

# Printout

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Irish National Teachers' Organisation  
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann

February 2012



## INTO activists of all ages take to the streets

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# New Northern Secretary but the same challenges

*Gerry Murphy*

I FIND MYSELF NORTHERN SECRETARY of the INTO at a time of change across the educational landscape and within the INTO in the North. Change and its management has been my stock in trade as a teacher and a Principal and this plus my experience of working alongside many of the INTOs "big beasts" provides me with a strong foundation on which to develop into a Northern Secretary of the quality of those who went before.

The traditional honeymoon is denied me, subjected as we are to an assault on two of the fundamentals, jobs and pensions. The learning curve is huge and the demands of the position many and varied. As a teacher and a Principal I learned to be flexible and to address the challenges thrown at me in a thoughtful, pragmatic fashion. I intend to hold on to these characteristics as even at this early stage I can see that pragmatism and careful consideration of the challenges we face is going to be key in protecting the jobs and the terms and conditions, of you, the members. The journey ahead will at times be difficult but the INTO is not afraid of change and I am heartened by the expressions of support and goodwill you have shown me. With your continued support the INTO will remain the premier trade union for teachers in the North.

The INTO enjoys a high degree of respect among the numerous administrative bodies who contribute to the mosaic of educational provision here. INTOs views are valued and we are happy to contribute in a positive and constructive fashion to the broad educational debate and to the discussions around specific initiatives. As our education system constricts and evolves in the next few years it is in nobody's interest that INTO, the Department and Employers find ourselves in a series of confrontations that will paralyse change and sour the working environment. I as Northern Secretary will seek to maintain a constructive and positive industrial relations climate. I will be judged on my actions and these actions will be around protecting the hard won terms and conditions of you the mem-



« The last Northern Secretary, Frank Bunting, is a very hard act to follow but I will take my lead from his work ethic and his belief in the good sense of members »»

bers and contributing to the re-shaping of our education system in general.

In facing into this uncertain future it is vitally important that we are in a fit state for the challenges ahead. This means a period of re-evaluation and re-focusing for the INTO in the North. From the turn of the year Branches and District have been holding their AGMs, evaluating their activities over the past year and electing their officers for the year to come. This year more so than for many years in the past these decisions need to be considered in the light of the changing educational landscape we will face. Leaderships at Branch and District level will likely be called upon to engage in increased levels of activity. I as Northern

Secretary along with my colleagues in Northern Office are working on putting in place increased training provision to better equip local leaderships with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage these important roles.

At this time we are also electing representatives to national committees and the Northern Committee. In the case of the national committees the contributions our delegates make are of central importance to the INTOs well being. The knowledge of the practical implications, that we possess, of the outworking of many of the policy and structural changes being considered in the Republic are vital in shaping how the INTO in the South responds. Locally our Northern Committee will change fundamentally in character this year with around a third of the membership changing. Leaving the committee will be some of our longest serving and most experienced activists, coming on to it will be a new generation of activists bringing different perspectives and talents. This new committee will require some time to adjust, to become familiar with its role. I will again in co-operation with my colleagues in Northern Office be working on assisting them to bed in. My aim is to facilitate the transition in such a way as not to impede our effectiveness in any way and ensure that the committee gets off on the right foot.

It will take me time to grow into this role and I am very conscious of the responsibilities I have inherited. It is my intention to build on the successes of my predecessors and continue the work of ensuring the INTO in the North remains the authoritative voice on education and trade union matters for teachers in the North. I will require your continued support and at times no doubt your tolerance. The last Northern Secretary, Frank Bunting, is a very hard act to follow but I will take my lead from his work ethic and his belief in the good sense of you the members. Together we will meet the challenges ahead confident in our abilities to work through whatever is thrown at us.



# Pensions Update – Government employs smoke and mirrors

The Coalition Government in England published a Heads of Agreement document following intensive negotiations with the trade unions based in the UK just before Christmas. This document contained their latest proposals. INTO is concerned the proposals outlined in the Heads of Agreement still represent too much of a hit for teachers.

Specifically:

- ✂ all teachers would still have to pay an average of 50 per cent more for their pension;
- ✂ most teachers would still have to work longer for their pension, with the TPS normal pension age rising to 68 for those aged 33 or under;
- ✂ most teachers' pensions would still be lower due to 'career average' pensions; and
- ✂ all teachers would still receive less in re-

tirement due to the switch of pension indexation to lower CPI inflation instead of RPI inflation.

Under these circumstances, the INTO would have been unable to sign up to the Heads of Agreement just like as our sister union the NUT. Other large British unions such as NASUWT, UCU, and UCAC have also found they too are unable to sign up to the Government's proposals. These unions together represent 80% of the teachers in the TPS. We will keep you fully informed of how the Government's proposals in this evolving situation will impact on your pension entitlements. The INTO remains in close contact with the NUT and as we only have observer status at the Pension talks we will be working closely with them as together we seek to improve the position.

GERRY MURPHY

## INTO Northern Conference

**Friday 9 – Saturday 10 March 2012, Canal Court Hotel, Newry**

The Canal Court Hotel, Newry is this year's venue for Northern Conference. The Conference starts on Friday 9 March at 10.00am and closes at 1.30pm on Saturday 10 March.

Delegates to Northern Conference and Congress are elected at their Branch Annual General Meeting, which is held in January each year. All Branches and Districts are entitled to submit motions to both Northern Conference and Congress to determine the Organisation's policy for the incoming year.

Over 150 members will attend Northern Conference as delegates over the weekend to discuss the current issues in education. This year some of the issues to be debated include our ongoing industrial action, teacher redundancies and teachers' condi-

tions of service issues. This year, for the first time, we are also hosting a Panel Discussion with representatives from the main political parties on Friday evening preceded by a wine reception sponsored by Adelaide Insurance Services which will hopefully spark some healthy debate.

As well as the serious business of Conference, delegates also enjoy a dinner dance on Friday night with entertainment provided by Newry Branch. The dinner dance is open to non-delegates and attracts around 220 members, spouses and friends. Any member who is not a delegate should contact their Branch Secretary or Northern Office to secure tickets if they wish to attend.

We look forward to seeing you there!



## INTO secures improved severance deal

Following robust representations made by INTO and following a meeting, with the Department and Employers agreement has been reached to:

- ✂ A ninety-week severance package for this academic year. This means that redundancy payments will be tripled, subject to a maximum of ninety week's pay. Voluntary redundancies are to be submitted by 31 March 2012.
- ✂ The first £30,000 of a severance payment is tax free. The remainder of the payment is the subject of tax deduction in accordance with the teachers personal circumstances.
- ✂ Teachers may access their pension from the age of 55 onwards. However teachers who do so will find that their [pensions are the subject of an actuarial reduction of approximately 5%pa.
- ✂ The severance payment will be available to all teachers who are the subject of redundancy either through voluntary or compulsory means. With regard to the latter severance payments will only be payable if it is impossible to secure suitable alternative employment for the teacher.
- ✂ A ready reckoner for severance has been posted to all school representatives and is also available online at the INTO website.
- ✂ It was further agreed to create a "central clearing house" to manage compulsory redundancies. Further details of the clearing mechanism will be made available to schools as soon as possible. INTO continues to press for union involvement in the clearing house and has asked DE to ensure that voluntary grammar, Irish medium and integrated schools are included in the agreed clearing house.

In addition INTO will continue to press our demands for comparable funding to be made available for the next two to three years to allow schools to effectively manage their budgets and allow a planned rationalisation of the schools estate and the teaching workforce.

TONY CARLIN



# The Day INTO Came To Town!



**November 30** will be remembered as the day that public sector workers across the North of Ireland demonstrated in their tens of thousands against the proposed austerity cuts by the cobbled together Tory/Lib-Dem Coalition. Against the backdrop of 'Work Longer', 'Pay More', Get Less', towns and cities were brought to a standstill as thousands of people expressed their dissatisfaction at the prospect of an outright assault on hard-earned pensions and public services.

Never since the 1920s have workers united in the vast numbers witnessed at various rallying points in defence of public services, sending a clear and very loud message to

the 'folks on the hill' that enough is enough ... And it's time they listened, as they should remember, it's people-power that elected them as 'their' representatives to their respective positions within the NI Assembly.

Speakers at the rallying points articulated with extreme clarity and passion that we are not 'all in this together' as Mr Cameron and his millionaire Tory-led Cabinet claim and that the proposed cuts agenda would only harm further the tentative growth needed to bring the UK-wide economy back into balance and into the black. Speakers were loudly applauded for their realism and vision of the economic situa-

tion – why can't others see the perils and pitfalls of a cuts agenda?

The planned huge cuts to public sector spending will directly lead to job losses in the public sector. There will be school closures as Minister O'Dowd has clearly stated and that will mean wholesale teacher redundancies. Are we then likely to see a mass exodus of our young teachers to foreign shores? This is a likely scenario and one that must be resisted at all cost!



**DES McDONAGH**, *Northern Committee Chairperson*



# Awards for Excellence and Special Commemorations

## RECENT INTO PRESENTATION EVENTS



*Bronagh Hughes, St Mary's University College, accepting John Cull Medal on behalf of Karen McGonagle from Des McDonagh.*



*Peter Finn, Principal, St Mary's University College, presenting Mary Cahillane with trophy in memory and appreciation of Frank Bunting, a friend of the College community.*



*Katie Armstrong and Elaine Grimsley, Vere Foster medal winners, Stranmillis University College*



*Eimear McShane, St Mary's University College, accepting the Vere Foster Medal from Des McDonagh.*



# INTO-EBS



# Handwriting Competition

We are delighted to announce the launch of our 2012 INTO-EBS Handwriting Competition. This is the 20th year of our collaboration with sponsors EBS in celebrating handwriting and recognizing the talent of primary school children in this area.

Our aim is to celebrate the skill of handwriting and the competition will be judged on neatness, style, flair and layout of the handwriting. Details on how to enter the competition and application forms have been issued to schools and details also can be found on the INTO website.

An application form should be affixed to the back of each handwriting entry. We ask that you please take particular note of the guidelines for each category in order to introduce uniformity and to keep the competition fair. **Entries that do not adhere to the correct guidelines will not be considered for judging.**

We kindly request that the



parents/guardians of children participating in the two categories for special recognition for achievement in handwriting (F&G) are informed and are aware that their child has been entered into these particular categories. **Please ensure that the parents/guardians sign the enclosed consent form and the teacher completes a short citation as outlined in the competition rules.**

Please return all entries by **Friday 11 May 2012** to your local Coordinator:

**Mr Eddie Keenan,**  
10 Tokio Gardens,  
Belfast, BT15 5EE  
Tel: 9077 6950.  
Email: [eddkeen@hotmail.com](mailto:eddkeen@hotmail.com)



# Belfast to Ballydavid or Bust!



On the day of Franks funeral when the large crowd who had turned up to pay their respects and to see him on his way dispersed. Remaining were a small group of INTO members with others from the field of education and beyond. This group remained to support each other and to remember a friend and champion of teachers.

It had nothing to do with the Guinness, but it was decided that the best way to preserve his memory, was with a fitting tribute that would echo the humanity and service that characterised his life. There was a lively discussion as to what form this tribute should take.

Although Frank had been a member of the INTO Athletic Club and a keen participant over the years in various running marathons organised by the Union for charity, a quick glance around the table immediately ruled that out.

A number of ideas were flagged from all corners of the table, but it was decided in the end that a sponsored cycle from Frank's birthplace in Belfast to Bally-



david in Kerry would be an appropriate tribute. So began the "Belfast to Ballydavid or Bust" planning.

The assembled crew took its first sharp intake of breath... a short journey of approximately 300 miles as the crow flies but not that problematic as it was all downhill... or so

we allowed ourselves to believe! Consequently the 'team' was

formed to organise a cycle-event in aid of the charity that had supported Frank in his illness. The plan was, this marathon-cycle event

The only criteria were: to be slightly insane, have a bike with at least two wheels and a good set of pins to operate it with! The route we have chosen is one which will allow us to complete the journey in five cycling days with Easter Sunday off for good behaviour. It's not going to be a race but as Frank would have said, "slowly, slowly catch the monkey" or in this case the more haste the sooner the cardiac arrest.

As you can see from the route Belfast is at the top end of the island and Ballydavid at the bottom end of the island (as indicated previously, downhill) via Cavan, Athlone, Limerick and Tralee to Ballydavid. The final stage will be from Ballydavid to Killarney to coincide with the opening of Congress 2012 on Easter Monday.

We realise that not everyone will want to or be able to cycle the full distance so we have set out various points where members can join the event to complete a stage (you may have other suggestions as to where you would like to jump in and out). For those wishing to complete the full event a doctor's certificate confirming your mental instability will be required.

To this end we are now inviting all those interested in taking part in any way with this tribute to Frank to notify us at the Northern Office or through the Dublin Office so that sponsorship forms can be distributed.

BARNEY MAGILL





# Workload agreement reached

At the start of January 2012, schools were informed of a range of documents agreed through the Teachers' Negotiating machinery. The documents being issued include the following:

- ✘ TNC 2011/08 Workload agreement and associated appendices
- ✘ Appendix 1 – Guidance and advice on Cover Arrangements
- ✘ Appendix II – Model School cover policy
- ✘ Appendix III – Time Budgeting
- ✘ Appendix IV – Directed Time Budget Sample Pro-forma

The documents were developed through a formal claim made by INTO and taken forward by the Northern Ireland Teachers Council (NITC). The documents give direction and clarity as to how teachers and Principals can manage their workloads, achieve a reasonable balance between their working and personal lives and allow INTO members to easily assess if demands made on them are in fact reasonable or not.

It is expected that further guidance in the form of appendices to the workload agreement will be developed. These will include guidance on:

- ✘ Planning, Preparation and assessment Time
- ✘ Health and Safety and Working Time Regulations.
- ✘ Teacher Health and Wellbeing (THAW)



## INTO raises issue of incremental advance

INTO has become aware that teachers including Principals and Vice Principals are not being allowed to progress on their incremental scales despite meeting the necessary regulations or achieving agreed PRSD objectives.

INTO has raised this matter through the agreed negotiating machinery and also directly with the Department of Education. INTO is concerned that the payment of salaries is a contractual matter and at no time was INTO advised of the deal in paying incremental advance.

As a result of our representations, INTO has been assured that all incremental advances due to teachers will be paid with any arrears due. The delay in paying the monies was an insistence by the Department of Finance and Personnel that any progression by public sector workers was on the basis of a business case from the relevant department.

INTO has been advised the business case has now been prepared and is awaiting submission to DFP to allow the payments to be made.



*Tony Carlin*

## Workload Agreement – Why?

Over the past few weeks, INTO representatives have been receiving copies of the recently agreed Workload Agreement (TNC 2011/8) and its associated appendices on Time Budgeting and Cover. These documents are important both on a school level and on an individual level. The aim of the agreement is to set out clearly the principles which must govern work allocation for Principals, Vice Principals and Teachers. These are set out in the agreement as: an acknowledgement that teaching staff have the right to:

- i. reasonable workloads;
- ii. a fair distribution of work within the school and to raise concerns where this is not the case;
- iii. carry out their duties within socially acceptable working hours;
- iv. regular daily, weekly and annual breaks from work;
- v. enjoy other rights as specified in contractual terms and conditions and in other agreements without pressure to rescind or restrict these rights other than on a temporary basis.

In addition the agreement spells out four entitlements applying to all staff:

- i. That workloads will continue to be managed in an open, fair and equitable way at departmental/school level and that staff are able to challenge unfair and/or unrea-

sonable distribution of workload.

- ii. That workloads will be such that contractual duties will normally be completed within contractual hours. Actual work patterns may vary to meet the needs of the school, the department and, if appropriate, the individual but will not involve regular directed working during unsocial hours except by agreement.
- iii. Staff are required to have a break of a minimum of 30 minutes between 12 noon and 2pm.
- iv. Where a teacher and his or her line manager fail to reach agreement on any of the above, in the first instance the teacher should raise the matter informally and may refer the matter to the Board of Governors using the agreed grievance procedure.

The two appendices on cover and time budgeting contextualise the Jordanstown Agreement and clarify how a teachers workload should be managed and in respect of cover that this included within the specified teaching hours of 23.5 for a post primary and 25h for a primary school.

Further guidance will be issued during the year in respect of:

- ✘ Working Time regulations and Health and Safety
- ✘ Teacher Health and Wellbeing (THAW)

# References Material

References are frequently the subject of concern especially when teachers fail to secure positions within a school. The main concerns raised by INTO members relate to the issue of legal liability. The employer who Principal or Governor who gives an inaccurate or misleading reference to an employee in negative terms may find that they are subjected to a claim of negligence or defamation from that employee. On the other hand, the Principal or Governor who fails to mention serious concerns about an employee's performance and conduct could face a claim in negligence from the employee's future employer.

In general terms, the legal duties for employers when writing references are as follows: –

(a) To take reasonable skill and care to

ensure the accuracy of the facts in the reference.

- (b) To ensure that the facts are not presented in such a way as to give the reader an unfair overall impression of the employee.
- (c) To ensure that the information in the reference is not misleading.

Although legal claims are relatively rare, the risk of litigation is the main reason that INTO continues to raise with Employing Authorities, the need to review and reform the process for obtaining references. The legal position is that, although the employer has to take care if they write a reference, there is no legal duty to provide a reference for employees or ex-employees in the first place. In normal circumstances, an employer can simply

refuse to write a reference altogether.

Schools do need to be careful about not giving references in relation to employees who have raised issues of discrimination or made discrimination claims at the Employment Tribunal. In these cases, the refusal to write a reference (where a reference would normally be given) may amount to an act of victimisation and give rise to a claim for compensation.

INTO considers that the present practice of requesting scores for staff as part of a reference is outdated and we have highlighted these concerns. In addition we have suggested that as parts of reform of any recruitment practice that the only reference to be considered would be for the successful applicant and this only after a decision has been made by a panel to recommend the individual for appointment.

## Employment contracts

Many INTO members contact the Northern Office because they do not have contract of employment even after a number of years in a school. This article gives a brief overview of the issue of contracts of employment.

A contract of employment is an agreement between employer (Board of Governors) and employee (teacher) and is the basis of the employment relationship. A contract is made when an offer of employment is accepted. A number of rights and duties, enforceable through the courts, arise as soon as this happens.

Most employment contracts do not need to be in writing to be legally valid, but writing down the terms of the contract will cut down on disagreements later

on. The Employment Rights Order (NI) 1998, requires employers to provide most employees with a written statement of the main terms within two calendar months of starting work. Some schools may include an introduction to terms and conditions as part of the induction programme for new starters but this practice is uncommon. This gives employees a chance to ask questions and for the employer to test understanding of the employment contract.

Not all terms are always explicitly agreed in writing (express terms). The courts have established that all employment contracts have the following terms included, whether express or implied:

- ✦ to maintain trust and confidence

through co-operation

- ✦ to act in good faith towards each other
- ✦ to take reasonable care to ensure health and safety in the workplace.

Some implied terms can become part of the contract because of the employer and employee's behaviour, through custom and practice over time, or through a firm's rules (particularly if the employee has been made aware of them and given access to them).

INTO members who have concerns over their contractual rights should contact their Northern Committee or CEC representatives or the Northern Office. In addition general information about contractual rights is available free from the Labour Relations Agency.



## Relax Destress Have an Indian Head Massage

Massage includes upper back, shoulders, arms, scalp, head and face  
Phone Noelle – Cert. IHM Level 3

Assoc. Member of INTO

South Belfast 028 90 661546, 077 767 326219

*Donations – £20 suggested – to schools in Barriadas of Lima and Arequipa*



# INTO/UTU Joint Leadership Seminars

*'Handling redundancies and the potential impact of the Minister's viability audit'*



INTO and UTU have organised joint information seminars for school leaders in three venues across Northern Ireland on handling redundancies and the potential impact of the Viability Audits being carried out across the School Estate.

INTO and UTU are very aware of the financial crises schools are currently facing and have organised these seminars to provide principals and vice-principals with information and guidance in

relation to how to deal with redundancies within their schools, voluntary, transferred, and compulsory. The seminar will also provide information and guidance to principals and vice-principals on how to deal with the potential impact of the Viability Audit of schools, which is to be published by June 2012.

The seminars will take place from 2.30pm – 4.30pm, dates and venues detailed below.



Nuala O'Donnell



## Date Venue

<b>Monday</b>	<b>20 February 2012</b>	<b>Hilton Hotel, Templepatrick</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>21st February 2012</b>	<b>City Hotel, Armagh</b>
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>23rd February 2012</b>	<b>Silver Birches Hotel, Omagh</b>

Please contact INTO by email or phone 02890381455 to reserve your place at the seminar of your choice.

## Date for your diary

Annual joint INTO/UTU Leadership Conference will take place on Tuesday 15 May 2012 in the Hilton Hotel Templepatrick.



## Anti-Homophobia Week

The NITC LGBT Teachers' Group is currently organising an event for Anti-Homophobia Week. This public event will take place in Belfast on Tuesday 15th May 2012. The group welcomes participants from all the teaching unions. For further details please contact [lgbtnti@into.ie](mailto:lgbtnti@into.ie)

## Teacher Insurance Specialists, Adelaide Insurance, celebrate 20 years of success!

Teacher Insurance Specialists "Adelaide Insurance Services" paid tribute to their customers, stakeholders and employees at their 20th anniversary celebration held at Parliament Buildings, Stormont on 9 December 2011.

For a company proud of its Northern Irish roots this was a fitting venue. The guest turnout included Northern Secretary Gerry Murphy and Chair of the Northern Committee, Desmond McDonagh, pictured with David McKendry, Adelaide's Operations Manager.

Sam Geddis, Founder and Director of Adelaide Insurance Services paid tribute to the company's customers, stakeholders and employees who've been instrumental in Adelaide's success both in business and on the social responsibility front – always

integral to their business strategy.

"Now that we've come of age and going into our 21st year, Adelaide's future looks very positive. Our success is down to a solid foundation with the support from Cornmarket, the loyalty of our staff and the successful relationships we've cultivated with our business partners. Our sound track record in both the UK and Republic of Ireland markets is paving the way for bigger and better things for Adelaide"

Adelaide Insurance Services are the official insurer for the INTO providing car, home & motorcycle insurance.

Contact Adelaide for a quote on 028 9044 2200 or email: [into@adelaideinsurance.com](mailto:into@adelaideinsurance.com)

EAMON LENEHAN, Adelaide Insurance



David McKendry, left, of Adelaide Insurance Services with Des McDonagh, NC Chairperson

# Annual Education Conference

## *Literacy in a Changing World*

The INTO annual Consultative Conference on Education was held in Athlone in November 2011. Almost 400 delegates attended. The theme of the Conference was Literacy in a Changing World.

The theme was a particularly timely one, given the earlier publication of the Department of Education's Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools. One of the highlights of the Conference was the presentation of a gift on behalf of INTO by President, Noreen Flynn, to Seamus Heaney. Seamus made a very well received response to the delegates, recalling his time as a lecturer in Carysfort college and reciting six of his poems.

Dorothy McGinley, Strabane Branch, represents District 2 on the National Education Committee. Dorothy made a strong presentation to the Conference, giving delegates an insight into the DENI's Literacy

and Numeracy Strategy in Northern Ireland, *Count, Read: Succeed*, and its implications for teachers here. She drew parallels with the draft plan in the Republic, highlighting the focus on target setting and measurable outcomes, coupled with the lack of resources to support and deal effectively with pupil underachievement.

Dorothy's presentation was very well received by delegates, who felt that they had been given plenty of food for thought as to how the Republic's draft plan might, if unchecked, roll out.



BRENDAN HARRON

## New Online Resource for Schools

In January 2012, Education Minister, John O'Dowd, officially launched a new online resource designed to help schools to raise standards, share best practice and celebrate success. The resource, which is called *Every School a Good School TV* (ESaGSTV) can be accessed at [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk).

It is a showcase of video

resources promoting and sharing good practice on all matters educational, including *high quality teaching and learning, analysing and using data, providing challenging learning experiences in pre-school* and a host of other issues. It is expected that teachers will find the resource very useful in areas such as lesson planning, assessment and administration.

## Potential effects

The Department of Education has provided schools with many documents and legislation placing numerous demands on schools. Every School: A Good School, SENDO, New assessment arrangements, school Development Planning, and most recently Count, Read Succeed. Schools have embraced the challenging targets set by this requested change. Implementing change over the last 10 years has been part and parcel of post primary education. Many demands were seen as a burden on an already tired and over worked teaching staff – but we accepted these demands because we were told it was for the good of the school but more importantly for the good of the pupil. Management of schools implemented the arrangements.

I can only applaud schools as they pushed standards up in a climate of great difficulty. Why have standards risen? A dedicated staff, using their professionalism and expertise, a willingness to work with pupils who need that extra push to get them over the line to achieve their best. Teachers being supported by hard working classroom assistants, hard working administration staff, and having the backup of CASS.

No matter what type of post primary school we look at the demands are ever increasing. Suddenly, the Education minister announces the need for budget cuts and rationalisation. These cuts will have immense ramifications for the existing high standards being set and achieved in post primary education. Already schools are announcing cuts in staff. Subjects will now be delivered by non-specialists, class sizes will increase, students with special needs will no longer be given that extra time to push them towards their goals, the gifted and talented will be held back because staff are dealing with larger classes, teachers delivering a wider range of subjects because specialists are no longer there. The reduction of staff with the increase in the pupil ratio that this brings will lead to a reduction in standards and achievements.

As school budgets are reduced the key resource of schools will be dispensed with – TEACHERS. As teachers are removed standards will drop. As mentioned earlier, ever increasing demands are placed on schools. Where will Count, Read: Succeed – A Strategy to Improve Outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy sit? It is unrealistic and unachievable to implement change to improve standards in a climate where school budgets are being cut. To improve standards, class sizes should be reduced, staffing levels increased and resources improved. This will become the bedrock of the economy and produce the economic climate that we desire and deserve.

PAUL KEALEY





# of budget cuts

## A principal's view on the education cuts

Everyone is aware, in no uncertain terms, that there are economic difficulties and that times are tough. Money is very tight and from a school's perspective, difficult choices need to be made.

The 'mantra' coming from Stormont has been that the cuts are from London and that "front line services would be protected as far as possible".

As a Principal, I studied the Draft Budget for Education in NI over a year ago and looked at the reductions in various parts of that plan. With dismay, I realised that major reductions were being made to the Delegated Budgets of the schools and to the amount that schools are allocated to educate each child. Little was said after the Draft Plan was released and something like a 'Phoney War' ensued. No debate, no protests—nothing in the public arena anyway.

Not until an e-mail was sent on Friday 25th November (3.15pm by the way) to every Chairperson of Boards of Governors and to Principals. This e-mail stated that in the financial year (2012/13), the standard amount allocated to the school budget for each child will be reduced by £100—a reduction of 5%, another £20 in 2013/2014 (1%) and a further £100 (5%) in 2014/2015. This is the Department's definition of protecting frontline services!!

What catastrophic implications will this have on the schools and on the considerations that Principals and Board of Governors will have to decide upon? Decisions that will have negative impacts on all the children, parents and staff of the school. Every time a Principal has to make a difficult decision, it's not just against an Excel spreadsheet or budget return—it's about people, good hard-working people and the children who we serve.

In many schools, whether urban, rural, large, small, Primary or Post-Primary, it's children and people who will loose out. Here are some of the considerations that schools will be examining come April...

- ✂ Does the school need to call any redundancies (voluntary or compulsory)?
- ✂ Will there be greater class sizes?
- ✂ In some schools, the VP and/or SEN-



CO will be teaching full-time.

- ✂ Will there be enough staff to meet the needs of children with Special Educational Needs?
- ✂ Will larger schools have enough money for teachers unless there are composite classes?
- ✂ Can schools afford educational trips?
- ✂ Will there be fewer classroom assistants in P1 and P2?
- ✂ Will there be cuts in secretarial staff, supervisors, cleaners and dinner ladies?
- ✂ Will requisition to teachers for classroom essentials be cut?

These are only a few considerations on how to manage these cutbacks. And I ask the question WHY? Because the government says so. WHY? In order to bail out the banks. WHY? Because we are the Public Sector. WHY? Because the government cares more about the banking system and its greed than they do about children.

And what's more, with a reduction of 11% and £220 per child less after 3 years, with inflation running at 5%, with minimal pay increases (in fact decreases), pensions disseminated, employee contributions for pensions greatly increased, the government want us to raise educational standards. At whose detriment—the children and the people. More workload and stress for the teachers and staff.

Maybe the political parties should consider their position in the Stormont Executive. After all, the institutions were brought down over decommissioning and policing, yet no-one seems to think that the plight of children and their education is worth anything like that. Obviously not!! In my opinion, the blame for this situation lies with both the British Government and the Stormont Executive. It certainly doesn't lie with the teachers, the children nor the Principals. Yet they are the ones who will suffer. The Principals want to maintain and enhance educational standards and services, not cut them, but it's the Principals who will have to make the cuts that will affect the people in our schools for years to come.

**MARTIN SHORT,**  
*Principal,  
Holy Child  
PS, Belfast,  
District 1*



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