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Teachers continue to be undervalued by Education Minister

INTO members have embarked on a renewed phase of industrial action. The Minister of Education, Peter Weir, MLA took it upon himself to withhold a pay rise to INTO members owed for the

2015/16 year. In response, we balloted members in line with draconian trade union laws and received a massive mandate for strike action and a refreshed suite of actions short of strike. Across the north on January 18th thousands of members responded to the call to withdraw their labour and joined their colleagues on picket lines. Evidence elsewhere in this publication gives a flavour of the widespread nature of this action.

Media coverage on the day effectively communicated the anger felt by INTO members at the Minister's decision. Our action has clearly had an impact as the Management Side of the Teachers' Negotiation Committee which includes the Department of Education who are falling over themselves to engage us in talks. Furthermore, the Minister clearly feels under political pressure as evidenced by a pitiful and failed attempt by a certain prominent political web site to deflect criticism of his role in this dispute onto the current Finance Minister. Preceding this action INTO members were instructed to withdraw their co-operation from the ETI from January 6th. This action short of strike has been received with enthusiasm

across the school system and the actions of the Chief Inspector since have greatly assisted INTO in ensuring the near complete compliance with this directive across the system.



GERRY MURPHY,
Northern Secretary

This is of course only the beginning and the changing political backdrop suggests that this is a dispute that may take some time to resolve. INTO members were well briefed, in advance of the action beginning, as to the potential complexities of the challenge we are undertaking and are prepared for the long haul. There is no doubt that the political situation and the consequent financial fall-out across the government will impact further as time unfolds. None of this is of INTO's making, we are not the people who recklessly threatened the public finances. Our demand for a pay uplift, the same as that awarded to every other education worker in the 2015/16 year, pales into insignificance compared to the amount of public monies dispersed to a raft of pet projects and the now infamous RHI Scheme. It will be the case that at some point this dispute will have to be resolved and that resolution can be achieved relatively quickly should the Management Side pay teachers what they are owed. Our second demand for a multi-year pay deal to follow on can be negotiated out in a totally different atmosphere should the Management

Side adopt this sensible approach. Failure on their part to do so will mean INTO members continuing with the action until reason reasserts itself amongst the Managements' representatives.

Preparations are already underway by INTO for a negotiation. We are working with our NITC colleagues to agree a common approach and we remain determined to continue to play a leading role in this process. Preparations continue for the continuation of our actions should sense not prevail. In the meantime there are differing tactical approaches being adopted across trade union side to the dispute but we remain as a NITC united on the demand that teachers have to be paid the 1% uplift awarded to every other education worker for the 2015/16 year. This dispute could lead to a complete re-examination of how teachers are remunerated and a wider review of teachers' terms and conditions. This is something NITC won't be rushed into and which will require careful and thoughtful management from the trade union side. INTO does not fear such an undertaking but we will be careful to bring the members with us every step of the way. Meanwhile the political shenanigans present us with an opportunity to raise the issue of teachers' pay with the canvassers from the political parties who will be knocking your doors looking for votes in the days ahead. INTO is content that members won't be shy in making it clear to the canvassers that the votes of teachers will only be going to those who are prepared to commit to reversing the decision of Minister Weir and pay teachers the 1% they are owed for the 2015/16 year.

Committee Information

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INTO has no confidence in Inspections!

In early October INTO, along with the other teacher unions, met with the Chief Inspector and others to discuss the ETI Complaints Procedure and a Myth Busting Document for teachers on school inspections. At the meeting the Chief Inspector expected the unions to agree the documents which had been issued late on a Friday evening for a Monday morning meeting. The teacher unions took the documents away and responded two weeks later.

On 24 October 2017, the Chief Inspector issued emails informing unions and schools of consultations on three documents, 'Revised Self Evaluative Framework', 'ETI Complaints Procedure' and a new 'Monitoring Inspection'. The surveys were available online but the completed versions could not be emailed or printed in any accessible versions for sending to members or for teachers to discuss in schools. The consultations closed on 3 December 2016 and on 9 December 2016, six days later, the Chief Inspector Issued a letter to all schools and unions announcing 'CHANGES TO INSPECTION FROM JANUARY 2017' which included changes to Sustaining Improvement Inspections and full Inspections, none of which were consulted upon. It also included changes to Inspection and Self Evaluation Framework and introducing a new Monitoring Inspection, both of which had been the subject of the consultations which closed 6 days previously. The letter also informed that 'the outcome of the consultations will be made available on the ETI website in due course'. It was clear that the outcomes of the consultation were not taken into account at all.

On 6 January 2017 INTO commenced industrial action short of strike to withdraw cooperation from the Education and Training Inspectorate. Members are carrying out the action and they are joined in this action by members from ATL and UTU, and more recently NASUWT. NAHT are also giving consideration to joining the action. The Chief Inspector is seeking to bully members into breaking the action by threatening the school with a follow-up safeguarding inspection as 'During the inspection, the school was unable to provide evidence that satisfactory arrangements are in place for safeguarding learners. The arrangements for safeguarding are, therefore, unsatisfactory.' Therefore for the duration of this industrial action, every school due to be inspected and not co-operating could be found unsatisfactory in regards to safeguarding.

The Inspectorate have advised Principals that in consequence of their refusal to engage with inspections as part of such industrial action, the Inspectorate will ;

1. Issue letters to the parents of pupils in the schools concerned implying that the school is unsafe by reason of the fact that the Inspectors were unable to carry out a safeguarding inspection.
2. Prioritise the school for a no notice inspection.

3. Publish a report suggesting a school is unsatisfactory because they have not received all necessary information to complete their report by reason of the industrial action.

In response to this threatening and scaremongering, the INTO, UTU and ATL have sent a solicitor's letter to the Chief Inspector informing her that we consider these threats to schools, on the part of the ETI, to amount to unlawful interference with our members' right to participate in legitimate industrial action. The letter goes on to demand that in order that the Unions may reassure our members that no such inappropriate and unwarranted action shall be taken by the ETI, we are

requesting confirmation that the ETI will hereinafter adopt a totally neutral stance with regard to the ongoing industrial action and will not seek to impose penalties of any nature on those schools, principals and teachers who decline to engage with the ETI due to such industrial action. We await the Chief Inspector's response!

INTO has attempted at every turn to negotiate with the Chief Inspector, to no avail. As a last resort the INTO Northern

Committee are proposing a vote of no confidence in the Chief Inspector at this year's annual Northern Conference on 3 March 2017.



NUALA O'DONNELL,
Senior Official

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Teachers give thumbs up to action on workload

INTO members' reaction to a recent workload and industrial action survey has both highlighted the positive effect the action is having on their working day and has united members as they focus on their workload.

When the returned surveys were analysed the five most popular actions, in rank order, were:

- 1) Not to undertake directed time
- 2) Boycott all new system & school initiatives
- 3) Boycott of new assessment arrangements
- 4) Action on PRSD
- 5) Provide only one written report per year.

The non-cooperation of the annual Governors' report was the least popular among ordinary members however was highlighted as the most popular with INTO principal members.

The sub-group of the Northern Committee tasked with gauging INTO members' opinions around the effectiveness of and communication of the action short of strike welcomed the opinions from the majority of returns which clearly showed that INTO does offer support to teachers who participate in industrial action. It was noted that some members felt that, in schools without reps, the information was not always available and therefore was sometimes open to interpretation by school management. Also there did seem to be a need for more clarity in relation to special needs and teachers in special schools. These points were then reported to the Northern Committee.

In relation to workload most felt that INTO's action, especially around

assessment, was decreasing their workload. Members felt that staff meetings had been happening too often especially for insignificant matters. Working from home and non-participation in new initiatives did reduce teachers' workload. Many teachers did, when filling in the survey, raise concerns that the working day still seemed to exceed the school day significantly at times running to a 45hr week.

The majority of returns commented that the impact of industrial action was such that the school day felt more manageable.

Because the survey was carried out before the announcement of the December 2016 ballot result, it was noted that the lack of action in relation to ETI was not seen as positive given that members felt obliged to frantically gather information for principals when inspections are announced. Unfortunately teachers felt that parents seem to be unaware of the industrial action and teachers felt that they need to be informed.

Generally it was felt that INTO are proactive in their approach to industrial action and the action is specifically tailored to the needs of members. Most agreed that the information sent to members from Northern Office was sufficiently detailed however many teachers, because of workload commitments, do not always take the time to read the information. It was suggested that information should be updated termly and therefore the bulletins should be coloured and titled differently to reflect the different terms of the school year.



TOMMY MCGLONE,
Senior Official

In response to the communication aspect of the survey it was felt that the INTO do communicate effectively with members. Some ideas that were proffered were that a smartphone APP in relation to industrial action should be developed with an alert to announce any updates to the action. Other comments included informing members on how to sign up to the ebuletin and perhaps including any updates as leaflets to be contained within the INTO magazine. Some respondents felt that INTO officers and officials need to visit schools more often.

Even though there was general agreement that the INTO action short of strike was comprehensive enough, some members felt that a boycott of ETI would reduce pressure in work. Many members felt that their job was simply to teach children and not spend valuable time with meaningless new initiatives. They also questioned the idea that when their contractual hours were completed then they should not be expected to work from home.

Many members took the opportunity to provide additional comments. These included taking action on excessive marking, greater action on cover at post-primary, a question and answer forum on the website, training in workload proofing of all current and new tasks and the belief that the ETI now do not simply inspect a school but expect a business model. Teachers generally live in fear of an inspection and that they are getting paid less now than before. Worryingly some teachers have decided to look at alternative modes of employment other than teaching.

The members that responded to the survey were satisfied that INTO was taking its lead from its members in targeting the appropriate areas and selecting the types of actions that are important and relevant to its members rather than the other way around.

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Transfer system continues to fail children

On Saturday 27th of January, those ten and eleven year old children who had been able to sleep, woke to await the arrival of the letter that, in their eyes, would define them as success or failures. 15 years after Martin McGuinness, in one of his last acts as Education minister, announced the abolition of the transfer test, children are still trapped in an education system, where the outcome of an unregulated test limits the choice of post-primary schools available to them.

The following Monday, despite the best efforts of their families and the teachers children who have been successfully educated together from the age of four, begin to see themselves as different from their peers. For those who have achieved a grade which allows them to attend a grammar school, school life will continue as normal, but for those who haven't, many will return to school with their self-belief and self-esteem damaged.

The majority of primary schools are at the heart of the local community. Pupils of all abilities are educated together for seven years, in an atmosphere where every child feels valued, and where the ability of children, in all areas of the curriculum, is used to encourage their peers. Children, and their parents have a shared experience of school life, enjoying a variety of activities, taking part in school plays, sports days, matches and school outings. The use of academic selection divides children and families. If all eleven year olds were able to move to the same local school, this sense of community could continue, benefiting both the post-primary school, and the local community. Academic selection not only disrupts these relationships, it can often make travel to school more difficult for the pupils, and makes the development of a network of strong local schools difficult to attain.

The educational task of teachers in non-selective post primary schools is

often more demanding than that of their grammar school colleagues. They have to give many children considerable support in rebuilding their self-esteem, and rekindling their enthusiasm for learning, before they can get back to the core purpose of their teaching. Yet no matter what the outcome of the transfer test, all pupils will be expected to follow the same curriculum, and will sit similar examinations at GCSE and A' Level.

Non-selective schools are already at a disadvantage due to the use of academic selection as an admissions criteria. Grammar schools are the only beneficiaries of the current transfer system. They will fill their places every year, which allows the school a modicum financial stability. Planning how the curriculum will be delivered, the availability of resources, and the subjects that are on offer, will take place with a degree of certainty that is not always reflected in non-selective post primary schools. Some of these schools face the threat of closure due to falling pupil numbers. This can have a detrimental effect on the staff of a school, where the constant uncertainty can lead to anxiety and stress.

The transfer test should not be seen as a test of a child's intelligence or potential, it is merely a snapshot of how a child performs in an unfamiliar building at a particular point in time. Many families feel that they must employ private tutors to give their child a better chance, further adding to already stretched household budgets, leading to feelings of failure for parents who cannot afford private tuition.

This was highlighted in a report, Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation (Iliad), commissioned by the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister in relation to socio-economic factors on success in education from 2015

which states, "The current system significantly favours those with positive family norms around education, for example, academically successful parents, and the financial capacity to afford, for example, private tutors," In September, Peter Weir, the Education Minister, sought to characterise his decision to allow primary schools to use their already depleted resources to prepare children for the unregulated tests as

providing schools with a necessary clarification, the removal of a threat and a device to promote equality. This view is not reflected in the facts, as in comparison to the Grammar sector, non-selective post primary schools have currently about three times as many pupils in receipt of free school meals. The bulk of research into the effects of academic selection on social mobility would tend to contradict the Minister's position.

It is clear that what is needed is a proper and open debate on the way forward for education in the north. Such a debate should reflect on the current educational and socio-economic research, should enable us to create a system which will allow every child to reach their full potential, rather than subjecting our young people to a discredited, divisive and stressful system which has continued to fail the majority of our young people.



MARK MCTAGGART,
Assistant Northern Secretary

IMPORTANT: For all members of the NI Teachers' Pension Scheme

If you have been a member of a teachers' pension scheme elsewhere in England & Wales, Scotland, Isle of Man or Channel Islands ("comparable teaching service"), your pension benefits will not be transferred automatically to the NITPS. If you wish to transfer in any such comparable service you must contact the

NITPS to request a transfer before 31 March 2017.

Existing arrangements, whereby a member was able to transfer comparable teaching service to the NITPS at any time up to retirement will no longer apply. To facilitate members, a grace period is currently in place (up to 31

March 2017) for members to apply for a comparable pension benefit transfer between schemes.

An application form is available from: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/tp67-application-to-transfer-in1.pdf>

Confidence at Work – An ICTU course for Trade Union members

Jim McLaughlin and Peter MacAllister attended this course during November 2016 and found it an extremely relevant and interesting course relating to current issues affecting teachers and trade union representatives.

The course focused on the two main areas of Building Confidence in the Workplace for Trade Union Representatives and Challenging Intimidating Behaviour in the Workplace.

The learning outcomes in this course were particularly useful as they aimed to develop an understanding of and competencies in:

- How building confidence may impact on union members within the workplace.
- How behaviours may contribute to building or undermining confidence in the workplace.
- How to bring about change in the workplace.
- Understanding the types and impact of intimidating behaviour in the workplace
- Knowing how legislation and policy may assist with challenging intimidating behaviour in the workplace.
- Being able to develop a trade union plan for dealing with intimidation in the workplace and building solidarity

Attitudes that affect confidence in the workplace can be extremely complex and subjective. When it comes to attitudes affecting confidence, any given situation can elicit a different response dependent on each individual's emotions and experiences. The environment itself can impact on the health and well-being of the worker and Barbara Martin, the ICTU tutor, was excellent in communicating and motivating representatives in ways in which they could help to change a hostile environment and create a sense of positivity and confidence through their engagement and working from an informed position. She provided facts, templates and structures for approaching problems and working with others to build trust and realistic, flexible approaches to dealing with management.

Attitudes displayed by those within the workforce can build as well as diminish



Jim McLaughlin and Peter MacAllister

confidence. Positive attitudes that increase confidence within the workforce are: feeling you can cope with the demands of your job, feeling you have some control over these demands, feeling you have the right support when these demands are out of balance, feeling your relationships within the workplace are professional and supportive, feeling your role is appropriate to your skills, knowledge and experience, and feeling that where change happens it will be done in an appropriate time scale with all information that will impact on work demands. Barbara Martin also looked at the impact on health and confidence when this does not happen and how the union representative can deal with those scenarios.

Importantly, it was addressed that negotiations of stressful situations must be based on reality [not wishful thinking] and that representatives need to be flexible while showing assertiveness based on knowledge of both problems and procedures. Of use here are Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Guidelines that cover the primary sources of stress at work, i.e. Demands, Control, Support, Relationships, Roles and Managing Change.

How stress is managed and its subsequent impact on confidence at work is very much dependent on the attitude of the management. Poor management as a

result of inappropriate training and a culture of ignorance of the stress mean that management standards will have a detrimental effect on workers confidence. It is not surprising that poor management is often cited as the main cause of stress and lack of confidence at work.

Building a confident workforce who feel supported by their union and their employer will be much more productive and result in less sickness related absenteeism. This is surely what employers desire. If unions and employers are seen to be working together for the greater good of all then confidence will increase.

Examples of the impact of building confidence within the workforce:

- Increase in self-esteem and emotional resilience.
- Awareness of tactics that avoid low self-esteem in self and others.
- Have a greater sense of self-worth, optimism and hope.
- Be more positive in their thinking.
- Challenge unacceptable behaviours.
- Unafraid to promote trade unionism within the workplace.
- More likely to value their own opinion.
- Have a good knowledge of rights resulting in members being better informed.
- Members are more likely to assert their rights as workers.
- Take advantage of union training.
- Increase in activism and solidarity amongst members.
- More likely to attend meeting, courses and conferences.
- More likely to engage in activities that will impact on union and workplace policies.

INTO will be running a Confidence at work course for school representatives in conjunction with ICTU in the near future. Members will be informed of the dates as soon as they are confirmed. It is in your best interest as a rep, and for your principal and staff that you attend this course and build on yours and your colleagues' confidence at work.

PETER MacALLISTER and JIM McLAUGHLIN,
School Representatives



Teachers' verdict on 0% pay increase

On Wednesday 18th January the INTO responded, very visibly, to the Minister of Education's imposition of a pay freeze upon teachers. The presence of teachers taking strike action demonstrated the anger of teachers who have worked hard, produced results and yet remained the only group within the education sector to be denied a pay increase. Sound bites released by the minister in the run up to the strike indicated that he believed that teachers would not support industrial action, they would not turn out, they would not close schools and that teachers would accept whatever he put on the table. The Minister did not make any effort to address the injustice of his pay award but instead called upon teachers "to reflect", this source of action was "futile." In addition to these sound bites the media machinery was turned up and

we found ourselves having to defend the rights of teachers to reject a 0% pay offer. Attempts to place teachers against parents were made and we moved to separate truth from lies, spin from facts. Below are the lies presented to distort and discredit our action. We have asked all teachers to challenge these lies and to do what we do best, educate and remove ignorance.

LIE ONE: TEACHING IS SUCH AN EASY OCCUPATION, WHY SHOULD YOU BE PAID MORE?

This first lie that was generated was that teachers have an easy job, they work five hours per day, have four months a year on holiday and when in school it is nothing more than minding children. This lie is used to remove any justification for a pay increase.

The truth is that teachers' workload has

continued to rise, as have the expectations and demands of management and Government. Price Waterhouse Cooper ranked teaching as one of the most stressful jobs and while pupils may not be in schools, teachers are. Weekends and evening are consumed with school work. Teachers cannot just leave their place of employment and forget about it until the next day. We are constantly working.

LIE TWO: TEACHERS ARE OVERPAID

This lie again attempts to remove any justification for providing a pay increase. It uses the highest figures it can get to demonstrate that teachers are already over paid and goes to the top of aspirational pay scales and uses phrases in the media including, "teachers can earn up to £100,000."





The truth: Teachers are all graduates, professionals, we left institutions such as Queens University and started work on a salary that is on average £7,500 below our peers and while graduate salaries increased we watched our salaries stagnate and then just stop. Now year by year teachers' salaries have begun to creep backwards. I used two salary slips from a teacher who is at the top of the pay scale and with no posts of responsibility, the first from September 2008 and the second from September 2016 to demonstrate the actual backward movement of our salaries. Our salaries have fallen by £722.28. That is real money, not percentages or any other nonsense, real cash that should be in our pockets. Aspirational figures that exist only in theory confuse the issue. We could point to aspirational figure earned by directors

of companies as the potential earning of a worker within that company but the reality is that only a select few will ever earn those figures. This use of spin will capture the headlines but it is important that we continue to fight it with fact. The salary of teachers is falling.

We are continually compared to other OECD countries. News headlines announce our ranking and position and DENI uses such data to benchmark our teachers. However, compared to these countries teachers in the north are paid on average 16% less. International research has shown that when teachers are well paid results go up. When DENI next publish the OECD data perhaps they might also acknowledge that these other countries demonstrate the value they place upon their teachers through the provision of higher salaries.

LIE THREE: TEACHERS WANT A BIG FAT PAY INCREASE

The ability to portray teachers as being simply greedy making unreasonable demands is such a common lie.

The Truth: Teachers deserve a pay increase that reflects their value and the increasing workload associated with our profession. Teachers are asking for the restoration of the meager and miserable pay award that was ours by right for 2015/16. This pay award is the first of our demands; it is the grand total of 1%. It is important that the public know that it is 1%. The figure is ridiculous when you compare it to our colleagues in the South but the non award reflects the attitude of management and the minister to teachers. The total figure in the budget would be just over 6 million. The provision of this increase is a signal that management are serious about entering into talks surrounding teachers' future pay. This would be a practical demonstration that management recognise the value of teachers in schools and that we are not to be taken for





granted. Comments made include the observation that if we had five wood chip burners the INTO could fund the increase in teachers' salary ourselves.

LIE FOUR: TEACHERS WERE OFFERED A JUST AND FAIR PAY INCREASE AND THIS WAS REJECTED BY THEIR UNIONS

The Truth: Teachers were offered a pay increase in exchange for surrendering the rights of new teachers entering this profession to the same terms and conditions of service that we all experienced. Young teachers would start £7500 below the average graduate salary and stay there unless the principal could find the money to allow them to move along incremental grades. The 9% of young teachers would have to go cap in hand each year to ask to be moved along the grades and despite doing the same work and the same hours and the same pressure would be paid less. The INTO rejected this as it would neglect our young members. Uncontrollable performance related pay for young teachers is not acceptable. The responsibility of INTO is to negotiate towards a just and fair pay offer.

LIE FIVE: TEACHERS RECEIVED OVER 3% PAY INCREASE SINCE 2015, AN ABOVE INFLATION PAY INCREASE

The minister presented this through various media outlets to confuse the public and to attempt to show that teachers have had the most generous pay increase among all public sector workers.

The Truth: 9% of teachers received a contractual increase in salary. They moved up the incremental grades. This is not a pay increase, it is a contractual right and

no amount of spin should be used to confuse this. Teachers received 1% for the two years from 2015 to 2017. It is important that teachers tell people the truth. We got 1% for 2016/17 and nothing for 2015/16. This message must be kept simple and if teachers take a look at their salary slips they will be able to provide the proof that this is spin and lies.

LIE SIX: WE HAVE NO MONEY TO FUND A PAY INCREASE

The Truth: This colleagues is the biggest lie. The money was there, the money was budgeted for and Peter Weir decided that teachers did not deserve that money and gave it away. He gave away money that I earned and money that you earned. He gave money that should be in our pockets. It is our money and we want it back. Nonsense talk that it has gone and he does not have any more so just go back and accept it is not acceptable. This assembly could find money to pay for failed airline routes and for pet projects that were allowed to over spend. When you want to find the money and it is important enough it is always there. Minister go find the money!!!

LIE SEVEN: PETER WEIR "I VALUE AND RESPECT TEACHERS"

The Truth: Our minister expected teachers to simply turn up, put up and shut up. He neither values nor respects teachers and as far as he is concerned we will just roll over. Minister and management that day has long since gone. Teachers will no longer roll over and take every new initiative, every new demand and every new education fad that comes along. Platitudes are not enough. If you want it

pay for it because that is the only thing that you truly value.

LIE EIGHT: INTO ACTION HITS OUR PUPILS

The Truth: INTO teachers have always put our pupils first and we ensure that our pupils receive the best of us. We teach our pupils to read, write, be creative, think and express their ideas. We give them choices for their futures, help to raise their potential and care for their educational, social and emotional needs. This education system has been underfunded and relies of teachers to patch it up and pay for the resources that schools need from their own pockets, this is failing our pupils. Our education system is at breaking point with a lack of resources, personnel shortages and is leading to continual increases in teacher workload. The unwillingness of our politicians to properly fund schools is what is failing our pupils.

For our Belfast rally we returned to Queen's university which, for many of those present was the starting point of their careers. It was from here that many graduated and being present in Queens was a reminder that teachers are graduates, professionals and part of a profession that impacts positively on society. Political spin is being fed to parents, the public and teachers have had to suffer the nonsense that derides our profession. On the day of the rally we stood together to tell the minister and management of this education system that we will no longer be taken for granted. We want platitudes turned into action.

SEAMUS HANNA, Chairperson





Defence For Children International – Palestine

Promoting the Rights of Children

INTO members will be meeting with representatives from Defence for Children International Palestine (DCIP) on a forthcoming trip to the West Bank in occupied Palestine this March. DCIP is a NGO committed to securing a just and viable future for Palestinian children in the occupied Palestinian territory.

For more than twenty years, they have supported and advocated for Palestinian Children: investigating and documenting grave human rights violations, holding both Israeli and Palestinian authorities to account, and providing legal services to children in urgent need. DCIP demand that national and international bodies enact stronger measures to safeguard this vulnerable demographic of Palestinian society – over 50% of Palestinians are children.

Since DCIP's inception in 1991, they remain the only Palestinian human rights

organization specifically focused on child rights. Their highest value is the pursuit of each child's best interests. To this end, they are guided by the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), as well as other international, regional and local standards.

As a national section of Defence for Children International (DCI), an international child-rights movement and non-governmental organization established in 1979, their aims are to "promote and protect children's rights in accordance with international standards." At the same time, DCIP autonomously develops its own programs in response to the specific situation faced by children in the Occupied Territories and Gaza. The main focus of the work of the Palestinian section of DCI is working with and representing the hundreds of children each year detained by the Israeli Military and speaking out, for instance, for the 32 children killed in the West Bank in 2016

by the Israeli Defence Forces, investigating the circumstances of their deaths and seeking justice for their families.

DCIP attended a Trade Union Friends of Palestine conference in 2016 and outlined the situation for the hundreds of school children detained under military law, harassed and intimidated by soldiers and settlers on their way to school and the psychological trauma caused by living in a situation where separation from family, denial of basic rights, constant exposure to state and communal violence and so on.

Details of the work of this inspirational and courageous group can be found on their website at <http://www.dci-palestine.org/> where you will find a range of resources including videos and case studies.

KEVIN DALY, Southern Area, Northern Committee Representative



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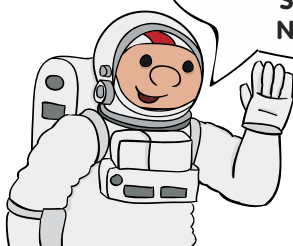
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Vere Foster medal presentations



Mark Murtagh presenting the John Cull medal to Breda O'Kane, St Mary's University College, Belfast



Seamus Hanna, Chairperson, presenting the Vere Foster Medal to Francis Murphy, St Mary's University College, Belfast

Draw winners – Dungannon Branch

Dungannon Branch initiated a draw to encourage participation in INTO and promote the positive work of the Union in schools at their recent AGM. Winners of the first draw, which entitles the winners' schools to claim 15 INTO Dungannon Branch sponsored jerseys,

were Sean Tornair from St Joseph's GS Donaghmore and John Kilpatrick, St John's PS, Moy. The same draw will take place at forthcoming branch meetings and only schools represented by teachers at the branch meetings are in with a chance of winning!



John Kilpatrick, Mary Dorman (NC Rep), Sean Tornair and Kevin Daly (NC Rep)

Belfast Pride hosts Trans event

As part of the 2016 Belfast Pride Festival, NIC-ICTU organised an event to highlight the experiences of trans young people. INTO was well represented at a packed meeting, along with representatives from other teaching unions and organisations.

Young people who are transitioning have a complex set of needs, emotional and practical. While society has moved towards full acceptance of lesbian, gay and bisexual people, the trans community still faces societal rejection, stemming from ignorance. However, the stories told by the young trans people at this event were inspiring and hopeful, and show that progress is being made. The courage displayed by the young people who have had to stand up for themselves and for their rights is immense, but they have already brought about great change. A next vital step is for schools and teachers to recognise the needs of their trans pupils.

The organisations working for trans youth include Gender Jam and SAIL (for parents and families of trans people). These groups have produced information for schools, which will be published in September. Schools must meet the needs

of all of their pupils, and this information should be required reading.

The most moving aspects of the NIC-ICTU event were the stories told by the young trans people. They spoke of the support they received from perhaps one teacher in their schools, who listened to their stories and accepted them as the people they are. The LGBT community's youth are among the highest risk group for self-harm, depression and suicide. We must not ignore the T in LGBT – if all schools are meant to provide an equally rewarding experience for all of their young people, then all schools must be ready to meet the needs of the trans community. As this community grows in numbers (and evidence shows that it is), and grows in confidence, then the day will come when all schools must have policies to protect and support trans young people.

When I asked for one thing that a school could do to help trans or pre-trans people, the answer was clear – listen, support and accept, even if it is only one teacher.

Be that teacher.

BRIAN R ADAMS, Ballyclare Secondary School

Chemistry is easy!



Well ok maybe that statement is a bit off the mark but chemistry can be easier than you might think.

We, at the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC), believe that everyone should have access to a high quality chemistry education which is engaging, inspiring and relevant. We are committed to promoting excellent science education across the world and are the largest non-government supporter of chemistry education in the UK and Ireland.

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Our Learn Chemistry website has over



4,000 free resources aimed at primary school pupils through to undergraduate students and every level in between. The resources include experiment simulations, such as aspirin synthesis and titrations, videos, games, handouts and many more. All assisting in the enhancement of chemistry to your students and hopefully allowing you to access professionally created and monitored resources for your professional practice. Spectroscopy In A Suitcase (SIAS) is a free outreach programme aimed at post-16 chemistry students. In conjunction with Queen's University Belfast, we bring the fully working Infra-Red, UV-vis and NMR to your school at a time of your choosing. While there, our

team of trained scientists cover the theory and allow the students to work with these three spectroscopic machines. The feedback has been impressively positive from the teachers and the students.

In Northern Ireland we work closely with various stakeholders to inform and contribute to the development of science in the primary school through to the creation of the various specification. We are also active in working with the All Party Working Group for STEM at Local Assembly at Stormont. We use our position of the world leading Chemical Professional Body to ensure our children can be equipped for the knowledge based future.

If you wish to find out more please contact us and sign up to our free Learn Chemistry Partnership (LCP). This free scheme will keep you up to date on our latest resources and events. As part of the welcome you receive a number of free goodies. Such as one free membership to the RSC, the world leading chemistry society, discounts on our paid CPD, Education in Chemistry magazine and regular contact with your RSC local Education Coordinator. .

We can help in making chemistry easier.

**DECLAN McGEOWN, Education Co-ordinator
Ireland, The Royal Society of Chemistry**
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Presidential candidates attend District 1 meeting



School Rep Prize Draw – Winner Stephen Jenkins, Dominican College, Fortwilliam, Belfast

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*Based on new car insurance quotes given by Cornmarket Insurance Services to UK teachers in October 2016 (for those who met acceptance criteria). Calls may be recorded for our mutual protection. Consumer Intelligence is a research agency which has specialised in the insurance and banking sectors for the past 12 years and surveyed 24,000 motorists. Cornmarket (under the trading brand IAM Surety) placed in three categories: Most Trusted, Most Recommended and Best Service in their 2016 awards. Cornmarket Insurance Services is authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority in the UK (Reg No 308099).