a child of 9. He said 'I just multiplied the 15 by 5 to get 75'. When asked why he used this method, he replied 'The difference between each circle is the same, 6. Because the difference is the same and we have 5 numbers, if you multiply the middle number by the number of numbers, 5, then you get the answer 75.'



It is magnificent to get a response of this nature in the classroom, and even more so that a child is able to articulate his method to both the teacher and his peers, in the manner described. The teacher being able to facilitate this happening is good practice in itself, but there is a serious opportunity for stretch here. A suggestion would be for the teacher to introduce an idea to the class such as, 'Would there be any way in which the class could investigate this approach?' The nature of how this stimulus would be introduced is obviously important and highly dependent on the ability range of the pupils in the room, the key being to leave it as open ended as possible



to allow the children to come up with as many ideas of their own on how to pursue the task.

### **Positive teacher intervention – often minimalist**

In addition to quality peer learning and receiving positive feedback, the nature and timing of teacher intervention can add real value to accelerating a child's learning.

For example on the wall of numbers already shown (below left), the first question asked is, 'What is the product of the numbers in the top row?'

Similarly to the 'sum of the circles' question, we have received a myriad of different answers to this question. An example of best practice would be, 'Now that everybody has attempted the question, would any group like to volunteer to go first?'

'May we go first?'

'Absolutely, go ahead!'

'We did 3 multiplied by 9 is 27. 6 times 27 is 162'

'Brilliant, well done and what did you do with the 6 and the 27 to get 162?'

'We multiplied 27 by 3 to get 81, then doubled 81 to get 162'

'Excellent work, really well done and had you any particular reason for choosing this method?'

'I can multiply anything by 3, so I multiplied the largest number by 3 to get 27 and then because I know six is two threes, I multiplied by 3 again to get 81 and then doubled my answer.'

'Fantastic, great work and very well explained.'

There are many advantages in getting to the 'how' and the 'why'. Not only does it do wonders for a child's confidence to be able to articulate these methods to his or her peers, which provides a wonderful opportunity for them to develop their processing and communication skills, it also recognizes and rewards the efforts of the child by identifying that particular method as being special to him or her. Instead of simply having an arbitrary list of various methods by which each question can be attempted, you have little capsules of what is going on inside a child's mind

that is precious to each individual, yet each can be shared with everybody in the room.

**Value of team – peer learning (Vygotsky)**

Group work is often cited as being of great value to pupils, but this is only true if the children can work effectively together in the group and if each child gets the opportunity to boost their own confidence and self-esteem by being able to add value to the group dynamic at some stage during the cycle of activities.

The PDRM evaluative loop adds structure to the group’s efforts and has an ongoing positive effect. The real strength that Izak9 has to offer a group is that all the stimuli on offer are varied, so that there is a greater chance that at some stage during the learning process, a child will be able to make a positive contribution based on their own preferred learning style.

For example in the ‘sum of the circles’ question already mentioned, we have children presenting methods visually by spotting number bonds – ‘I added 3 and 27 (pointing to both simultaneously), then 9 and 21 (pointing in similar fashion), finally adding 15, which makes 75’.

Some adopt a more traditional strategy, attempting to add the numbers in increasing order, but then discover something in mid-flow. ‘I added 3 and 9 first, then 15 to get 27 but now I have a total of 27 and am distracted by the other 27 and decided to go that way instead of the 21, double 27 to get 54, then add the 21, to get 75.’

We also get children who prefer to have the numbers called out, listen and then add.

In some cases, we have had children actually physically remove the cubes with the circles from the wall, manipulate them into the preferred arrangement for them to find the sum, then perform the opera-

tion. These methods are indeed only a snapshot of the variety of approaches we have seen to this question.

**Learning pyramid – question sharing to question posing – Eliminator**

Another of the principal attributes the use of Izak9 has to offer is the facility to provide children with opportunities to create content of their own. The Eliminator round uses the wall of single digit numbers (or any of the other walls if desired). The children are given a statement. They then remove the number associated with the statement from the wall.

For example:

Eliminate the number of sides on a pentagon.

Pupils remove 5.

Eliminate 72 divided by 8.

Pupils remove 9.

Eliminate the missing number from this sequence. 1, 2, 4, blank, 16, ...

Pupils remove 8.

Eliminate 52 minus 45.

Pupils remove 7.

Eliminate 4cm minus 36mm in mm.

Pupils remove 4.

Each group is now left with 4 numbers. The idea is now to give them a multistep question on which they work together. In this case we now have: 1, 2, 3 and 6 remaining.

The pupils are asked to use all the remaining single digit numbers and the 24hr clock to make the time closest to 1pm.

One example of what happens is that pupils say ‘OK, 1pm is 13, this leaves 2 and

6’ – so they build 1326 as a solution. Then their Plan, Do, Review and Make Sense kicks in, along with the fact that they have a physical product, which they can manipulate! In the vast majority of cases pupils will take another look, ask questions of each other and change their first effort to 1236, realising that it is a better answer. They will then be able to articulate the process by which they arrived at this conclusion and appreciate that their first effort of 1326 was not wrong, but merely a step in the right direction upon which they were able to build.

This is a great task in its own right, but the real added value comes when the teacher is able to suggest to his or her own class if they would like to design an ‘Eliminator’ round of their own and ask the questions of the other teams. Not only can the children then be creative in designing their own questions, they must choose 4 numbers for the purpose of designing a multi-step question, write 5 questions to eliminate the other 5 numbers and finally pose these questions to their peers.

Izak9 is being used to tremendous effect in an ever increasing number of Primary and Post Primary schools across Northern Ireland and can be readily adapted for use with any mathematics curriculum to support the teaching and learning of mathematics.

This article only scratches the surface of the activities available within the ever expanding portfolio of Izak9 tasks and provides merely a snapshot of some of the potential benefits its use can provide for pupils, teachers and the whole teaching and learning process.

*For further information contact Izak9’s creator FRANZ SCHLINDWEIN at [franz@izak9.com](mailto:franz@izak9.com) or visit [www.qubizm.co.uk](http://www.qubizm.co.uk) or [www.izak9.com](http://www.izak9.com)*

## New Sponsorship for St. Mary’s, Limavady

Pupils from St Mary’s, Limavady receiving their new Gaelic Football strip from the Limavady and Dungiven Branch of the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation, as part of a new bursary programme which is being piloted by the branch.

The school have been, for a number of years, competing in football competitions and this year, for the first time, entered the Ulster Colleges League.

The new strip has worked its magic, with the team, competing in their first year, winning the title against St Michael’s. Mr McKaigue with Mr M Franey coached the team to victory.

The new strip forms part of bigger plans for Gaelic Games in St. Mary’s with

the appointment of Derry County and Slaughtneil Player Chrissy McKaigue in the role of Gaelic Games co-ordinator.

The sponsorship of the strip by Limavady and Dungiven INTO branch is the first of a set of bursaries offered by the Limavady and Dungiven INTO branch to schools.

*Pictured are Mrs Guthrie, Chairperson of the Limavady and Dungiven INTO branch, Helen McGee, Vice Chairperson of the Limavady and Dungiven INTO branch, Coaches Chrissy McKaigue and Mark Franey, Mrs Mary McCloskey, Principal, and players Callum Brown, Corin McMonagle, Anthony McGuinness and Mark Creane*



# Did you know there's a Credit Union for Teachers in Northern Ireland?

Credit Union is increasingly cited in the media as a financial services movement based on fairness and democracy. You may not have heard of us but Teachers' Credit Union (BTCU Ltd) is celebrating 50 years' service to its 2,000 members in 2015. We were founded at Holy Child Primary School in 1965 by a small group of teachers but now our 'Common Bond' extends to all branches of Education and Training across Northern Ireland.

Teachers' Credit Union is a co-operative financial services business, owned and operated by teachers and managed by an elected voluntary Board. It works on a simple model of collective savings made available to individual members at low rates of interest. All surplus income is then returned to members as dividend or loan interest rebate. An additional member benefit is free life insurance on both savings and loans. Our members currently have collective savings of over £6 million and loans of £4 million at interest rates as low as 4.5% APR.

BTCU makes generous donations to local and international development charities and sponsors student teachers at St Mary's and Stranmillis University Colleges. In 2015, our 50th Anniversary year, we are funding the refurbishment of the library at our founder school and sponsoring a Schools and Colleges art competition. Belfast City Council have honoured us by allowing us to hold a Gala Event in October 2015 at the City Hall.

Although our office is in Belfast and members are welcome to call to discuss their account, most operate their account through email and telephone. We use online banking facilities for all transactions. Many teachers support and volunteer in their local community credit unions but we would still welcome you as a member with us.

We are part of a worldwide movement but each credit union is totally autonomous. In the UK credit unions are strictly regulated by the Bank of England through the Pru-

dential Regulation Authority and the Financial Conduct Authority.

If a group at your school/college would like a member of staff to visit to make a brief presentation on the advantages of credit union membership please contact our of-

fice to agree a date and time. For application forms and information call 02890 309770 or email [belfastteachers@btconnect.com](mailto:belfastteachers@btconnect.com). There is extensive information on our website [www.btcu.org.uk](http://www.btcu.org.uk); or call at our office at 95 Finaghy Road South, Belfast, BT10 OBY

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# LGBT Awareness Week



The week of 11th May saw the launch of the LGBT Awareness Week with a series of presentations as at its launch in Belfast City Hall. The event was opened with by the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Arder Carson. Other speakers included: Peter Osborne, Chair of the Community Relations Council; Pádraig Ó Tuama, Leader of the Corrymeela Community who spoke of the changing attitudes in Ireland; Ellen Murray from Genderjam addressed transgender issues and Seamus Hanna from INTO spoke of LGBT issues within education .

Since the 1960s we have regularly debated the question, does education effect society or does society effect education. Consequently with changes in both attitudes and actions among society in relation to LGBT issues, we, within education, find ourselves both contributing to this change within society and equally being affected upon by these changes.

The most common age that people become aware of their lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender orientation is 12 years of age. This places a great responsibility for secondary schools in Northern Ireland and Primary schools in the South to support our pupils at this critical point in their lives. The most common age that a young person will tell another person that they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender is 17 years – on average 5 years after they first realised it themselves. To leave LGBT students unsupported is to neglect our responsibility to help our pupils to develop into the person they were created to be, I am sure the Catholic Church will forgive for borrowing that phrase from the values of the catholic school. This period of time leaves LGBT students vulnerable and this vulnerability has left many students susceptible to bullying which takes the form of physical, verbal and emotional abuse.

Tackling homophobic bullying and protecting pupils is the most fundamental step that teachers can take. The children's research centre has found that 50% of LGBT people had experienced bullying in schools. The research has found a 'clear correlation between homophobic and transphobic bullying and serious mental health difficulties among LGBT people to the extent that:

- 27% had self-harmed.
- Over 50% of under-25s had seriously thought of ending their lives.
- Almost 20% of under-25s had attempted suicide

Four out of every five teachers reported that they are aware of the problem of homophobic name-calling but nine out of

ten say lack of policy hinders them in tackling this issue. In response to this, the Department of Education in Dublin have amended Anti bullying policies to make it incumbent upon all schools to proactively tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying. Regrettably here in Northern Ireland the Positive Behaviour Policy lacks the robust focus that is given to homophobic bullying in the south where it is explicitly rather than implicitly stated. There are currently efforts to bring legislation through the Northern Ireland Assembly to address this and a number of schools are ensuring that addressing homophobic bullying becomes part of their Positive Behaviour Policy by adding it to the list of areas that their Positive Behaviour Policy will tackle.

A school policy on bullying is most effective when supported by a positive school climate which encourages respect, trust, care, consideration and support for others. Research shows that is within schools where the issue has been discussed that pupils are more willing to report the problem and have it addressed. Regrettably bullying continues as LGBT students fear speaking out about this abuse, as with all types of bullying the silence feeds the problem.

Within INTO, we would like to see a movement towards an inclusive school where all pupils are welcomed and supported regardless of sexual orientation. To this end we have produced resources which can support teachers and schools in their efforts. These resources include: Recent resources which have been produced to support the creation of this climate including:

- Same Love Poster, by its very presence it encourages pupils to ask questions and to explore the concept of family
- List and description of picture books under the theme of different types of family
- Anti-bullying resources
- Good practice guidelines for staff inside and outside of the classroom.

As teachers we can address improper use of language, expressions such as "that is gay" should be robustly challenged and not accepted as normal name calling. As teachers when we challenge this improper use of language we address the hurt that it causes and direct our pupils to use language properly. It also allows teachers to reflect on their own use of language.

A second step in the support of diversity and inclusion is the representation of the

modern family as it truly is in its many complexities and make up. For this the family poster is a useful resource. In LLW and PSHE we have the opportunity to explore pupil understanding of family in a proper context and we can educate our students to value diversity. The administration process of the school should reflect this inclusive nature and letters home should be addressed as Parent/Guardian and where information is requested then this could be labelled as "relationship to Child" rather than Mother /Father. Small but significant steps such as this help parents to appreciate the efforts that schools are making towards an inclusive climate.

Teachers genuinely want to help support inclusion but, many lack the training and understanding of where they can play an active role in the formal teaching of the school day. To this end resources have been developed which teachers can use in the formal curriculum in both primary and post primary. The RESPECT bulletin provides guidance for teachers in each of the classes in the primary curriculum and in Northern Ireland the provision of resources by the Rainbow Project have been very successfully used in many subject areas. The INTO has called for LGBT training for all new teachers. Formal inclusion rather than an option to attend a lecture is of greater value to us and we note that Holland remains the only country where teacher training has LGBT training as a formal part of their teacher training course.

Regrettably the experience of LGBT teachers themselves is not always a positive one and where we fail to support our colleagues we can realistically believe that we are supporting our pupils. Teachers sit in silence when colleagues talk about husbands and wives and family life. The hidden silence is not confined to any particular type of school or any geographical area. The INTO leadership challenges discrimination against our LGT teachers and works with colleagues from the other teaching unions to highlight this discrimination and collectively use our resources to address the needs of LGBT members. However, we rely upon each of our members to ensure that staffrooms are an inclusive environment and LGBT colleagues do not feel the need to sit in silence.



**SEAMUS HANNA**, NITC LGBT Rep and NEELB Post Primary, Northern Committee Rep



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