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A welcome from ATL Cymru President, David Healey



David Healey,
President of ATL Cymru.

The Transformation Agenda is the hot topic for 2009. The *Terracotta Document*, as it has come to be known, is part of the Welsh Assembly Government's response to the Webb Report. It aims to widen pupil choice, increase the level of skills and reduce the number of people not in education, employment or training (NEETs). Ever greater collaboration between schools and colleges is believed to be the way forward in doing so. ATL doesn't dispute the aims, but we do have great concerns over some of the mechanisms put forward for achieving them.

One of our most acute concerns is the survival of school sixth forms. The *Terracotta Document* argues that those with fewer than 150 pupils are inefficient, ineffective and inflexible. ATL is proud of the excellent job that members do in those areas where further education (FE) colleges provide post-16 education. But any expansion of the tertiary system will have to be carefully justified on sound educational grounds and its social impact monitored; it can't be seen as the quick fix answer for areas of deprivation.

Any reorganisation brings with it the threat of redundancy. Members in schools and colleges are concerned about their jobs and rightly so. The *Terracotta Document* has stoked the fires by baldly stating that there are too many FE colleges and too many secondary schools in Wales, arguing that many of these institutions are too small to offer the desired breadth of opportunity for pupils and students. It suggests that local authorities (LA) might like to review the whole of education provision in schools from age three upwards. As we keep on reminding the Welsh Assembly Government, it's not just jobs but the skills, knowledge and expertise they represent that are at stake here. And during a recession when we know that those will be more needed than ever.

Issues surrounding transport, timetabling, terms and conditions for staff and student discipline also need to be thought through. And, as ever, we wonder what extra money will be forthcoming to help this agenda for change.

ATL respects the duty of the Assembly to ask questions about education, and its right to put forward suggestions for change, but we also insist upon the need for our voice to be heard. It's only together we can find the best solution for the youngsters of a twenty-first century Wales.

Wales TUC LGBT Conference 2009

Representatives from ATL Cymru attended the first Wales TUC LGBT Conference, which was held in Cardiff in February. ATL Cymru put forward a motion about homophobic bullying in Schools. The motion welcomed the excellent work done already by the Wales TUC and other organisations in tackling homophobic bullying in schools, whilst noting that some school teachers and school staff are still reluctant to own their sexuality in their professional lives because of continued fear of ostracism and prejudice. The motion called on the Wales TUC to work with other equalities organisations to ensure that schools are safe, friendly and supportive of both LGB pupils and staff. The motion was passed and will now form part of the Wales TUC LGBT Committee work programme for 2009-10.

ATL Apply Yourself evening seminars for students

ATL Cymru has been delivering a number of evening seminars on applying for jobs for students and newly qualified teachers in Wales. Abi Beacon, South Glamorgan joint branch secretary, and Alec Clark, Gwent branch secretary, have been running the sessions for students which provide advice and support on completing application forms, interview techniques and preparing for interviews. The two sessions that have run in South Wales have been very well attended

with students travelling from across South Wales to attend. The feedback that we have received has been very positive, one student from the University of Wales, Institute Cardiff said: "The evening has been extremely helpful. I now know how to structure my application to ensure that I demonstrate how my knowledge and experience meets the personal specification, ensuring that I score as highly as possible and giving myself the best chance to get an interview."

A student from the University of Wales, College Newport said: "I had no idea what to expect in an interview for a teaching post before, but thanks to Abi and Alec I now feel much better prepared and far more confident to attend interviews. I think that the evening that ATL Cymru put on for students was excellent and will give me an edge when applying for jobs."

Policy development at ATL Cymru

Last year was a busy year for ATL Cymru's policy development. We responded on your behalf to many key consultation documents issued by the Welsh Assembly Government on a wide range of issues including: federation regulations, NEETS strategy, funding regulations and school organisation proposals. In addition to this, ATL Cymru submitted written and oral evidence to a variety of Welsh Assembly Committees on issues such as child poverty, rural school reorganisation and the teacher workload agreement. We continue to build and develop links and relationships within the Welsh Assembly Government to ensure that your views are heard and that policy changes are forthcoming.

This year will see the launch of ATL Cymru's continuing professional development position statement. This position statement is Wales specific and will be used to lobby the Welsh Assembly Government to enact changes in this area. We are currently undertaking research into the exclusion situation in Wales. The aim is to develop a Wales specific position statement on this issue. Members will be consulted about this at a later date.

Your chance to get involved!

ATL Cymru will be issuing two email surveys in the next couple of months, one of which will focus on the key stage 2/3 curriculum changes. In September 2008 the Welsh Assembly Government introduced a new curriculum. We would like your opinion on these changes to enable us to provide positive/negative feedback to the Welsh Assembly on the new curriculum. A second survey focussing on Additional Educational Needs will also be emailed to members.

Your responses to our surveys are extremely important to us and ensure that the work we do is informed by your views and experiences. To ensure your voice is heard in the policy development process, please ensure that the email contact details we hold for you are correct and up-to-date.



Zöe Brewis, Research and Information Officer, who deals with ATL Cymru policy development.

Note from the Director



Philip Dixon, Director, ATL Cymru.

When I meet school and college reps up and down Wales I am always impressed by the excellent work they are doing for members. Time and time again they tell me of disputes they've

resolved, cases they've made, and arguments they've won on behalf of other members of staff. As the people on the ground they are always the best placed to deal with local issues. The other thing that strikes me about them is how self-effacing they are as individuals. They don't see themselves as trouble shooters or legal eagles or star peacemakers, but rather as people with some common sense, a lot of patience, and a desire to make their workplaces better. In fact, people just like you who are reading this newsletter.

We've been recruiting a lot more reps across schools and colleges in Wales but we still have some where reps are needed. Could you fill that gap? Training and support is provided and you would be given time off for union duties; it can provide you with many transferable skills and is informative and enjoyable. So when you get the email or the letter asking you to think about becoming a rep don't think that you can't do it. As President Obama might say: 'Yes, you can'.

Support staff: are you missing out?

Did you know that as a LA employee, for every five years of service you are entitled to one extra leave day? Due to the nature of the role, this is usually actioned as an increase in salary in lieu of holiday entitlement. ATL support staff members in North Wales have discovered that if you do not request your entitlement, you may not receive it. If you would like any help or advice regarding this issue, or would like a copy of a template letter to send to your headteacher and LA, please contact ATL's Cardiff office (contact details on back page).

Have you applied for threshold?

Threshold assessment is intended to reward good teachers who want to remain in the classroom. Teachers who 'cross the threshold' are promoted to point 1 of a three-point upper pay scale (worth over £2,000 in excess of the top point of the main pay scale). Once threshold accreditation is awarded it is permanent and portable from job to job.

Crossing the threshold is not an automatic process. A teacher has to be eligible, has to apply, and the application has to be assessed. Decisions on whether a teacher meets the threshold standards rest with the headteacher. Assessment is open to all qualified teachers in England and Wales who are legally covered by the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document, have qualified teacher status and who are paid on point M6 of the main pay scale for qualified classroom teachers.

The application form and guidance for threshold Round 9 are now available on ATL's website at: www.atl.org.uk. The closing date for applications in this Round is **31 August 2009**, although some schools may have an earlier closing date of which all teachers should be clearly informed. Further guidance and a Welsh language version of the documents are available from the Teachernet website at: www.teachnet.gov.uk.

ATL Cymru motions at ATL's annual Conference

The 2009 ATL annual Conference will take place in Liverpool from Monday 6-Thursday 9 April. ATL North Wales branch have submitted the following three motions:

National pay and conditions for support staff

This motion has been composited with Cheshire branch and requests that the Executive Committee lobbies for the forthcoming national pay and conditions structure to reward and develop the professionalism of support staff and ensure all who are involved in the direct day-to-day teaching of children are treated fairly.

Violence and malicious damage

This motion has been composited with Avon branch and calls upon the Executive Committee to consider a zero tolerance policy and to lobby the law enforcement agencies to take effective action to protect staff and their privacy.

Daily act of worship

This motion states that Conference believes that a daily act of worship should not be a statutory requirement in a secular school.

In addition, ATL Mid and South Glamorgan branches have put forward the following motion to Conference:

Teacher agencies

This motion expresses concern over the growing role of teacher agencies in teacher supply and requests that the Executive Committee lobbies for legislation designed to ensure that:

- teachers who choose to offer themselves for employment on casual supply through a teacher agency do so on a purely voluntary basis;
- supply teachers, employed on a non-casual basis, are paid the full salary to which they are entitled by virtue of their qualifications and experience with an agreed scale of agency fees met by the employer.

Mid and South Glamorgan branch meetings

The Mid and South Glamorgan joint branch meeting was held on Tuesday 10 February at the Village Inn, Coryton, Cardiff. Doru Athinodoru, member adviser from the Legal and Member Services department from ATL's London office, spoke at the meeting about health and safety, with a particular focus on bullying and stress in the workplace and how this sits within health and safety law, your rights and what to do if you or another member in your school or college is suffering from stress or being bullied. The meeting was very interesting and sparked some excellent discussions and debates amongst members. Local branch officers were also on hand to give support and advice to members.

Dates for your diary

Branch meetings

North Wales,
Tuesday 12 May 2009

South and Mid Glamorgan branches,
Tuesday 19 May 2009
5.15pm, Village Hotel, Coryton, Cardiff M4 J32

West Glamorgan,
Wednesday 20 May 2009
6.30pm, Village Hotel, SA1

Gwent,
Thursday 7 May 2009
6.30pm, Glen yr Afon Hotel, Usk

Committee meeting

The next meeting will take place on Friday 5 June 2009.



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