

## **National Conference Report- Belfast April 2007.**

**The Oxfordshire Delegation found Belfast a very welcoming City and was pleased to represent the Oxfordshire Members at this important gathering.**

**We would heartily recommend it to all members, and if you would be interested in representing your colleagues in Birmingham next March, then speak to your Local Secretary and put your name and motion ideas forward for consideration early in the first autumn term.**

**National Conference mainly consists of the opportunity for representatives from Local Associations to debate issues which have been placed high enough to be one of the 20 motions selected from the 140 or more sent into Headquarters each November.**

**There can also be proposals for rule changes or amendments, results from national surveys and reports.**

**Equally important is the opportunity for members from districts, regions and across the UK, to discuss issues, compare situations and solutions and generally socialise.**

**This year we had the findings from surveys on 'Primary Teachers' Pay 'and 'Workload, Working Conditions and Work/life Balance.'**

**There was a report on School Funding and also the National Executive Annual Report.**

**We also tend to have visiting politicians who are invited to speak, and who then enjoy the General Secretary's 'vote of thanks,' usually an opportunity to make points and raise a good humoured laugh from the delegates. This year we had Secretary of State, Mr. Alan Johnson and appropriately, the Education Minister in Waiting for Northern Ireland, Mrs. . Both were politely received.**

**The actual motion resolutions have already been circulated to schools and will appear in the forthcoming magazine, so I will just try to give you a flavour of the debate in what follows.**

**The Annual Report.**

**This document records all the activities of N. E. over the past year, especially information regarding work that Conference the previous year had set for them to carry out.**

**National Executive was pleased to receive a lot of questions from the floor (of Conference), glad that so many had read it I suspect. There was nothing really contentious and its adoption was carried.**

## **Motions.**

**The motion balloted most highly was the one calling for legislation on maximum temperatures in classrooms!**

**Executive were instructed to ‘campaign with the Trades Union Congress for a change in the law and to circulate good practice guidance for negotiating temperature health and safety polices with employers.’**

**The motion was carried so watch this space in next year’s annual report!**

**Wednesday mornings always contains the National Executive’s motion on Pay and Conditions of service, moved on this occasion by Sue Rogers, our Honorary National Treasurer.**

**With the cost of living and interest rates rising and the pay issues of Threshold and TLRs etc. now largely embedded, concern was raised about any a possible limit over the next three year period of 2% and an amendment was carried for a campaign against such a limit, including an indicative ballot for industrial action.**

**Primary Teachers’ pay had been balloted highly and everyone mandated National Executive to continue to urgently seek an end to the ambiguity perpetuated by many Head Teachers concerning curriculum responsibilities and TLR payment in primary schools. Remember, the Government through RIG, do NOT expect teachers to have whole school responsibilities without the appropriate pay!**

**With Performance management, an amendment to challenge OFSTED’ ‘satisfactory’ whilst still putting schools into ‘special measurers’ or ‘areas of weakness’ was accepted and the whole motion carried.**

**( One might also say the same for Head Teachers who follow OFSTED’s example by grading teachers in the same way.)**

**Concern and support were shown for part-time teachers and supply teachers, also high on the agenda, whilst the motion concerning Faith Schools was vigorously debated and only carried after an amendment for National Executive ‘to consider the implications of a totally secular’ education system.**

**It is rare that Conference is so closely split that a wave of agendas will not clearly show the vote, but the first amendment proposed to Rule 4(1)(c) regarding the Local Association to which a member should belong went to agenda count and then to a card vote ( when representatives hand an a card for each association with the membership numbers for the vote) and despite a healthy majority, there was not the required two thirds majority, so the amendment fell.**

**An acrimonious debate lead to amendment 2 about retired members and whether or not they could hold office and vote at meetings, also being lost.**

**Finally, our links to the wider world were well catered for at the lunch or evening fringe meetings, and Conference itself listened in awe to the quiet yet moving speech given, in translation, by a representative from the Iraqi Teachers’ Union.**