



School Workforce News

...nursery nurses, secretaries, bursars, learning support practitioners, site-keepers, school meals staff, teaching assistants, learning mentors, administrators, midday supervisors, librarians, cleaners, personal care assistants, technicians ...

GMB your union in school in Yorkshire & North Derbyshire

Minutes of the School Support Staff meeting held on the 20th January 2011

Three new delegates were welcomed to the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 20th October 2010, were agreed as a true record.

Administration of Medicine in Schools

One issue was raised from the previous meeting, the administration of medicine in schools. Kath Robinson, GMB national representative, asked the meeting to mandate her to take a strong message to the next national meeting calling for the administration of medicines in schools to only be carried out on a voluntary basis, she also asked the meeting to agree that volunteers should be paid for these activities. Sheffield Council is attempting to make the administration of medicines in schools part of support staff contracts.

There was a long debate on the subject and examples were given of support staff facing disciplinary action where children had been ill as a result of accusations surrounding the administration of medicines. The meeting unanimously decided that this task should only be carried out voluntarily and there should be a financial payment attached, Kath Robinson was mandated to ask the national committee to adopt this as GMB policy.

Leeds School Support Staff branch agreed to discuss this issue at their branch meeting with a view to submitting a motion to GMB congress 2011.

Public Sector Cuts to Jobs, Terms and Pensions

Neil Derrick - Senior Organiser

Neil outlined government plans to effectively privatise the NHS by franchising out the service to groups of doctors which would break up our national health service. He compared this with the push for academy schools. All academies are private businesses so for each one that is created the move away from our state education system becomes more inevitable. The Tories have stated time and time again that they wish to 'roll back the state' and their policies reflect this policy.

One hundred and twenty five thousand redundancy notices have already been issued throughout the UK, including 20,000 in this region.

In this region some authorities have taken a very hard approach and others are attempting to work with the unions. Sheffield Council, which is ruled by a Con-dem alliance, is attempting to bulldoze through cuts to pay and conditions and to dismiss employees. Leeds on the other hand is Labour controlled and is working with the unions to avoid compulsory redundancy. In Barnsley the council did not include school support staff in this year's cuts as the school budgets had already been set; now they intend to take 5% from their wages too, even though the saved monies will go directly back into the schools' budgets and not back to the council. The GMB is taking legal advice as these proposed cuts to school support staff are being made with no jobs saved as the saving will be made for the school budget and not the councils. Some head teachers have stated that they will refuse to implement them.

Where people working in schools have not joined the GMB, they should do so as a matter of urgency as everybody working in the public sector is under threat and workers will need the protection that only the collectivism of trade unionism can provide.

March for the Alternative - 26th March 2011 (London)

Government cuts will affect all aspects of our members' lives in Yorkshire and North Derbyshire. Cuts to jobs, terms and conditions, pensions and to services sees the biggest attack on working people's lives since the 1920s. Local government workers on lower pay were promised £250 for their pay rise in 2011 by George Osbourne, Chancellor, who has now reneged on his words. Other groups of public sector workers will receive the £250 lump sum, including teachers if they earn less than £21,000 per year.

The GMB will be prominent in the march which will be held in London on 26th March. We will be fighting for alternatives to the vicious cuts imposed on us.

Fighting Against The Cuts

- An unfair hike in VAT that hits the poorest the hardest.
- Re-organisation that risks privatising the NHS by the back door.

- Making families pay the price suffering cuts like **child benefit**
- Billions of pounds of local government cuts, squeezing local services, children's services, care for the elderly, sports, libraries, schools
- Hundreds of thousands of jobs at risk.

Fighting For The Alternative

- Every year we could raise £3-4 billion from a permanent tax on banker's bonuses
- £5 billion from a 50% tax rate for earners over £100,000
- At least £50,000,000 by cracking down on individual and corporate tax avoidance
- £15,000,000 by stopping tax relief being given to high earners.

These are just some of the policies that provide alternatives to the cuts!

Schools Report

Kath Robinson stated that there was no mention of support staff in the government's white paper on education. Delegates condemned the government's decision to scrap the School Support Staff National Negotiating Body and also condemned their push towards Academies and Free Schools.

Academies and Free Schools were private businesses outside of local authority influence and control, the meeting unanimously agreed to fight against the privatisation of our schools.

A report was given on violence in schools and particular notice was given to those staff working in special schools and especially those working in schools with excluded children. Staff suffered both physical and verbal abuse on a daily basis.

Staff were advised not to accept this sort of behaviour as the norm but to submit incident forms on every occasion, pursue personal injury claims through the GMB solicitors where appropriate and to inform their management that bad behaviour of the kind experienced was not acceptable.

A report was given from Barnsley delegates stating that school support staff had been included in the councils cuts, they had been given a stark choice by the authority of cuts of 5% or a cut of 2 hours to the working week.

Leeds nursery nurses have been under threat of a reduction in their pay because of the authority's desire to reduce them to term time only. Following negotiations which have lasted 3 years the loss experienced has been reduced from £4,000 per annum to £393.

This is still a loss at a time when all prices are rising and many staff have now withdrawn the goodwill that they have freely given for many years. Of course they will still carry out their duties professionally and with care but many school staff are withdrawing from working above their contract and, therefore,

their pay line and also stopping working all those unpaid hours. Sheffield delegates said they were sick of cuts and impositions by the Liberal council and vowed to make our organisation in Sheffield schools stronger.

Guest Speaker Hilary McLaughlin Criminal Solicitor Thompsons

Hilary responded to a number of issues including the physical abuse of staff. She reiterated the fact that employers responded to being hit in the pocket and advised members to submit a personal injury claim where appropriate. She gave examples of companies where staff experienced work caused injuries on a regular basis, the companies ignored complaints and grievances but made workplace conditions safer once personal injury claims were submitted. **Where appropriate members should submit personal injury claims when they have been assaulted by pupils.**

Hilary talked about allegations against school support staff and the absolute necessity of members having a lawyer from Thompsons with them whenever the police are involved. She stated that the police had no right to take photographs, fingerprints or DNA even when interviewing under caution but did have the right if a person was arrested.

She gave examples of staff being arrested upon arrival at the police station even after attending on a voluntary basis and stressed once again that GMB members should never attend a work related police interview by themselves but should always be accompanied by a Thompsons' solicitor.

On other occasions unaccompanied employees have accepted 'cautions' assuming that a caution was no more than a slap on the wrist. In fact a 'caution' is an acceptance of guilt and people have lost their jobs as their previously clean CRB is now blotted. **Never accept a caution.**

Hilary gave various examples of staff that had been accused unjustly but had still experienced months, and in some cases, years of investigation or pending court cases. In some instances their lives had been wrecked.

On a more optimistic note she reported that on the occasions that Thompsons attended interviews, members were in and out of the police station within 10 minutes and no further action was taken.

<p style="text-align: center;">Date of next meeting at Regional office 10th of May 2011 at 10.30 am</p>
