



Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association

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NEWSLETTER OF THE SCOTTISH SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

REPORT OF CONGRESS 2017 - CRIEFF 19 MAY 2017

SSTA Put Pupils First - Give Teachers Time to Teach!

PRESIDENTS ADDRESS - EUAN DUNCAN



Our focus this year has been putting pupils first and giving teachers time to teach. This single line summarises the aims of the Association, which are principally to advance education in Scotland and to safeguard and promote the interests of Scottish secondary teachers in all matters, especially those which affect salaries and conditions of service.

Founded in 1944, our Association has always been of the view that Secondary teaching is distinctively different from primary and tertiary education with its own unique concerns. There can be little doubt that the few years that people spend in Secondary school come at a time of great change and development in youngsters' lives, and yet it is also the time when success matters.

Through this time in youngsters' lives, often stormy and stressful, teachers have the challenge of encouraging pupils to be conscientious in their studies and open to learning in all its forms. It is the Secondary teacher's complex calling to stand as judge, witness and supporter of achievement.

While being bright helps with success, being conscientious, open and stable provide the conditions for successful learning to take place. When these conditions are right attainment rises. Secondary teachers desire success for their pupils and when the conditions aren't right teachers feel a responsibility, they feel a need to try and make the conditions right. The drive to encourage conscientiousness, to open young minds, to maintain good health, to get youngsters 'through' their exams often comes at a personal cost to teachers. Although exams should be an adjunct to all other learning taking place, formal assessment has grown out of control to take up an inordinate amount of time and effort. Giving youngsters the emotional stability they need to get

through the endless measurement and assessment that takes place demands the right skills, patience and time.

How often do we hear people say, "If only we had the time, if only we had the staff, if only we had the resources?" While the broad approach to curriculum in Scotland has changed and generally improved, there has been a significant deterioration in time and resources. 'How Good Is Our School?' encourages teachers to reflect on how good they are at improving all learners' outcomes (including wellbeing, equality and inclusion), yet too often Secondary schools are still measured in terms of simple data eg exam success, leaver destinations. Harder to measure is the tremendous value that Secondary teachers add to life after school for young people growing up. Being resilient and ready to cope, collaborating successfully with others as part of a team, and learning from them critically and cooperatively are large parts of learning in schools and yet they are largely ignored in favour of formal tests. These are qualities

which society needs in its formal and informal structures, they have played a large part in what has enabled humanity to succeed, and they can close attainment gaps.

Teachers are putting pupils first, but they need time to teach. They need time to nurture the fertile conditions that allow deep and sustained learning to take place, to develop

strong learning relationships and bonds of trust.

As well as recruiting and retaining the right number of teachers, and offering them good prospects, in schools we need a rainbow range of adults with different roles and skills. We need enough money coming in regularly to allow for sustainable planning, rather than a

flash of cash for a year or two. And we need to be properly paid for our efforts. Working together in union, the SSTA continues to push hard to improve learning conditions for everyone in Scottish Secondary schools.

You can see video of the President's full Address to Congress at www.ssta.org.uk/congress-17

Congress 2017 Motions

The Following motions were passed at Congress:

Emergency Motion 1

Because of the radical change in content and lack of preparation time, the SSTA demands that the Cabinet Secretary for Education instructs the SQA to suspend immediately the changes to National 5 Computing Science and Biology



Proposer: Kevin Campbell, Education Committee

Emergency Motion 2

Young people are starting their National 5 courses as we speak. The SSTA demands that the Cabinet Secretary for Education meets with the SSTA to negotiate appropriate and realistic timelines for changes to National 5 qualifications.

Proposer: James Cowans, Education Committee

Motion A

The SSTA demands that the Scottish Government and Local Authorities respect GTCS registered subject

specialists and employ only such teachers to teach and assess all accredited courses.

The SSTA also calls on the GTCS to specify the requirements for teachers to deliver new courses which do not have a tradition of teacher training.

Proposer: Peter Thorburn, Education Committee

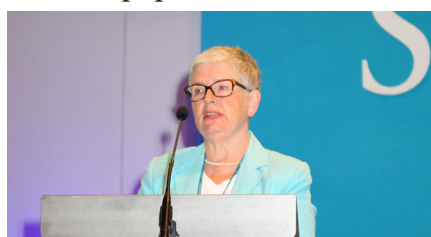
Motion B

Since the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence, there has been a squeeze on a number of core subjects resulting in a reduction of depth and breadth. The Association calls on both HMIE and Local Authorities to ensure a more balanced approach to all subjects within the Curriculum.

Proposer: Stuart Hunter, Lothian Area

Motion C

Insight has huge impact on the working of schools. The SSTA demands that the Scottish Government reviews the structure of the Insight Dashboard to minimise any unintended consequences and ensure schools are organised for the benefit of pupils, not statistics



Proposer: Ruth French, Education Committee

Motion D

Congress believes that having parts of National Course Assessments that can be completed at home contributes to the gap in attainment that exists between pupils from different backgrounds.

Congress calls on the SQA to end this unfair form of assessment.

Proposer: Gordon West, Aberdeenshire

Motion E

The SSTA calls on the Scottish Government to promote and incentivise subject specialists with an appropriate career structure thus maintaining subject specialism and enhancing pupil attainment.



Proposer: John Guidi, Education Committee

Motion F

The Association believes in equity of opportunity for career progression for all teachers. It is unacceptable that teachers who are not qualified to teach RME/RMPS are increasingly being expected to teach this subject. It reduces the value of the subject and can have a negative impact on teachers and

pupils. The Association calls on the employer to ensure that only trained subject specialists are used to teach the subject for which they have been appropriately trained and registered to teach.



Proposer: Stuart Hunter, Lothian Area

Motion G

Education in Scotland has faced a 10 year period of almost continuous change. A new curriculum, a change in curricular models, a change in the national exams, change in policy around ASN, DYW etc. has all happened in a climate of efficiency savings.

SSTA calls on the Scottish Government to place a moratorium on change in educational policy for a minimum of 3 years to allow teachers, schools and Local Authorities time to embed fully these changes in their practices.

Proposer: Janine McCullough, National Executive Committee

Motion H

The Association calls on the SNCT to ensure that measures are put in place to monitor the impact on Teacher workload of Benchmarking and National Standardised Testing in the Broad General Education phase.

Proposer: Catherine Nicol, Salaries and Conditions of Service Committee

Motion I

Austerity measures are having a direct effect on the capacity of Local Authority Human Resource

Departments to carry out jobsizing procedures.

The SSTA calls on the SNCT to establish a national team of Job Sizers to evaluate promoted teaching posts as necessary and within an appropriate timescale.



Proposer: Sid Sandison, Salaries and Conditions of Service Committee

Motion J

In December 2016, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills asked that the SSTA judge him on his progress on workload in 6 months' time. SSTA members have done so via a survey and have found progress disappointing.

This Association calls on the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills to clarify the present situation and future plans with regards to the reduction of workload for secondary teachers.



Proposer: Paul Cochrane, Renfrew Area

Motion K

Congress is aware that staffing pressure on schools can lead to a lack of support for, and excessive demand on, new teachers.

The Association calls on the SNCT to challenge and protect the workload of new teachers in their induction year.

Proposer: Stuart Hunter, Lothian area

Motion L

The Association calls on the SNCT to identify the responsibilities of staff undertaking the role of 'Named Person' and to ensure that they are adequately recognised via the Jobsizing toolkit.



Proposer: Catherine Nicol, Salaries and Conditions of Service Committee

Motion M

The SSTA deplores the level of increase in GTCS annual subscriptions in the current economic climate. This Association calls on the Scottish Government and Employers to make a fairer contribution in order to offset the level of increase.

Proposer: Ward McCormick, Ayrshire Area

Motion N

The Association calls upon the GTCS to protect the integrity of our workforce as some Councils are looking to recruit teachers from agencies for supply cover and shortages in some subject areas.

The Association calls on the GTCs to ensure that all new recruits are qualified at the same level as at present.

Proposer Sandra Richardson, Lothian Area

Motion O

Given the contractual obligation on all teachers to complete a maximum 35 hours CPD annually, as well as 5 yearly Professional Update, the SSTA asks all employers to provide an adequate budget and meaningful programmes of CPD in order to allow all teaching staff to meet their obligations.



Proposer: Ward McCormick, Ayrshire Area

Motion P

SSTA data about the numbers of teachers and pupil support assistants working specifically and exclusively within the field of Additional Support Needs in secondary schools not only reveals a reduction in staff but is also contradictory and confusing. Consequently, the SSTA requests that the Scottish Government urgently reviews ASN provision within secondary schools in order to ensure that the needs of our most vulnerable learners are met within a fair and equitable system.

Proposer: Anne O'Kane, ASN Panel

Motion Q

The SSTA calls on the Scottish Government and employers to provide teachers with appropriate training to ensure that they meet the needs of pupils with Additional Support Needs.

Proposer: Janine McCullough, ASN Panel

Motion R

The SSTA asserts that education is a basic human right, established in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1951 Refugee Convention.

The Association calls on the Scottish Government to ensure that:

- local authorities receive clear guidelines on developing specific policies and structures directed at supporting the needs of young asylum seekers and refugees,
- staff are offered appropriate training in meeting such needs,
- adequate resources are made available for effective migrant and refugee education.

Proposer: Euan Duncan, National Executive Committee

Motion S

The SSTA expresses concerns about the vulnerability of teachers to malicious claims from pupils and parents, Congress calls on employers to ensure that teachers are fully supported in the event of such claims.



Proposer: Sally Shearer, East Dunbartonshire

Motion T

Teachers in Scotland value the moderation and verification process as a means of assuring standards across schools. Every school and education provider in Scotland is also evaluated periodically against a quality framework to ensure they are delivering an adequate service and are planning for improvement. SSTA calls on the

Scottish Government to moderate and quality assure the inspection process to ensure a consistency of approach and reporting using a similar model.



Proposer: Janine McCullough, Senior Managers Advisory Panel

Motion U

Congress notes that HMIE has a valid role in identifying both good practice in schools and areas for school improvement in schools they inspect. However, Congress is concerned that inspectors are often unwilling to describe arrangements or procedures they would regard as good practice.

Congress calls on HMIE to be more open in offering practical support to promote best practice



Proposer: Gordon West, Senior Managers Advisory Panel

REPORT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY - SEAMUS SEARSON



The theme of our Congress is ‘Put pupils first – give teachers time to teach!’

This is what SSTA members stood together and pushed for in our struggle against teacher and pupil workload in our ballot in the autumn of 2016.

An excellent return in the ballot with a 91% vote in favour of taking ‘Action Short of Strike Action’ with a 40.8% turnout. This was not an easy decision for SSTA members to take. I am proud to say, their pupils and their pride in education is always their priority.

Why do teachers drag themselves into schools when they are unwell, put up with poor wages, lack of a professional career structure, teacher shortages, work long hours, endure ever decreasing support and resources, put their health, families and relationships at risk?

I will tell you why? Because teachers care and despite all the changes, new initiatives and whims of politicians, teachers try to make it work for the benefit of the pupils in their classrooms, because they only get one chance.

So I say congratulations to you for sticking together and challenging

the pressures applied to you by supporting our industrial action. The battle is not over and there is a good distance to cover. But we will succeed because we have to. If we don’t, we would be failing the pupils we care for most and our cherished education service.

The way teachers are treated is nothing less than systematic abuse. We need to bring an end to this teacher abuse and ensure that teachers are valued and rewarded for the important role that they play in the lives of our young people.

The First Minister has pledged to put education at the heart of her government’s programme for the year ahead.

“Education is at the heart of our plans and I am committed to doing all I can to improve the life chances of every child and young person.”

But without a valued professional teacher in every classroom, and without education support staff and resources, her best intentions cannot and will not be delivered. Whether the First minister likes it or not the teacher in the classroom is the first and most important education resource.

Teacher Workload

The SSTA industrial action began on 24 October 2016 to give teachers back control of their time and we needed the ballot to give security to our members in schools. Teachers need to focus on teaching and learning, and put to one side those duties and tasks that do not help the teacher in the classroom. We are making progress. More and more

of our members are saying NO or more politely ‘thank you very much for your kind offer of more work but I will decline the offer on this occasion.’

The SSTA has campaigned for a number of years to reduce teacher workload in all aspects of a teacher’s work but especially in the senior phase. The SSTA asked for a more measured implementation of the new national qualifications but the government moved forward regardless.

It came as no surprise to SSTA members that the accountability and micromanagement systems contained within the National Qualifications forced teachers and pupils to breaking point.

However, there is no satisfaction in knowing you were right all along. It is so important to listen to the teachers in the classroom, not to give importance to the views of those not involved in the ‘day to day’ business of teaching. Those who actually do the job. The SSTA represents the views of teachers at all levels in secondary schools and should be listened to.

The Deputy First Minister said last year in relation to the changes to National 5

“This will help to reduce unnecessary workload for teachers and learners. It is not enough to have good teachers if they do not have the time and space to do their job. That is why groups like this are essential to help us strip away anything that creates unnecessary workload for the profession”-

The SSTA survey on National 5 changes, conducted in early February highlighted the increases in workload across all subjects. Teachers were told to expect changes to Assessment arrangements but not to course content. As we all know the changes announced in the last few weeks will again increase workload with the courses in many schools already begun, without time to consider and implement the changes.

Unfortunately, I can predict, with the rush to make changes we will find that the SSTA was right again but the powers that be do not always want to hear.

The Deputy First Minister told us at our Council meeting back in October that he wanted to reduce teacher workload and has taken steps to bring about change. But change in education, as we know, does take time and longer than the six months the Minister asked for.

As for other measures taken by the Deputy First Minister to reduce teacher workload

Education Scotland conducted a Local Authority Review on Tackling Workload and made a statement on Broad General Education.

Inspectors looked at: what support and guidance for schools and teachers the local authority had in place; what the local authority required schools and teachers to do; and any specific guidance the local authority had provided on how to reduce bureaucracy/workload. Some of our District Secretaries didn't recognise their local authorities from the report.

The Deputy First Minister expected a positive response from SSTA but the SSTA Survey at the time

showed 68% of SSTA members said the document would not have an impact in reducing teacher workload. A further 14% said the document would actually increase their workload. The over-riding view is that it would have little impact in Secondary Schools.

Benchmarks

The Benchmarks for all curriculum areas were published in March. The lack of 'meaningful consultation' is a concern to us but they have been mostly welcomed by secondary teachers. However, the usual rule applies: 'Just give it to teachers and they will make it work'. They have been rushed through without any time given for teachers and departments to be consulted with, or time to understand and implement into existing courses. Again, another good intended action but without a teacher workload assessment being undertaken.

Standardised Assessment

These tests for children in P1, P4, P7 and S3 will take place next year covering reading, writing and numeracy. The online tests will take 50 minutes, they will not be marked by teachers and there will be no pass or fail. The assessments will be completed online and automatically marked by the online system. The Scottish government said the information produced by the tests would help teachers raise attainment amongst schoolchildren.

Again training time for managing the tests and using the evidence produced has not been allocated and it will be left for the teacher to undertake in their own time.

It is interesting that this method of assessment together with the teachers professional judgment is sufficient for pupils up to S3 but

has not been considered for pupils in S4. Most pupils stay in education beyond S4 yet we persist with an archaic over burdensome system, damaging to pupils and a totally unnecessary SQA system for pupils in S4. My advice to the Minister is to reduce teacher workload and pupil stress by finding a better way for continuous assessment in the senior phase.

The bottom line is that the SSTA industrial action guidance is quite clear: if you are not allocated time within the schools Working Time Agreement then the work cannot be done.

The teacher shortage

Teacher recruitment is an increasing problem across Scotland and will have a damaging impact on the students and teachers in the long-term. Teachers are 'papering over the cracks' and trying to keep the system afloat. All available teacher time is being used to continue the service. Many teachers with management and specialist roles in the school are being used to cover classes due to the lack of supply, particularly subject-specific supply. These teachers are being abused by the education system.

Our recent Survey of school reps showed

- 81% of main scale teachers were being timetable up to the maximum 22.5 hours a week
- 37% of principal Teachers were being timetabled between 20 and the maximum 22.5 hours a week
- 41% of teachers were covering 3 hours or more a week
- 67% of schools found it very difficult to get supply teachers

Measures used by schools to manage the teacher shortage

- 28% of schools regularly split National Qualification classes with 44% occasionally
- 21% of schools regularly collapsed classes with 40% doing so occasionally
- 12% regularly left senior classes unsupervised with a further 30% doing so occasionally
- 7% of schools regularly gathered classes together in a hall or sports hall with a further 25% doing so occasionally
- 12.5% of teachers were regularly taking classes above timetable allocation with a further 33% doing so occasionally

The failure to provide supply teachers and fill vacancies promptly is often seen as an attempt by local authorities to save money. However, this is a false economy as when teacher workload increases; teacher stress increases, teacher absence also increases.

The General Secretary also reported on:

- **The Teacher in the Classroom**
- **The Subject Specialist**
- **The Management Structure**
- **The Teacher Career Structure**
- **Teacher Salaries (the facts)**
- **The Governance Review**

It is the responsibility of and the duty of our Government and politicians to defend our excellent education system and find solutions to the challenges we face together.

A message to our politicians. Please stop using education as a political football and using it as a way of scoring points against each other. It is unforgivable. Education is too important to play political games with and you do more damage to education and its image every time you run-down education.

Every time you run down and undermine education another young person chooses not to follow a career path into teaching and another group of teachers walks out the school gate.

It is now time for Government to invest in its teaching workforce. Not just by providing professional learning opportunities. Now is the time to end austerity measures. Austerity policies are a political choice to reduce public services. It is time to move away from the austerity mentality and invest in Education, invest in teachers, invest in Scotland's young people and Scotland's future.

It is time to Put Pupils First and Give Teachers Time to Teach

You can see video of the General Secretary's full speech to Congress at www.ssta.org.uk/congress-17

CONGRESS REPORTS

Reports were heard from the following

- **Education Committee**
- **SNCT**
- **Salaries and Conditions of Service Committee**
- **GTCS Professional Updates Steering Group**
- **Additional Support Needs Panel**
- **The Scottish Advisory Group for Relationships and Behaviour in Schools**
- **Health & Safety Panel**
- **Senior Managers' Advisory Panel**

The printed reports from above can be found on the SSTA website at <https://ssta.org.uk/congress-2017>

SSTA Congress 2017

To see video of the speeches and motions passed at the SSTA's 73rd Annual Congress please go to www.ssta.org.uk/congress-2017/



SSTA PRESIDENT 2017-2019 - KEVIN CAMPBELL



Born and raised in the East End of Glasgow to actively political parents, Kevin was brought up in a period of economic decline and Thatcherite hegemony. This led to his firm resolution that all people have to be organised to resist detrimental changes to their material conditions and to his involvement, almost continually, in the trade union movement.

Whilst at university, Kevin was actively involved in student politics and anti-racist organisations.

The decision to enter teaching was a fairly easy one. Where better to uphold the ideals of fairness and equality than in the class room? Kevin's teaching career began in the North East of England. Peterlee's Shottonhall, not far from Sunderland, was somewhat a baptism of

fire: An area of deprivation unequalled by anything he had previously seen. Shottonhall demonstrated how kids from the most difficult backgrounds can succeed when schools and teachers inspire them to achieve the potential each and every young person has within them.

Returning to Scotland and settling in Fife Kevin again opted to work in an area of severe economic difficulty: Levenmouth: comprised of the communities of Buckhaven and Methil, famous old towns known for decades of industry now gone completely. Kevin has taught in the area for the last 13 years, firstly at Buckhaven High School, then Kirkland High School and now in the brand new Levenmouth Academy.

Throughout this period Kevin has been an active member of the SSTA primarily because of the understanding that secondary teachers need a voice tailored to the demands of that sector. Kevin, almost immediately became a school rep and shortly thereafter joined the regional executive of Fife, the National Council and recently became the District Secretary for Fife. Through these duties Kevin is involved on a day to day basis working for the benefit of SSTA members and the young people they teach.

SSTA meets Deputy First Minister



The SSTA met with John Swinney, Deputy First Minister on Wednesday 21 June and discussed a number of the Associations motions from Congress in May. The SSTA delegation was led by Kevin Campbell (President), John Guidi (Vice-President), Euan Duncan (Immediate Past President) and Seamus Searson, General Secretary.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION - YEAR 2016

SCOTTISH SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

STATEMENT TO MEMBERS ISSUED IN CONNECTION WITH THE UNION'S ANNUAL RETURN FOR PERIOD ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2016
AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 32A OF TRADE UNION AND LABOUR RELATIONS (CONSOLIDATION) ACT 1992

1. FINANCIAL STATEMENT

INCOME

Membership Subscriptions	£ 958,949
Other income	£ 180,075
	£ 1,139,024

EXPENDITURE

*Annual Operating Costs	£ 1,009,172
Appropriations SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	£129,852

*including:

In respect of General Secretary,
Seamus Searson

Salary	£85,572
Superannuation and NIC	£25,462
Employee's Superannuation	£7,072

Honoraria to elected Office Bearers:

General Treasurer	£	5,855
Minutes Secretary	£	5,885
President	£	2,509
	£	14,279

The Association does not maintain a political fund.

2. Irregularity statement

A member who is concerned that some irregularity may be occurring, or have occurred, in the conduct of the financial affairs of the union may take steps with a view to investigating further, obtaining clarification and, if necessary, securing regularisation of that conduct.

The member may raise any such concern with such one or more of the following as it seems appropriate to raise it with: the officials of the union, the trustees of the property of the union, the auditor or auditors of the union, the Certification Officer (who is an independent officer appointed by the Secretary of State) and the police.

Where a member believes that the financial affairs of the union have been or are being conducted in breach of the law or in breach of the rules of the union and contemplates bringing civil proceedings against the union or responsible officials or trustees, he should consider obtaining independent legal advice.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION - YEAR 2016

Independent auditors' report

to the members of SCOTTISH SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

We have audited the accounts of Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association for the year ended 31 December 2016 which comprise the Cash Flow Statement, Income and Expenditure Account, the Balance Sheet and the related notes. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" to the extent that the standard is relevant to the Association.

This report is made solely to the association's members, as a body. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the association's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors' report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the association and the association's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of the Finance Committee and Auditors

As explained more fully in the Statement of Finance Committee's Responsibilities, the Finance Committee members are responsible for the preparation of the accounts and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view. We have been appointed under the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (amended 2016) and report in accordance with regulations made under this Act. Our responsibility is to audit and express an opinion on the accounts in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). Those standards require us to comply with the Auditing Practices Board's (APB's) Ethical Standards for Auditors.

Scope of audit of accounts

A description of the scope of an audit of accounts is provided on the APB's website at www.frc.org.uk/apb/scope/private.cfm.

Opinion on the accounts

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the association's affairs as at 31 December 2016 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- have been prepared in accordance with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (amended 2016); and
- the information given in the Finance Committee's Annual Report is consistent with the financial statements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (amended 2016) requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the association has not kept adequate accounting records; or
- returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the accounts are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Stephen Grant, Senior Statutory Auditor

for and on behalf of

Tindell, Grant & Co Limited Statutory Auditors

6 Munro Road, Springkerse, Stirling FK7 7UU

Tindell, Grant & Co Limited is eligible to act as an auditor in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006

SSTA NATIONAL AWARDS AT CONGRESS 2017



Peter Wright has been a tireless supporter of the Association for almost forty years. He has served in almost every capacity, from school representative to District and Area Secretary, to long-term Council and Executive member, to President. He served two terms as an SSTA commended member of the General Teaching Council for Scotland with distinction.

In all these roles, Peter has demonstrated unwavering commitment to trade union values and the principles of natural justice. He has argued forcefully and eloquently for improvement in teachers' conditions of service, for fair treatment at work and, more broadly, for human rights and the principles of equality and dignity.

Peter began his career as a teacher of history in 1974 in Dalkeith High School, retiring as Principal Teacher of History at Broxburn Academy in 2014.

One of his first actions as an SSTA member was as a school-gate picket, demonstrating his strong belief in the value of trade union activism. He has always played an active role in the Association, particularly in times of discontent and industrial action.

In Lothian Region, Peter served on the JCG and the JCC. As District and then Area Secretary, he showed his ability to deal with employers at every level. His astute, analytical mind ensured that his arguments were very well prepared and effective.

At national level, his outstanding service on Council and Committees, particularly Executive and Education, was recognised by his election as Vice-President and subsequently President of the Association. While President, Peter was committed to using his position to enhance the profile of the SSTA. He made a point of visiting as many schools as possible throughout Scotland to ascertain members' real concerns and to listen to what they had to say.

Peter is a genuine and caring person who has the welfare of his pupils, colleagues and the profession at heart. His commitment to high educational standards is his primary motivation. This has informed his efforts to support subject specialists and defend them from the cynical and cost-driven attempts of some in authority to undermine and devalue their expertise.

In conclusion, Peter Wright exemplifies all the qualities of a strong SSTA activist. Lothian Area and Fife District are proud to recommend him for a National Award.

Poem to Deputy First Minister

'CFE shall set you free!
'No need for facts or courses,'
So, cutting down a million trees,
Putting carts in front of horses.

The SQA - HMIE,
And Education Scotland,
Sent forth their glorious folders
green,
They'd never asked for thoughts on.

'It's simpler, easier, than before,
Each Unit has one test,
And if they fail, a resit too,
Rejoice for you are blessed!'

On top of that, the SQA,
Deemed coursework most essential,
And hence, assignments they
became,
Assessment fundamentals.

Years went by and teachers left,
And yet there's no confession,
From those who left us all bereft,

At friends lost to the profession.

Till October first in Edinburgh Town,
Council met in West End Hilton,
Excessive workload was wearing
down,
The goodwill that schools are built
on.

'Bureaucracy and endless tomes,'
Said the Minister in elation,
'Reveals an obfuscatory syndrome,
Prevalent in education!'

'So hear me well, do not despair,
And judge me six months hence,
I will return, I'll prove I care,
Your workload I'll condense.'

True to his word the units fell,
No UASPS saved his face,
Until the SQA revealed,
You can keep them just in case!

Although the DFM was clear,

He wanted less, the fact is,
The SQA expect each school,
To put in operational practice,

A strengthened course to end this
feud,
And (you'll all love this caper,)
For each exam must now include,
An extension to the paper.

Here we are. 6 months on.
Crushed, bewildered, battered.
And still we wait for Our Dear John,
To make us think we mattered.

Now one final thing to say,
If you have the notion,
Consider well this Motion J,
And please support the motion.

Paul Cochrane

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