



**Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association**



**NEWSLETTER OF THE SCOTTISH SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION - JANUARY 2015**

## General Secretary

We are pleased to announce that Seamus Searson, who was successful in being chosen as the “Preferred Candidate”, will be the new General Secretary of the SSTA. A start date of 2nd February 2015 has been agreed. We extend a warm welcome to Seamus and wish him every success in his new post.

## Reports from October and December Council

### Motions

The following motions have been passed

#### Motion 1

The SSTA calls on the Cabinet Secretary for Education to give the option to delay, by one year, the introduction of National 7, CfE Advanced Higher.

(October)

#### Motion 2

The SSTA calls on the SQA to review and where appropriate to reduce the assessment demands placed on teachers due to the National Qualifications for CfE.

(October)

#### Motion 3

At this time of unprecedented curricular and examination change we urge the SQA to set an annual date by which all documents should be released in their final form prior to commencement of use. Where possible, after this date there should be no further changes to these documents except in preparation for implementation and use in the following year.

(October)

#### Emergency Motion

Council acknowledges concerns which have been expressed regarding recent nominations for the post of

General Secretary and instructs Executive as follows:

- To ensure that any internal procedures arising from these concerns are carried out as expeditiously as possible.
- To proceed with the election, in the manner required by legislation, ensuring that all candidates nominated by districts and still seeking election appear on the ballot paper.
- To commend to the membership, in the strongest possible terms, the candidacy of Council's “Preferred Candidate”, Seamus Searson.”

(December)

The following motion was remitted to the Education Panel

In light of our belief that all pupils have a fundamental right to a quality education and in view of the growing postcode lottery of educational provision caused by shortages of specialist teachers in some parts of Scotland, we call on the General Secretary to contact the Chair of the Scottish Parliament's Education and Culture Committee to initiate an investigation into the current funding of education in Scotland including the extent to which that funding is delivering the required numbers of specialist teachers in all parts of the country.

**The Voice of Scottish Secondary Teachers**

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## REPORTS

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Various reports were given at Council in October and December:

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

The General Treasurer informed Council that there would be a small increase in subscriptions for 2015. The subscription for full members has increase by 10 pence per month or by 5 pence per month for retired, part-time, job-share, temporary or supply members.

An annual subscription will be £167.20 for all members who pay their fees by 31 January 2015. This reduced tariff includes annual direct debit, cheque, part-time, job-share and retired members. This saving is clearly of advantage to members and is only available to those who pay before the end of January.

The rates for 2015 are as follows:

- Full members £167.20 if paid annually by 31 January 2015, or £182.40 if paid afterwards; £15.20 per month if paid by monthly direct debit.

- retired, part-time, job-share, temporary or supply members: £83.60 if paid annually by 31 January 2015 or £91.20 if paid afterwards; £7.60 per month if paid by monthly direct debit.

Members who have elected to pay their subscription by annual cheque are reminded that these should be forwarded by 31 January 2015, either through school representatives or directly to the Association offices.

Members who pay annually by cheque are encouraged to transfer to annual Direct Debit. This method not only reduces workload for both school representatives and office staff? Paying by Direct Debit guarantees that the payment will be taken in time to obtain the discounted subscription. Direct debit instruction forms can be completed online or downloaded from the website at [www.ssta.org.uk/ddi](http://www.ssta.org.uk/ddi). Members who have opted to receive information on revised subscription rates directly to their home addresses will be contacted early in the New Year.

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### District Secretaries Training 7 November 2014 – Stirling Court Hotel



*John Crichton,  
Professional Officer*

Over 20 District Secretaries gathered in Stirling for their bi-annual training day. It was refreshing to see so many new faces (not that I was unhappy to see the “old” (well-known)

ones. The day opened with welcome by the President, James Forbes, followed by him outlining the responsibilities of District Secretaries in terms of their constitutional and Local (LNCT) roles. This was especially helpful for the newer District Secretaries.

This was followed by what the Agenda entitled “Enhanced Role of a District Secretary” and was given by Ian MacLean, the long standing DS for Stirling Council. Ian gave an inspirational and humourous talk

(note free I might add) on his origins and progression in the SSTA. His fundamental message was “you get far more for the members if you do not poke them (the employer) with a stick or rattle their cages ..... work with the employer not against them”. Wise words indeed though for the record Ian was never slow at telling his employer when they were doing something wrong but it was always in a way that did not damage relationships.

Ian’s contribution was always going to be a hard act to follow and it fell to me to recall my Experiences, Observations and Concerns in relation to the Disciplinary Process. This focused not only on the actual stages of the policy but also on how best to support members going through that process which is

inevitably a stressful and challenging time for them.

We then broke for lunch. The informal chat between District Secretaries at lunch time is always a time to share experiences and information about how different employers are dealing with similar problems. Common themes discussed were supply shortages, CfE, and workload ..... now there's a surprise!

After lunch Stuart McCullough, Independent Pensions Adviser, initially outlined 2 workshops that he was prepared to run for member either on a district or area basis. These were:

- Understanding the Pension Changes Workshop
- Retirement Workshop

Stuart then outlined the impact of the 2015 proposed move to a Care Scheme rather than the Final Salary. He stressed that despite the loss of the Final Salary scheme the proposed CARE scheme was a "good" scheme and for a member to purchase the equivalent pension benefits privately would require the individual to set aside around 29% of income over his/her career.

Finally Stuart explained briefly the new changes that come into force in April 2015 regarding Additional Pensions, AVCs and Drawdown Rules which will give significantly increased flexibility for those retiring

after that date.

Liz Hunter, PO then led a session on Recruitment and asked district secretaries in groups to draw up a list of 10 reasons why teachers should join the SSTA and to rank them in order of importance. In other words what was the unique selling point of the SSTA.

The consensus was that we were different and unique because we were: Scottish (not UK) ..... Secondary (not pre-school, primary or FE) and ..... for Teachers (not LSAs or music instructors). We believe, passionately, that the job of a secondary teacher is different and unique and as a result deserves a separate voice.

The clue is really in the name ..... some said!

The day closed with Stewart Dick, from Payplan giving an overview as to how his organisation can support members deal with and manage any debt problems.

The feedback from the delegates was that they found the day informative and constructive and helped them gain a wider understanding of the many of the current issues being faced by many of our members.

## 5% Pay Claim for 2015



*Euan Duncan  
Convenor, Salaries  
and Conditions of Service*

The SSTA has joined with colleagues in other teaching unions to present a 5% salary claim for 2015-16 to the management side of the SNCT.

Since 2001 teachers' salaries have gone down in value by around 15% because of rising prices, restrictions in previous pay claims and increased pensions contributions. There have been major changes in the way the curriculum is delivered and assessed in Secondary schools. Everyone knows that there have been critical staff shortages. These mean that teachers are working harder than ever and receiving less than they should in their pockets.

As well as a 5% increase, partially to help cover rises

in the cost of living and partially to restore eroded pay, the SNCT Teachers' Side is seeking other guarantees. It is looking for supply teachers' pay and conditions to be restored to help solve the critical shortage of supply teachers. Against a backdrop of proposed local authority cuts to teacher/pupil ratios in schools, the Teachers' Side is calling for the number of teachers in schools to be maintained in line with pupil rolls to help improve young peoples' outcomes. The Teachers' Side is also calling for teacher workload to be reduced through well-evidenced local and national agreements.

Working with our SNCT colleagues we welcome the shared commitment to recognising teachers' hard work and the important part they play in developing Scotland's future. We look forward to reaching a negotiated settlement soon.

## Supply Teachers

As part of the April 2014 pay settlement it was agreed that a working group was to be set up to consider the problems being experienced finding supply teachers. The SSTA has been represented on the national working group by the convener of the Salaries and Conditions of Service Committee, Euan Duncan. The working group will report soon with a number of recommendations for local authority employers. The report will be available through the SSTA website when it is published.

## Shared Parental Leave

Parents may be entitled to shared parental leave if their baby is born or they adopt a baby on or after 5 April 2015. This means that both parents can share time off work to care for their new child during the baby's first year or within a year of adoption. Guidance should be available from employers; any member expecting to become a parent should contact a Professional Officer at the SSTA for advice. The SNCT Joint Secretaries are also expected to publish advice soon and this will be available on the SNCT website [www.snct.org.uk](http://www.snct.org.uk)

## Holiday Pay Accrual for Additional Work

Due to a recent European Court of Justice ruling it has been established that holiday pay should also have been accrued on any Additional Work, potentially going back to 1998. Some teachers will be affected by this decision and the Additional Work could include supported study, tutor groups, holiday revision groups at rates paid by the Local Authority, development work paid for on an hourly basis, or additional Music, Drama or PE activities paid at an hourly rate, e.g. a Council wide event.

The effect of the judgment is that there will be an additional 8.3% of the amount paid due to those who have carried out this work. Some authorities have already started applying the 8.3% increase to these payments and some have backdated the payments to a variety of dates.

COSLA are currently trying to negotiate a national settlement with non-teaching unions which proposes this 8.3% uplift on any payment which falls into the category of Additional Work backdated for an agreed

period of time. The negotiation is around how long the backdating is applied and what proportion of the sum due will be paid. If an agreement is likely with these other unions, COSLA has indicated that it may wish to negotiate the same settlement with the teacher unions. The advantage of such an agreement is that local authorities would not require any evidence to support the back payment of sums due, they will use their own payroll information, but they will only go back the nationally agreed period of time, possibly a few years. This may suit some members who do not have the necessary evidence for a claim but not others who have retained relevant payslips.

The SSTA has been establishing how many members may be affected by this judgement and whether they have sufficient evidence to substantiate claims. Early indications are that a national settlement may be of greater benefit to the majority.

Please note that all work done within a teacher's normal contract already attracts holiday pay as set out in the SNCT Handbook and the rates paid for the Additional Work are not negotiated under the terms of the SNCT Handbook. These are additional voluntary duties.

## Pensions

Consultations have recently been received from the Scottish Public Pensions Agency and circulated among members. The Salaries and Conditions of Service Committee has asked the Acting General Secretary to make an SSTA response to the technical questions on behalf of members.

## Flexible Working

Following extensive negotiation, flexible working was introduced in April 2014. There is a possibility that some schools may seek to introduce flexible working this year when next session's Working Time Agreements are negotiated. There are a few things to bear in mind:

1. Flexible working is not an ad-hoc arrangement. It is not directed by the local authority and cannot be imposed.
2. Where there is a collegiate agreement in the school's WTA Negotiating Group on a planned,

flexible approach to working hours within an individual establishment and the national criteria are met, a school can develop an alternative approach to working hours.

3. School WTA Negotiating Groups are encouraged to engage with LNCT Joint Secretaries if advice is required on formulating an alternative approach. These will be submitted to LNCTs with the WTA for confirmation that they meet the national criteria.

School representatives are advised to contact their District Secretary or an SSTA Professional Officer for advice if necessary. The national criteria can be found in Appendix 2.17 of the SNCT handbook at [www.snct.org.uk](http://www.snct.org.uk)

### **National Criteria:**

- (i) A school may operate class contact time, preparation and correction time and remaining time over a longer period, normally 2 weeks, but not exceeding 4 weeks;
- (ii) Maximum class contact time in any single week is restricted to 25 hours, subject to an average of 22.5 hours over the agreed period of variation.
- (iii) Any reconfiguration of class contact time would be subject to discussion and agreement between the Headteacher and the relevant teaching staff.
- (iv) The school proposal signed by the Headteacher and a representative of the teaching staff should be submitted to the LNCT Joint Secretaries.

(v) Preparation, correction and collegiate activities are key elements of the work of teaching professionals and Headteachers must allow appropriate time for such core activities.

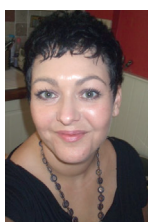
(vi) The working week must average 35 hours over the agreed period of variation. Preparation and correction remains as a minimum, one third of the class contact time delivered each week. The remaining time is for collegiate activities, as per the schools Working Time Agreement. Where class contact time is varied from 22.5 hours per week the agreement must show how this will be averaged out over the period of variation, including staffing arrangements; time for preparation and correction will be guaranteed within that period.

(vii) This flexible approach should be planned prior to the beginning of the academic year; this should be part of the school's annual working time discussions and not normally used to deal with short term cover situations. Any flexible approach will be reviewed on a regular basis by the school Negotiating Group, any revisions which are deemed necessary will be subject to the same level of joint agreement outlined in (iii) and (iv) and reported to LNCT.

(viii) Planning at school level should be characterised by collaborative, consultative and collegiate processes focused on the best outcomes for the school and its pupils.

Time and place arrangements will be retained.





Yvonne Stewart  
Professional  
Officer

## Your SSTA Equality Panel

Panel members have been looking at ways of increasing their own specialist knowledge – as well as supporting and building SSTA member awareness - of Equality Act duties and responsibilities. Several training providers, including LGBTYouth Scotland, Stonewall, respectMe and Capability Scotland, have been identified and the Panel hope to have training up and running in the New Year. The Panel hope to offer training in the first instance to Panel members – expanding to others should there prove to be a demand. This is a significant area of law and given the onerous Equality duties on Education providers it is essential that we maintain a current bank of specialist knowledge. Information regarding this training initiative will follow – so please let Yvonne Stewart (Professional Officer) know if you would be interested in any future sessions.

The Panel did send out FOI requests to all Local Authorities early this year in an attempt to gauge the quality/quantity of ‘equality and diversity training’ being offered to teaching staff and seeking information regarding the numbers of schools registered for the UNICEF ‘Rights Respecting Schools’ Award. A very patchy national picture emerged – and it is clear that many Authorities are only now beginning to address the question of staff training on Equality Act duties and responsibilities.

At their November meeting the Panel members present

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## SQA



Iain Glennie  
Professional Officer

The planning for the SQA diet 2016 is already underway. This exam timetable will be the first one with no dual presentations, and many will consider it a blue print for a number of years to come.

The SSTA was represented at a meeting early in December, along with other professional associations,

discussed actions that could be taken to decrease the potential barriers to union activism – looking particularly at the measures that might be taken by the SSTA to help those with caring responsibilities to attend meetings. Panel members are interested in hearing from you about the difficulties you experience or barriers you perceive keep you from taking a more active part in your union contact Yvonne – yvonnesh@ssta.org.uk - if you want to share your own suggestions or tell of your own difficulties.

Panel member, Susan Thorburn, will be attending an interesting and topical Conference which links directly to the protected characteristic of ‘religion or belief’. The Conference, entitled ‘A Time for Reflection on Religious Observance?’ will take place in Edinburgh on 4 March 2015. This Conference aims to “deepen understanding and promote discussion of RO in schools; examine the current arrangements – in particular, the many benefits and opportunities to assist and engage our young people in a culture of tolerance, inclusiveness and shared understanding; and explore potential areas for further improvements – not least the joint Church of Scotland-Humanist Society initiative to review the terminology used.” Susan has promised to report back on the Conference.

The Panel are always looking for new members and would really welcome your involvement. If you think you might be interested in the work of this Panel please don’t hesitate to contact either Catherine Nicol (Panel Convenor) or Yvonne Stewart (Professional Officer) through the SSTA Office for more information.

and representatives of the many and varied stakeholders in the examination process.

No firm decisions were taken at the meeting, but extensive discussion took place and the Timetable Consultation Group will be involved in feedback on the first draft when it becomes available.

The examination diet will be shorter than in previous years, taking only 20 – 23 days for all examinations.

The proposed start date would be Monday 9th May 2016, and in future it would be unlikely to have any examinations before the May Day holiday. In 2016 this start date will also avoid the provisional date for the Scottish Parliament elections, which with the proposed lowering in voting age could affect many of the candidates.

High uptake subjects will be given, where possible,

a day on their own. The number of co-incident examinations has dropped from over 2500 in 2010 to only 324 in 2014, it was hoped that this will drop still further. It was also hoped to take into account common subject combinations to further reduce the number of candidates having “back to back” examinations.

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## Myjobscotland

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Please note that Myjobscotland is changing its website in January 2015 which will require members to re-register for an account to set up job alerts and search for any vacancies in which you may be interested.

The old site will be kept active until 31st March 2015:

- for jobs that have closed but are still active whilst the job is filled
- to allow councils to still communicate with you about your applications e.g. email, mail, phone
- for access to your old account to allow you to take back-up copies of your previous applications, which you

can then use to copy and paste information from the old system to the new one.

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## Senior Manager Seminar

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The Senior Managers' Advisory Panel is holding a Senior Manager Seminar. The Seminar will take place on Saturday 14th March at Stirling Court Hotel, University of Stirling and is free to SSTA members.

The theme of the seminar will be “Leadership” and the speaker will be Gillian Hamilton, Chief Executive of the Scottish College of Educational Leadership (SCEL).

Should members wish to attend the seminar they can register for a place by completing the registration form [www.ssta.org.uk/smseminar](http://www.ssta.org.uk/smseminar) no later than Monday 3 March 2014. Alternatively you can contact the office for an application form.

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If you have any problems then please do not hesitate to contact us at:  
We are here to help YOU!

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14 West End Place  
EDINBURGH  
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OR

By email at: [info@ssta.org.uk](mailto:info@ssta.org.uk) Or in an emergency by telephone on 0131 313 7300

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