



Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association

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NEWSLETTER OF THE SCOTTISH SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION - June 2024

Message from the President

The summer break will soon be upon us. Every one of you has gone the extra mile for the young people to ensure they get the very best on their educational journey. Many of you are exhausted as a result of the ever-growing demands on your time, too often, way beyond the contractual 35hrs per week. The summer break belongs to you, it is yours to do with as you please. There is no obligation to do additional school related work. Therefore, switch off from school and switch on to the most precious 'me time'. It is my wish that all of you have a fabulous summer break, spending quality time on yourself and with those that are important to you in your day-to-day life in the real world outside of school. Relax and relish the next few weeks without the sound of the school bell dictating your day!



SSTA President, Stuart Hunter

Stuart Hunter
President (2023-2025)

Excess Workload Damages Health

79th Annual Congress, 10 May 2024

Stuart Hunter, Presidential Address

At the end of congress last year, I was honoured to have our Immediate Past President, Catherine Nicol, hand over the Presidency to me. It has been a busy year. To say that it has been exhilarating and an enormous learning curve is understating the last year. Catherine gave me a lift home at the end of congress, and we chatted about what lay ahead. One thing I knew for certain was that I already knew what my theme was going to be when it came to this day to stand at this lectern to deliver the President's address. The actual content was not set in stone, but my theme was: Your Voice. We are the Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association and our raison d'être is to be the Voice of Secondary Teachers, to be your voice.

Over these past 12 months, there have been many issues raised. Our committees have been working hard, and you will hear their reports later in this congress. However, to me, there was one issue that stood out from the others. It has been a long-standing issue and one that can often be linked to the many others that our committees have been working on and that is the issue of workload.

We speak about workload, we moan about it, we despair at it, we are exhausted by it. Even the many past attempts to have it reduced by a plethora of initiatives: anyone remember Tackling Bureaucracy?

That quickly disappeared under a pile of even more paperwork intended to tick boxes that really had nothing to do with the day-to-day teaching in the classroom.

I would like to spend a little time addressing the issue of excess workload, or as I prefer to call it, toxic workload. How do we define it?

What are the consequences? Who is responsible and what must be done?



Excess workload is when a teacher's responsibilities and tasks extend beyond the contractual 35hr week.

Do you recognise any of points below?

Long working hours: Teachers may work significantly more than the contractual 35hr week, including evenings and weekends, to complete tasks such as planning and preparation, marking, homework assignments, and administrative tasks.

High Pupil-to-teacher ratio: Managing large number of students in a classroom can increase the workload for teachers, as it requires more effort to provide differentiated lessons, individualized attention and support.

Extensive administrative tasks: Multiple reports such as tracking, emails and data entry for certificated courses including evidence gathering.

Lack of support staff: Taking on tasks performed by support staff (e.g., counselling, mentoring, or special education support).

Additional responsibilities: Pressure to take on extracurricular activities, committee work, mentoring, all in the name of enhancing your opportunities for promotion or even a permanent contract.

Complex curriculum changes: Frequent changes to the curriculum or educational standards require teachers to spend extra time adapting lesson plans and materials. CfE, SQA?

High stakes testing and accountability: Pressure from multiple testing requiring more time for preparing students and subsequent data analysis.

Lack of resources: Teaching materials or technology can make tasks more time-consuming e.g. poor Wi-Fi.

Excess workload can lead to:

- Stress
- Burnout
- Decreased job satisfaction impacting teaching effectiveness and students' learning outcomes.

Addressing excessive workload involves providing adequate support and resources to help teachers manage their responsibilities effectively, NOT a program of systematic budget cuts! Neither should the

threat of cutting the number of teachers in schools be used as a political weapon.

I am certain that many, if not all of you, recognise the sources of work that increase our workload from normal to excessive or toxic. This is by no means exhaustive, but merely a flavour of what teachers face, and we have not even touched on faculty heads and Senior Management teams who face a quantum leap in the data required by Local Authorities and the consequential excess workload that they face too.

To recap, excess workload leads to:

- Stress
- Burnout
- Decreased job satisfaction impacting teaching effectiveness and students, learning outcomes

We must now ask ourselves the question: If excess workload leads to stress, burnout and job dissatisfaction, what are these in the real lives of teachers?

There have been several surveys and studies carried out by a number of teacher organisation, including the SSTA. What follows is a brief overview of some of those statistics on teacher stress and mental health challenges collated from articles in TES.

One survey found that 70% of teachers in Scotland feel stressed frequently (48%) or all the time (22%). Most teachers attempt to manage stress on their own (73%) without seeking help from their school or local authority.

A second survey found that very few teachers believe national support for the wellbeing of the profession is positive, with 81% disagreeing that government policies support schools to respond to mental health and wellbeing issues that affect teachers.

A third survey found that 75% of all education staff reported feeling stressed, with 78% experiencing mental health symptoms due to their work.

Additionally, a report indicated a rise in the number of teachers signed off with stress in Scotland. The pandemic has exacerbated existing pressures on teachers, including excessive workloads and challenges related to the additional support needs of students. *(All sources collated from TES)*

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To be frank, these statistics do not tell us anything that we did not already know. Alas, the results repeatedly fall on deaf ears whilst offering patronising appreciation for what teachers do in schools.

What the articles in TES highlight is that Scotland's teachers experience high levels of stress on a daily basis. It further highlights the serious concerns how these stress levels impact on teacher wellbeing, mental and physical health. Not only are teachers suffering, the quality of education, despite extraordinary efforts by teachers, is too.

To look at the survey outcomes more closely, we now need to ask: What are the stress related issues and their links to job of teaching?

Stress related symptoms experienced by Scotland's teachers.

Do any sound familiar to you?

Mental health issues: Anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion due to work-related stress. It is common for teachers to identify these symptoms with excess workload as the causal link.

Physical health problems: Symptoms such as headaches, fatigue, disturbed sleeping patterns, and other health issues.

Burnout: Prolonged stress leads to burnout, emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment, and depersonalization.

Reduced job satisfaction: Stress leads to a decrease in job satisfaction and motivation, which can affect teaching performance and student outcomes.

Work-life imbalance: Many teachers struggle with maintaining a healthy work-life balance due to high levels of stress and workload.

The symptoms of stress can, and do have, a significant impact on teachers' overall wellbeing and their ability to perform effectively in the classroom.

An important factor highlighted in the Stress Related Symptoms is the hidden issue of the damage to physical health.

Do you think teaching under the present conditions of service should come with a health warning?

Stress can have a significant impact on teachers' short and long-term health.

Sleep disturbances: Stress leads to difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, resulting in sleep deprivation

or poor-quality sleep. The long-term affect for teachers' can be a drop in energy levels and ability to focus during the day.

Musculoskeletal problems: Prolonged stress can contribute to muscle tension, particularly in the neck, shoulders, and back. Teachers may experience headaches or body pain due to tense muscles.

Gastrointestinal issues: Chronic stress can cause digestive problems such as upset stomach, indigestion, or irritable bowel syndrome.

Cardiovascular problems: High levels of stress can increase the risk of developing heart-related issues such as hypertension (high blood pressure) and heart disease.

Immune system suppression: Chronic stress can weaken the immune system, making teachers more susceptible to illnesses and infections.

Fatigue: Prolonged stress can lead to physical exhaustion and fatigue, impacting teachers' ability to perform their duties effectively.

Weight changes: Stress can lead to changes in appetite and eating habits, resulting in weight gain or loss.

Physical health issues can negatively impact teachers' overall well-being and ability to perform their job effectively. The best stress management strategy is blatantly obvious:

Reduce workload!



THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

However, there is our friend the Elephant. You know the one I mean. That Elephant that is so large that we just ignore it and pretend that it is not there! Nonetheless, there comes a point we must confront what we avoid. There is an uncomfortable truth that we must face and that is we can be our own worst enemies! No matter how we feel, no matter how exhausted we are, we simply find it impossible to say "No."

How many times do we hear the voice in our heads telling us that we cannot let the students down? We feel compelled to take on additional workload even though we are exhausted and on our knees. Was it not the reason that many of us came into teaching as a career: To make a difference to the life chances of our students by providing good education? Many would call teaching a vocation, a calling and many would concur.

The teaching profession is one of self-reflection. We should reflect on an issue connected to excess or toxic workload. In the past, we have voted in favour of Action short of Strike Action, Working to Contract. Despite voting for this action to reduce our workload, it very quickly collapses as a means in achieving the intended goal. Why is this? The answer is simple: We do not want to let our students down!

We become conflicted. We know only too well what excess workload is doing to us physically and mentally, but we cannot, in all good conscience, let our students down.

This is the conundrum. How do we reduce our workload back to our contractually agreed 35hr working week without having a detrimental impact on our students? Why do we allow ourselves to be emotionally blackmailed to the point we damage our own mental health to do the job we love: to making a positive difference through education to the lives of every student we teach?

Therefore, to tackle excess workload, it is incumbent on us to identify the root cause. Only then can we begin the task of making genuine and honest efforts to reduce excess workload, to improve the mental and physical wellbeing of every teacher in the profession.

Colleagues, I ask you to consider and reflect on what is the foundation of our spiralling workload:

Institutional Controlling or Coercive Behaviour.

Institutional Controlling or Coercive Behaviour is similar in many ways to the more commonly known domestic form of abuse. Nonetheless, all forms of abusive behaviour impact negatively on the victims of the abuse. As already discussed, there are consequences of mental and physical health of victims. Whilst many schools and Education Authorities have policies and procedures to address controlling and/or coercive behaviour, the truth is that far too often these policies, albeit well-meaning, often end up in a filing cabinet and rarely see the light of day.

Institutional control or coercive behaviour in Scottish schools can manifest as policies and practice that limit, intentional or otherwise, the autonomy and well-being

of school staff. The result can often be a potentially harmful environment in the workplace.

- 1. Lack of Autonomy for Teachers:** Imposing strict curriculum guidelines and teaching methods without allowing teachers the flexibility to adapt to their students' needs.
- 2. Limiting Freedom of Expression:** Suppressing or teachers' opinions or views on various topics, including academic, social, or political issues.
- 3. Bullying and Harassment:** Allowing or participating in bullying or harassment of staff by other teachers, or administrators can create a coercive environment.
- 4. Controlling Student Choices:** Unduly influencing or restricting students' choices regarding courses, extracurricular activities, or personal interests.
- 5. Pressure on Performance:** Applying extreme pressure on students to achieve high grades or on teachers to meet certain performance metrics can lead to an unhealthy environment.
- 6. Lack of Support for Students and Staff:** Failing to provide adequate support for those who are struggling, such as students with special educational needs or staff facing challenges.
- 7. Punitive Attendance Policies:** Enforcing rigid attendance policies without considering individual circumstances can be coercive.

Scottish schools, like educational institutions in other parts of the world, are expected to follow guidelines and policies set by the government and education authorities to ensure a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for students and staff. This includes addressing and preventing any forms of controlling or coercive behaviour.

However, the very nature of some policies and educational initiatives deriving from these policies, create the very issues being described. The drive to close the attainment gap has led to a high stakes exam results driven system that fails to take into consideration all students and sets them up for failure. Persistent changes and requirements by SQA unload an impossible burden on both staff and students. Schools are measured by exam results. Absolutely no consideration is given to the numerous students who have given their absolute best yet do not meet the magic targets. The truth is that there are students who are far more suited to achieve success in vocational studies than the academic.

Whilst a number of reviews are taking place, none address the cuts in education and elsewhere. The likes of social work and Educational Psychology, not

to mention the severe lack of mental health support for students. So, who must fill the void? Teachers! Teachers are Not social workers. Teachers are Not Educational Psychologists. Teachers are Not Mental Health Workers. Yet this is where Controlling and Coercive behaviour comes in as a direct result of the policy decisions. Teachers are expected to fill the void, even though we are not trained to provide this service. Brutal truth? IT REQUIRES FREE OVERTIME TO ACCOMMODATE ALL OF THESE ADDITIONAL TASKS. WHY PAY QUALIFIED STAFF WHEN TEACHERS WILL DO IT FOR NOTHING! It becomes an expectation because teachers 'will go the extra mile' for their students. It will look good on the CV if you are looking for a permanent contract. We have normalised the exceptional.

We have created a culture whereby, teachers cannot say "no" because it will not look good for them, after all, "It's for the sake of the kids."

We have been conditioned over the years by moral blackmail to take on more and more work. We have been very subtly controlled and coerced into believing that we are letting our students down if we do not take on the additional work for which we are not trained. And I have not even touched on endless reams of data we must process to satisfy those who are nowhere near a classroom, that we are doing an excellent job!

It is our altruistic desire to do the best for our students. It is our desire not to let a single student down that has become a tool of exploitation and manipulation.

It is Controlling or Coercive Behaviour.

The most effective way to begin the process of ending Controlling and Coercive behaviour is to first to acknowledge that it is happening. The next step is to unite and with one voice clearly state that magic word: No.

We are part of the toxic culture that has created excess workload that damages our health. The toxic culture of excess workload means we become less effective to carry out our primary function: To Teach. Let us re-channel out energy to build a culture that encourages and supports us to do what we have been trained to do: To be teachers!

I thank you for your indulgence and patience for listening to this address.

View a recording of the Presidential Address in full on the [SSTA website](#).

SSTA Health & Safety Reps Training

The SSTA Health Safety & Wellbeing Committee are hosting a training day for all Health & Safety Representatives on Friday 13 September 2024, at the Stirling Court Hotel, University of Stirling.

Sessions will include:

- Heating and Ventilation
- Cyber Security
- Mental Health
- Risk assessment with SSERC
- Fire Evacuations
- The role of a School H&S Rep.



Registration will open at 9.30am with the first session starting at 10am. Lunch will be provided. The training day will close at 3.45pm. Travel expenses will be provided for attendees.

To register for a place at the training day, please complete the registration form on the [SSTA website](#). Detailed Agenda to follow.

Please note: All Health and Safety representatives are entitled to paid time off to attend training. It is your employer's duty to allow it under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977, regulation 7.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the event, and in the interim, any questions regarding the event itself then please email: info@ssta.org.uk

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Fund education: An urgent appeal to the G7

Call to the G7 Italy 2024 Ministerial meeting on Education

Education International, the voice of teachers and education workers around the world, jointly with member organisations from G7 countries, supports the following statement released ahead of the G7 Italy 2024 Ministerial meeting on Education, following an initiative of Federazione Lavoratori della Conoscenza (FLC-CGIL), concerned by the exclusion of education unions from this important convening:

Unions play a fundamental role in addressing inequalities and ensuring equitable living conditions for all. We believe that meaningful and effective social dialogue in the education sector is crucial for promoting social cohesion, solidarity, and trust in public policies. For this reason, it is essential that workers' organisations have a voice in the decisions made by the G7 countries regarding education, especially during these critical times. Despite the requests from Italian unions, we regret that trade unions have not been given the opportunity to contribute to this important event.

We therefore make the following demands for the Ministers of Education meeting in Trieste, Italy, on June 27, 28, and 29, 2024:

- E**▶ We call on G7 governments to meaningfully involve civil society and, in particular, labour organisations in discussions on education, as recommended by the [United Nations High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession](#).
- E**▶ We urge the G7 to end austerity, implement macroeconomic policies and reform global economic governance to strengthen state investment in public education.
- E**▶ We demand that the G7 promote peace, ensure respect for international humanitarian law and human rights, and curb the increase in military spending that too often comes at the expense of social spending.

As a fundamental human right and public good, education empowers individuals and communities, fostering holistic development and active citizenship. Teachers and education support personnel are vital to ensuring equitable and inclusive education for all. Hence, workers, organisations stress the need for engagement with G7 governments in making critical decisions for the education sector during these pivotal times.

Today, 400 million children around the world live in or flee from conflict zones. Since 2005, over 315,000 serious violations of children's rights in conflict areas have been recorded, with at least 120,000 children killed or maimed. As military forces in war zones demolish school buildings and universities, global military spending increased for the eighth consecutive year in 2022, reaching an estimated US\$240 billion, the highest level



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ever recorded by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Governments around the world spent an average of 6.2 percent of their budgets on the military, or US\$282 per person.

Meanwhile, for many years, austerity policies have negatively impacted public spending, particularly in vital sectors like education and health care. These policies have shown that a purely financial approach is harmful for the protection of human rights. Therefore, we echo the calls made by the [Go Public! Fund Education](#) campaign for increased state investment in public education and research, to combat inequality and support the right to education for all, irrespective of income or socioeconomic background. We advocate for free quality public education and oppose the privatisation and commercialisation of education. Education must be guaranteed by the state and equitably accessible to all. Inclusive education is a prerequisite for quality education, fostering global citizens, with the cognitive and socio-emotional skills to understand the world and live peacefully with respect for others.

The G7 education ministers must engage with teachers and their organisations now. We must ensure that no child is denied their right to education and that every teacher is valued in their essential role in society.

Sincerely,

Signatories



Education International



FEP-CFDT France



FCE-CTF Canada



CAUT ACPPU Canada



GEW Germany



NEA, USA



SSTA UK -Scotland



NEU United Kingdom



UCU United Kingdom



EIS UK -Scotland



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Education International (EI) is the global federation of education unions, representing over 32 million teachers and education workers through 373 member organisations in 178 countries and territories. EI's mission is to ensure that every student has access to a well-supported, qualified teacher and a quality learning environment.

SSTA General Secretary Report to Congress 2024

The SSTA is entering its 80th year having been established in 1944. The focus of the SSTA was and still is, secondary teachers and secondary education. Over the years the SSTA has dealt with many challenges but throughout its journey it remained true to the position of its members. The SSTA is a principled union but also a pragmatic one.

The SSTA Has never accepted that things cannot be changed but has worked to find solutions to problems, impasses, or stubbornness of others. The SSTA is a teachers' union that identifies a problem or can foresee a problem and attempts not only to highlight the problem but is prepared to open discussion with new or different ways to find a solution. The ability to think 'outside the box' or question the 'way things are done' shows a union that is confident and understands the bigger more important picture. The SSTA must be prepared to stand up to the challenges and be the solution not the problem. It was this way of working and thinking that brought about the SSTA in 1944.

The education landscape in Scotland is in a period of change, some will say that has always been the case, changes that will impact on secondary teachers not only in the short term but for a generation. The changes to assessment and examinations, the future role of the SQA, the future role of Education Scotland, the future of school inspections, the future of the curriculum for excellence, the future of the senior phase in secondary schools, just to name but a few.

All this in a climate of austerity when teachers only know of cuts and further cuts, a plethora of new initiatives all reliant on the 'goodwill of the teacher' when graduates are turning their backs to teaching. All this leads for more workload for teachers who are left behind is schools trying to teach pupils with an ever-increasing complex learning needs. Hence, the importance of the SSTA in giving a voice to the thousands of secondary teachers who are isolated from decision making and are always left to 'pick-up the pieces' and make things work.

The SSTA is adamant that whatever changes that are to come in the education system must have teachers at the centre and must be a support to teachers in the classroom and not a hinderance. The SSTA will ensure that the teachers are at the centre of the new SQA. The SSTA will ensure that Education Scotland will be there to help and support teachers in the classroom.

A new inspection system that supports schools and not focus on individual teachers and the very different challenges they face. No two schools are the same so why waste time trying to compare and measure things that are different. The fear of inspection is rife in our schools. The fear of inspection is often used



*Seamus Searson
General Secretary*

as a control mechanism to squash innovation and enthusiasm. It stifles teachers and learning as the focus is about getting higher exam results at the expense of everything else.

If we are to have an inspection system lets inspect those who have the control. Those who control the money, the staffing, and the curriculum. It is a nice notion to believe that schools are autonomous body but that is far from the truth. Everything in schools is prescribed by those above. All that schools do is try to manage to do more with less. Therefore, I say if we are to have inspections then let them inspect those who have the control - the local authorities. This would take pressure off schools and teachers and allow teachers to focus on teaching and learning.

The SSTA challenged the SQA's plan to revert to the national qualification pre-pandemic requirements in 2024 on two fundamental grounds. The pupils were not ready and most importantly the teachers were not ready. Schools are still addressing education recovery; pupils moving into the senior phase are not in the place they need to be if they are to meet their true potential.

However, we do know that both teachers and pupils have struggled this year and I fear that many pupils will either under-perform or fall away from education. The SSTA was the only voice against the return to pre-covid arrangements, but I hope we were wrong, but I fear not.

Poor pupil behaviour remains a major issue for SSTA members and my thanks to members who responded in their thousands to our surveys on pupil behaviour. These surveys helped in pushing the issue to the top of the agenda and not just swept under the carpet. Together with the mobile phone survey that gave real evidence of the disturbance caused by the misuse of mobile phones in schools.

To view the Report of the General Secretary in full, please [follow the link to the SSTA Website](#)

Motions Passed at Congress 2024

Please find below a note of all the motions passed at the 79th Annual Congress of the SSTA.

Salaries and Conditions of Service

Motion A

Congress notes that teachers and management in schools negotiate annual Working Time Agreements to try to ensure that key development priorities can be delivered within identified collegiate hours. While Working Time Agreements do not, in themselves, prevent teachers feeling pressured to work excessive hours planning and preparing for lessons, and checking, correcting and assessing pupil work, they can help to limit the amount of development work being required of teachers by their employers to time that has been identified for that purpose.



Gordon West

Congress also notes that the Scottish Qualifications Authority does not employ the teachers who work in our schools and is not party to any Working Time Agreements that have been made by teachers and their employers. However, the SQA is directly responsible for adding to teachers' excessive workloads whenever they decide to change assessment arrangements in a way that places extra burdens and bureaucracy on teachers and whenever they change course content or coverage when no development time is available within current Working Time Agreements.

Congress believes that the SQA needs to be controlled. Specifically, the SQA should be prevented from making changes to assessment arrangements that add to teacher workloads except by negotiated agreement with the teaching unions, and any changes to course content or coverage it announces should not come into effect until a year after the completion of the current academic year in which those changes are published.

Proposer: Gordon West, Aberdeenshire

Motion B

Congress expresses grave concern about ongoing issues regarding recruitment of teachers in the secondary sector.

Congress notes that significant factors contributing to this unsuccessful recruitment efforts is the lack of incentives and housing opportunities for new teachers in parts of Scotland.

Congress calls on the Scottish Government and Local Authorities to prioritise housing opportunities for all teachers who wish to move into areas close to their employment and offer them incentives.

Proposer: Constantinos Athanasopoulos, Highland

Motion C

Congress calls upon the Scottish Government to review the probationary scheme as it no longer works to the benefit of newly qualified teachers.

Proposer: John Guidi, Renfrew



Paul Cochrane

Motion D

Congress acknowledges that HGIOS 4 focuses on pupil health and well-being.

Congress believes the evidence shows that teachers' health and well-being is declining. Health and well-being must be a priority that includes all members of a learning community.

Congress calls upon the Scottish Government to review HGIOS 4 with the aim of prioritizing and reporting on the health and well-being of teachers and associated staff within the quality indicator framework.

Proposer: Paul Cochrane, Renfrew Area

Motion E

Congress is concerned at the assumption since the pandemic online teaching has become normalised. Pupils learn best with physical face to face contact with a teacher.

Congress calls on the SNCT to determine how and when teachers can be instructed to deliver digital online courses.

Proposer: Issable Dupraz, Lothian Area



Issable Dupraz

Education

Motion F

Congress calls for Local Authorities to strengthen teaching and learning by focusing middle leadership reinforcing subject specialism.

Proposer: James Cowans, Renfrew Area



Monique Dreon-Gould

Motion G

Congress believes that so called efficiency savings are not only impacting on teachers' workload but also on our pupils' subject course choices in the senior phase of secondary schools.

Congress calls on the Scottish Government and COSLA to ensure schools will continue to offer a wide range of appropriate certificate courses to all their learners.

Proposer: Monique Dreon-Gould, Lothian Area

Motion H

Congress is of the view that in-school truancy is giving cause for concern for schools. It impacts negatively on learning and teaching for both the class and the truanting individual and creates workload and stress for teachers.

Congress calls on Scottish Government to: -

- Research and publish the extent of this concern
- Establish lasting solutions which aim to eliminate this phenomenon
- Enact expediently as this is a high priority

Proposer: James Cowans, Renfrew Area



James Cowans

Motion I

Congress expresses grave concern that Modern Languages have faced an uphill struggle since the introduction of CfE. This is despite the Scottish Government's injection of 1+2 money, which has not transformed into presentation numbers in the senior phase due its piecemeal and fragmented implementation.

Congress calls upon the Scottish Government to invest heavily in language provision in schools and recognise the importance of languages to the economy.

Proposer: Peter Brandon, North Lanarkshire



Peter Brandon



John Guidi

Motion J

Congress believes that a significant number of schools and Local Authorities have sought third party providers and training programmes for teachers on improving pupil behaviour.

Congress calls on all Local Authorities to immediately review and critically analyse the cost effectiveness of such expenditure on these training programmes.

Proposer: John Guidi, Renfrew Area

Motion K

Congress believes that the access to the internet in all secondary schools is essential and connectivity should be reliable. To support learning and teaching and reduce workload, the ease of access to class sets of mobile devices in schools should be an expectation not the exception.

Congress urges the Scottish Government and Local Authorities to ensure that every school has sufficient bandwidth through full-fibre connections with secondary schools achieving at least 1Gbps. Additionally, Schools should have robust and extensive Wi-Fi coverage throughout the entire campus. To maintain future readiness, the network infrastructure should be regularly reviewed and updated.

Congress further calls on the Scottish Government and Local Authorities to fund and set out clear targets to make handheld online learning devices available to every learner.

Proposer: Derek Harris, Dumfries & Galloway



Derek Harris

Additional Support Needs Committee

Motion L

Congress is increasingly concerned that the meaning of "Getting it Right for Every Child" has now become getting it right for council budgets. Congress calls on The Scottish Government to take meaningful action to ensure that children's education is not compromised by budget concerns of Local Authorities.

Proposer: Gordon West, Aberdeenshire

Health, Safety & Wellbeing Committee

Motion M

Congress calls on the Public Health Scotland to include teachers in its vaccination programme in order to protect teachers and the educational provision offered to our young people.

Proposer: Paul Devlin, Glasgow City



Paul Devlin



Catherine Nicol

Motion N

Congress notes that a significant rise in staff absence rates is being recorded by employers.

Congress calls on all Local Authorities and education establishments to provide regular opportunities for holders of leadership posts to undergo high quality Human Resource training that will allow them to fully support their colleagues' health & wellbeing.

Proposer: Catherine Nicol, Ayrshire Area

SSTA NATIONAL AWARDS AT CONGRESS 2024

At the close of Congress, the President had the honor of awarding Life Membership to Elaine Henderson, Aberdeenshire and Sid Sandison, Aberdeen City. Both have served the Association with distinction over the years. A note of their nominations can be found below.

Nomination for National Award: Elaine Henderson

I am honoured to nominate Elaine Henderson for the prestigious national award with the SSTA in recognition of her outstanding leadership, dedication, and significant contributions to the association and the education community.

Elaine's journey within the SSTA is a testament to her unwavering commitment and exemplary service spanning more than three decades. She joined the SSTA in August 1994, bringing with her a wealth of experience from her work at esteemed institutions such as Peterhead Academy and Ellon Academy. Her firsthand experience in the education sector has deeply informed her advocacy and leadership within the association.

One of Elaine's most notable contributions has been her proactive engagement on behalf of the Association with the Scottish Government and its education agencies. Her efforts have been instrumental in advocating for policies and initiatives that benefit teachers, students, and the education system as a whole. Elaine's ability to bridge communication and foster productive relationships showcases her strategic vision and commitment to shaping positive change within the education sector.

Elaine's leadership journey within the SSTA has been marked by her tireless dedication to supporting and advocating for all members, regardless of their position or tenure within the education sector. Her role as General Treasurer since May 2011 has not only showcased her financial acumen but also her strategic vision and commitment to the association's long-term sustainability.

In conclusion, Elaine Henderson's engagement with the Scottish Government and its education agencies, coupled with her exceptional leadership, financial stewardship, and commitment to educational excellence within the SSTA, make her an exemplary candidate for the national award. Her contributions have significantly impacted the association's growth, stability, and inclusivity, making her a true asset to the education community. I wholeheartedly recommend Elaine Henderson for this esteemed award, confident that her passion, dedication, and leadership make her a truly deserving candidate.



Elaine Henderson receives her Life Membership Award from the President

SSTA NATIONAL AWARDS AT CONGRESS 2024

Sid Sandison – Nomination for National Award

Sid Sandison joined the SSTA in 1988 and retired from teaching in the summer of 2019. He was a Chemistry teacher and School Representative at Northfield Academy, Aberdeen City Council.

Sid became Aberdeen City District Secretary and Aberdeen Area Secretary in 2009. Sid represented Aberdeen City District at Council from 2005 to 2019 and was a regular attender and contributor, through presenting reports and motions, at Annual Congress during that time.

In 2008 Sid became a member of the Finance Committee until May 2019. Sid brought to the table a unique perspective on many aspects of the committee's work in particular the thorny and controversial area of Association investments.



Sid Sandison receives his Life Membership Award from the President

Sid was a member of the Salaries Committee between 2008 and May 2019. His willingness to ensure all members across the education system were valued and respected by challenging the established practices.

Sid was a member of the Women's Panel that became the Equalities Committee from May 2005 until November 2010.

In 2015 Sid became the Convener of the newly established Recruitment Committee. Sid served as Convener until his retirement in 2019. It was the Recruitment Committee that exemplified Sid's professional passion and commitment for SSTA reps in schools and at District level. His leadership and drive to give reps the place they deserved were well recognised within the Association. He was instrumental to place a real focus on recruitment and ensuring the Associations future. Sid developed the support and training for school reps and District Secretaries as an important component.

Sid was well respected for his dogged determination to seek out the truth of matters even with busy agendas when colleagues were inclined to simply move to next business.

Sid was a willing volunteer, at the shortest of notice, to propose SSTA motions. The thoroughness of his research and inclusion in his prepared speeches was exemplary.

Nominated for a National Award by SSTA National Executive and supported by Aberdeen City District.

SSTA Membership – Recruit a Colleague

All members are encouraged to recruit a colleague to join the SSTA. SSTA membership is unique in that it offers direct access to a senior official for advice and support. No other teacher union provides this service. The SSTA is the only trade union that offers this access to all members and remember the SSTA is the only teacher union that speaks only for Scottish Secondary Teachers.

- NQTs – Free until January 2026 (qualified 2024)
- New members – 50% off for 12 months
- Part-Time – 50% off for all part-timers (£9.00 per month)

Any new members can join view the website at www.ssta.org.uk/join

SSTA Legal Services cover more than you think



Call 0800 081 2207
Visit [TalkToThompsons.com](https://www.talktothompsons.com)

Are you and your family prepared for the future?

We all know that we should have a Will but statistics show that less than 50% of Scottish adults have one. It is difficult but it is not morbid. It is just about ensuring that your wishes are expressed and followed and it is about ensuring that your family are properly catered for. But a Will is only one of three key legal documents that experts advise everyone should have these days for the future protection of their family.

The three documents are a Will, a Power of Attorney and an advanced Directive. Our legal partners, Thompsons Solicitors, will explain the importance of these three documents and answer any questions that you may have.

The SSTA's best kept secret – complete legal services for you and your family

You will know that if you have an employment issue you will have the full support of the SSTA's legal service. You may know that if you have an accident at work you will also receive expert legal support for free. But there is so much more to the legal support you and your family receive as an SSTA member.

In fact, our aim is to provide a complete package of free or discounted legal services so that we can be your one stop shop for every legal issue you may have.

Our legal partners will describe the full range of legal services and support available to you as an SSTA member, how you may access them and some of our success stories over the years.

Statement to members for period ended 31 December 2023

as required by section 32a of Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992

Income and Expenditure

The total income of the union for the period was £894,840. This amount included payments of £838,990 in respect of membership income of the union. The union's total expenditure for the period was £1,060,375.

Political Fund

The Association does not maintain a political fund.

General Secretary Salary and Other benefits

The General Secretary of the union was paid £114,274 in respect of salary and £20,165 in respect of benefits.

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.

Auditor's report

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF SCOTTISH SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association (the 'Association') for the year ended 31 December 2023 which comprise the Statement of financial activities, the Balance sheet and the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the association's affairs as at 31 December 2023 and of its incoming resources and application of resources for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 and the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993.

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF SCOTTISH SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION (CONTINUED)

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the association in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the United Kingdom, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Finance Committee members' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the association's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Finance Committee members with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual report other than the financial statements and our Auditors' report thereon. The Finance Committee members are responsible for the other information contained within the Annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

Opinion on other matters prescribed by the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 and the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- The Association has kept proper accounting records in accordance with the requirements of Section 28 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 and the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993 and has maintained a satisfactory system of control over its transactions in accordance with the requirements of that section; and
- the financial statements agree with the accounting records.

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 and the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the Finance Committee members' report is inconsistent in any material respect with the financial statements; or
- proper accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements 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.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Finance Committee members' responsibilities statement, the Finance Committee members are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements which give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Finance Committee members determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Finance Committee members are responsible for assessing the association's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Finance Committee members either intend to liquidate the association or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditors' report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

We are not responsible for preventing non-compliance and cannot be expected to detect non-compliance with all laws and regulations – this responsibility lies with management with the oversight of the Finance Committee. Based on our understanding of the Association and industry, discussions with management and directors we identified financial reporting standards as having a direct effect on the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. As part of the engagement team discussion about how and where the Association's financial statements may be materially misstated due to fraud, we did not identify any areas with an increased risk of fraud.

Our audit procedures included:

- completing a risk-assessment process during our planning for this audit that specifically considered the risk of fraud;
- enquiry of management about the Association's policies, procedures and related controls regarding compliance with laws and regulations and if there are any known instances of non-compliance;
- examining supporting documents for all material balances, transactions and disclosures;
- review, where applicable, of the Finance Committees' minutes;
- enquiry of management, about litigations and claims and inspection of relevant correspondence
- analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships;
- specific audit testing on and review of areas that could be subject to management override of controls and potential bias, most notably around the key judgements and estimates, including the carrying value of fixed assets and accruals;
- considering management override of controls outside of the normal operating cycles including testing the appropriateness of journal entries recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in the preparation of the financial statements including evaluating the business rationale of significant transactions, outside the normal course of business;

Owing to the inherent limitations of an audit, there is an unavoidable risk that some material misstatements of the financial statements may not be detected, even though the audit is properly planned and performed in accordance with the ISAs (UK).

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF SCOTTISH SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION (CONTINUED)

The potential effects of inherent limitations are particularly significant in the case of misstatement resulting from fraud because fraud may involve sophisticated and carefully organised schemes designed to conceal it, including deliberate failure to record transactions, collusion or intentional misrepresentations being made to us.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our Auditors' report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the Association's Finance Committee, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 Section 33 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 and the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993. 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 organisation and the Association's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Angus McCuaig
Senior Statutory Auditor

for and on behalf of Anderson Anderson & Brown Audit LLP
Statutory Auditors
133 Finnieston Street
Glasgow
G3 8HB



**SCOTTISH SECONDARY
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION**

**info@ssta.org.uk
www.ssta.org.uk
0131 313 7300**

**Scotland's only specialist union for
Secondary Teachers**

Tax Refunds for more than 3 in 4 SSTA members – update

We are pleased to tell you that since launching our employment tax review service in 2019, over 1,250 members have already taken advantage of the service and the results are eye-opening!

You may recall we decided to launch the service after we saw evidence indicating over 50% of taxpayers in the teaching profession have been given the wrong tax code by HMRC which had resulted in them paying too much tax.

The problem is caused because HMRC relies on you checking your tax code and informing them if they give you the wrong code.

The review, provided by leading employment tax specialists, The Tax Refund Company, identifies any tax code errors that caused members to pay too much tax and helps them get their money back from HMRC.

Since launching the service, it turns out significantly more than 50% of SSTA members have been given the wrong tax codes!

Since May 2023, 84% of SSTA members finishing a review were identified as having been given the wrong tax codes causing them to pay too much tax. The average amount HMRC has given back to our members is now £169.56 each, although some members have had over £2,550 back!

If you haven't used the service yet, please bear in mind there is no charge for a review. If you have paid the correct amount of tax, the review is FREE.

If the review concludes you have paid too much tax, The Tax Refund Company will correspond with HMRC to recover your money. Where they are successful, there is a fee of £38 for amounts up to £100 or 38p per £1 where the amount recovered is over £100.

This fee only relates to money you overpaid in up to 4 previous tax years. Any money you overpaid in the current tax year will be included as part of the review and recovered free of charge. For complete peace of mind, if you receive an unexpected tax bill as a direct result of using this service, The Tax Refund Company will pay the bill for you. (T&Cs apply)

To take advantage of the service, please go to www.sstatatx.co.uk

In a matter of minutes you will find out if you could have paid too much tax and if so, you will be able to register for a full review.

Please note – HMRC has a deadline for handing back overpaid tax so if you want to avoid losing money you could get back, you should consider reviewing your tax affairs as soon as possible.

Office Bearers 2023-2025

President, Stuart Hunter
Vice President, Monique Dreon-Goold
Immediate Past President, Catherine Nicol
General Secretary, Seamus Searson
General Treasurer, John Guidi
Minutes Secretary, Alan Taylor

National Executive 2023-2025

Elected Members:

Kevin Campbell, Fife
Paul Cochrane, Renfrew Area
James Cowans, Renfrew Area
James How, Glasgow
Grant McAllister, Fife
Lynn Myles, Lothians
Gordon West, Aberdeenshire

SSTA Committee & Panel Conveners

ASN Panel	Ruth Nicoll, Ayrshire Area
Education Committee	James Cowans, Renfrew Area
Equalities Panel	Maggie Nesbitt, Central Area
Finance Committee	John Guidi, Renfrew Area
Health & Safety Panel	Grant McAllister, Fife
Recruitment Committee	Ward McCormick, Ayrshire
Salaries & Conditions of Service	Paul Cochrane, Inverclyde

SSTA Social Media Channels

You can follow the SSTA on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for updates on current issues and campaigns, publication of advice notes and information on training events.

 fb.me/sstatradeunion

 [@sstatradeunion](https://twitter.com/sstatradeunion)

 [@sstatradeunion](https://www.instagram.com/sstatradeunion)

District Secretaries

Argyll and Bute: Donald Holmes	Highland: Constantinos Athanasopoulos
City of Aberdeen: Jason Currie	Inverclyde: Paul Cochrane
Angus: Catrona McDonald	Midlothian: Isabelle Dupraz
Aberdeenshire: Luke Wright	Moray: Pete Kelly
Clackmannanshire: Maggie Nesbitt	North Ayrshire: Catherine Nicol
Dundee City: Andy Sinclair	North Lanarkshire: Peter Brandon
Dumfries & Galloway: Jay Young	Orkney: Rashka Woods
East Ayrshire: Ward McCormick	Perth & Kinross: Matthew Mackie
City of Edinburgh: Lynn Myles	Renfrewshire: Raymond Kane
East Dunbartonshire: Jacqueline O’Kane	South Ayrshire: Louisa Maestranzi
East Lothian: Monique Dreon-Goold	Scottish Borders: Duncan Taylor
East Renfrewshire: John Guidi	Shetland: <i>Vacancy</i>
Eilean Siar: Amanda Macdonald	South Lanarkshire: Karen Dickson
Falkirk: Chris McDonald	Stirling: Gavin Black
Fife: Kevin Campbell	West Dunbartonshire: Claire Mackenzie
City of Glasgow: James How	West Lothian: Lorna Webster



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