

## SSTA meets Deputy First Minister

The SSTA met with John Swinney, Deputy First Minister on Wednesday 21st June and discussed a number of the Association's motions from our Annual 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. The following issues were discussed:

### Teachers' Pay and Career Structure

One element of the recent publication of 'Education Governance: Next Steps' by the Scottish Government was welcomed in relation to teachers' career structure as it reaffirmed the SSTA position that the current system needs to change. The lack of career opportunities in schools at present is a matter of serious concern. The Minister was reminded that the SSTA represents members in all positions in secondary schools and should be fully involved in strategic planning. The SSTA highlighted the disparity of classroom teachers' pay: in other jurisdictions some are receiving more than £2,000 a year more than similar colleagues in Scotland. The Minister affirmed that the current restraint on public sector pay (1%) is not sustainable in the future. The SSTA sought additional funding for the current pay claim; members are becoming frustrated by the fact that recent pay settlements have not kept pace with rising costs.

### Subject Specialists

The SSTA focused on the lack of recognition for subject specialists in secondary schools and the important role they play in developing the school curriculum and raising attainment through effective teaching and learning. The lack of time given to members in management positions to undertake such duties was becoming severely reduced. The SSTA reaffirmed its position that only registered and properly qualified subject specialists should be teaching in Scottish secondary schools.

### National Qualifications

The SSTA asked for the suspension of the changes to National 5 in Biology, Computing Science and other subjects as time and resources have not been available to members in schools. Teachers need realistic timelines for changes and these problems may occur in the future with Higher and Advanced Higher without relevant and realistic support from outside agencies such as SQA and Education Scotland. Discussion took place on giving schools an alternative to continue with the existing courses but the Minister had difficulties with this option. The issue of Insight and pressures it can create in prioritising statistical data over teaching and learning in some schools was discussed.

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### Teacher Workload

The SSTA sought a moratorium of changes as rushed alterations are increasing teacher workload and further revisions being introduced in some subjects are adding yet more to the burden. The Minister was aware of our concerns but indicated the need for changes to close the attainment gap. The SSTA's view was that many of the measures introduced by the Minister over the last year (removal of units, the Chief Inspector's Statement and the introduction of Benchmarks) had not reduced teacher workload but in many cases had increased teacher workload. The SSTA asked for clear statements from the Chief Inspector giving examples of what secondary teachers should not be doing. Time is teachers' most valuable commodity, and there is very little of it for teachers in our schools.

### New Teachers

The SSTA highlighted that new teachers needed to be protected from the excesses of workload in many schools as result of the teacher shortages. They were not getting support from a mentor or being restricted to teaching within their own subject. It is not a surprise that many are looking for careers outside of teaching.

### Additional Support Needs (ASN)

The SSTA asked for a review of ASN and pupil support provision. The reduction of staff is leading to more disillusioned young people whose needs are not being met and consequently causing problems in schools. There was an urgent need to support these young people.

We would like to congratulate Yvonne Stewart (Professional Officer) on her appointment as the Assistant General Secretary (Operations and Equalities) at the STUC. Yvonne will take up her post at the end of September. I would like to thank Yvonne for her excellent service with the SSTA and wish her well in her new position with the STUC.

The SSTA will begin the process of finding a replacement at the start of the next session.

Seamus Searson  
General Secretary