

## Contents:

### News and advice

- Maintained sector pay 2011/12 (p2)
- Independent support staff e-newsletter (p2)
- SSSNB abolition confirmed (p2)
- Training triumph (p2)
- Academies and support staff (p3)
- Exam officers have their say (p4)
- Fight for your right to libraries (p4)

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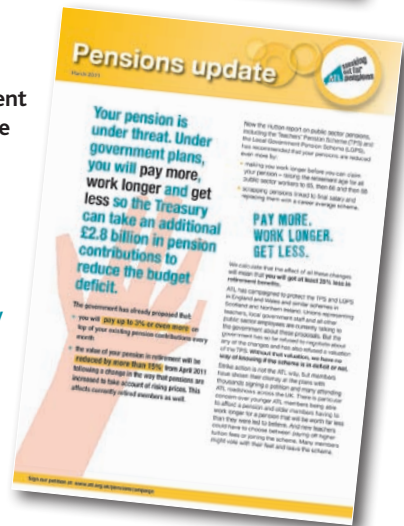


## Pay more, work longer, and get less? No way, says ATL

The recent publication of Lord Hutton's Public Service Pensions Report has confirmed what many observers had long suspected: that the coalition government will now move to end final salary pension schemes in the public sector, and at the same time expect pension fund members to pay more by way of an increase in monthly contributions.

Along with the other education unions, ATL reacted angrily to the Hutton report. ATL general secretary Mary Bousted said that **"the government risks an inflated benefits bill to support retired workers who cannot afford to stay in their pension scheme and pensioners who cannot survive on their pension. We haven't heard any good reasons for abandoning final salary pensions in the public sector."**

Mary went on to say that the government's failure to provide any evidence for the attack on public sector pensions is revealing: **"This blatant disregard for the facts shows up the government's pension plans for what they are – playing politics with ordinary people's futures because it is not strong enough to recoup the financial losses from the banks."**



## Support staff

The precise implications for support staff, who are predominantly members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), are as yet unclear. The government has pledged to minimise the impact of any changes on the lower paid, which includes the majority of school support staff.

### What is ATL's response?

ATL has campaigned to protect the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) in England, Scotland and Wales and a similar scheme in Northern Ireland. According to the National Audit Office (NAO), the costs of public sector schemes are coming down not going up and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Major changes made as recently as 2008 were designed to put the LGPS on a firmer footing, and have ensured that the scheme is sustainable and affordable.

### What happens next?

Talks between the unions and government are ongoing and we have successfully postponed an announcement on the imposed hike in contributions. Discussions were continuing as we went to press, but so far the government has refused to provide evidence to support an increase in contribution rates.

## Make your voice heard

Already ATL members have shown their dismay at the plans to increase contribution rates. Thousands of you have signed our petition and hundreds are attending pension roadshows across the UK.

Without a robust response from ATL members, the government's proposals for England, Scotland and Wales will go ahead and we expect similar changes to be made to pensions in Northern Ireland. You can help protect your future by joining in with ATL's pensions campaign. Visit [www.atl.org.uk/pensionscampaign](http://www.atl.org.uk/pensionscampaign) for a range of possible actions, including:

- writing to your MP using the template letter
- saying no to further pensions changes – if you haven't already, sign ATL's online pensions petition ([www.atl.org.uk/pensionpetition](http://www.atl.org.uk/pensionpetition))
- attending one of our pensions roadshows
- downloading or ordering ATL's A3 poster for your school or college noticeboard
- keeping up to date with developments on email and by post. Make sure we've got your correct details by visiting [www.atl.org.uk/update](http://www.atl.org.uk/update) or by emailing [membership@atl.org.uk](mailto:membership@atl.org.uk).

## Maintained sector pay 2011/12

Members will be aware that the recognised local government unions (Unison, GMB and Unite) submitted a pay claim for 2011/12 for "an increase of at least £250 per annum on all spinal column points".

But in a letter of 17 February 2011, the Local Government Employers (LGE) informed the unions that they will not be making any pay offer for 2011/12. This applies to those working in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The LGE letter states that meeting the unions' pay claim "would increase the local government pay bill by £265 million and add significantly to the funding gap of £6.5 billion facing councils in 2011/12. The choice for the employers has been a difficult one but they believe that the protection of services, and consequent mitigation of job losses and redundancies, should take priority over any increase in pay and, while they acknowledge this will make it the second successive year without a national pay increase, have decided that they are unable to make an offer for 2011/12."



## SSSNB abolition confirmed

In a letter of 15 December 2010, Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove confirmed his decision

to abolish the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB). While he has agreed to encourage joint local authority/union work on job evaluation and job role profiles, Mr Gove was also keen to stress that schools should continue to have "the freedom to organise staff and resources in a way that reflects local priorities and needs".

The unions are currently reviewing their position. ATL had previously expressed anger over the government's decision to abolish the SSSNB. Deputy general secretary Martin Johnson said: "The vital role support staff undertake in schools continues to be undervalued and the SSSNB had begun to address the serious issues of low pay, term-time only employment and career development.

"Support staff make an invaluable contribution to pupil learning, in particular helping pupils with special educational needs, and raising literacy and numeracy standards. Teachers and parents recognise this – clearly Michael Gove does not."

## Training triumph

Thirteen support staff members from as far afield as Hampshire, Wales, Slough and Staffordshire, as well as from more local West Midlands locations, gathered in central Birmingham recently for the long-running 'Supporting yourself' one-day course, held exclusively for ATL support staff members.

The day was split into two parts. In the morning, national official Peter Morris ran an interactive session on your rights at work, covering such topics as contracts of employment, pay, and discipline and grievance procedures.

Then just before lunch, Midlands learning organiser Vicki Lang gave a presentation on the role of a union learning rep (ULR), ATL's comprehensive CPD package for members, and ATL's partnership with Edge Hill University.

And in the afternoon, Lisa Miller of Practical Tactics looked at challenging behaviour in the classroom, and at various techniques to deal with it.

The feedback from attendees was as ever, very positive: "excellent – good to see someone treat us like the professionals we are" and "I feel that our whole school would benefit from this" were just two of the very appreciative remarks made by members.

The last 'Supporting yourself' for the 2010/11 school year takes place in London on 21 May. Places are limited, so if you are interested in attending, please visit [www.atl.org.uk/training](http://www.atl.org.uk/training). You will also find more information about ATL's other rep and nationally run CPD courses.



## Independent support staff e-newsletter



The first edition of *Independent support news* was published in March. Containing news and views from independent schools members, and updates on ATL activities in the sector, it will be emailed out to members on a termly basis.

If we don't have an up-to-date email address for you, and you would like to receive the newsletter, please email Aleksandra Bartosz at [abartosz@atl.org.uk](mailto:abartosz@atl.org.uk) to receive the spring edition, and to ensure you receive future copies.

To submit an article, question or point of view for inclusion in the summer 2011 edition of *Independent support news*, ideas need to be sent to Peter Morris, national official, at [pmorris@atl.org.uk](mailto:pmorris@atl.org.uk), to be received by no later than Friday 17 June.

# ACADEMIES AND SUPPORT STAFF

With nearly 200 new academies opening this school year, and applications running at more than 100 a month, Peter Morris, ATL national official for support staff, looks at the government's school reform strategy and what it means for support staff.

If it can be said that the coalition government formed last spring has a flagship policy, then the ending of local authority control over English schools is it. And in erstwhile *Times* columnist cum education reformer Michael Gove, the coalition had just the man for the job.

Of course, the concept of academies was not invented by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat government. The previous Labour administration had overseen the creation of more than 200

academies, which were either failing secondary schools, or brand new schools, all of which had to have an external sponsor, such as a business, charity or educational institution.

The coalition government has extended the academy concept in a number of ways:

- All primary and secondary schools that have been rated outstanding or good with outstanding features by Ofsted can submit their individual applications to convert.
- In addition, any school – primary or secondary – can apply with other schools as part of a formal partnership, providing at least one is rated outstanding or good with outstanding features, or they join an

existing academy trust with a proven track record of school improvement.

- Outstanding maintained special schools can also apply for academy status.
- Outstanding schools do not need an external sponsor to apply.

This radical extension of criteria has meant that, as of early March, there are now 467 academies in England, with new-style academies now open numbering 185 as of that date. And with 241 new applications to convert received during the month of January alone, the pace of conversion is, if anything, accelerating, as governing bodies jump on the academies bandwagon.

## So what's so bad about academies?

Speaking just after last year's general election, ATL general secretary Mary Bousted said:

"These proposals to turn more schools into academies are just irresponsible. They have not been properly thought through and could end up making a mess of education provision through their unintended consequences.

"Cutting local authorities out of the equation will end any meaningful local planning to target funding to the children who need more help, such as those with special needs.

"Schools are less likely to work collaboratively if they are doing their own thing and competing for resources and pupils.

"Local democracy will be damaged if parents, staff and local authorities are given no say in whether their schools are turned into academies.

"If academies are allowed to determine their own pay and conditions, this will create uncertainty for staff and could make it even harder for the most deprived schools in the toughest areas to recruit staff.

"When there is no proof that academies improve children's education, certainly no more than any other school with extra funding, and with several academies in special measures, it is particularly irresponsible to push more schools down this route."

## What does it mean for support staff?

A change of employer, for one thing. All staff in a new academy will become employees of the academy, with the employment relationship with the local council being severed. Pay and terms and conditions become the prerogative of the new academy, and schools may or may not agree to adhere to the support staff terms and conditions (the 'Green Book'), and the national pay bargaining arrangements. Some academies have also made radical changes to the length of the working day and week, and have introduced performance related pay (for teachers).

For more details on the implications of a move to academy status for you and your school, visit [www.atl.org.uk/academiescampaign](http://www.atl.org.uk/academiescampaign) and read the 'FAQs for staff'.

## How can we stop our school becoming an academy?

Again, [www.atl.org.uk/academiescampaign](http://www.atl.org.uk/academiescampaign) is the best place to start. There you will be able to access our 'Academies campaign toolkit', which provides detailed advice on involving your colleagues in a campaign, and also materials to help you lobby your governing body, parents and the general public.

The move to academy status is all but irreversible. It is the most important decision your school will

make during your working career. It is vital that you avail yourself of all the relevant facts, talk to your colleagues, and keep in touch with your ATL branch secretary, so that you can ensure that your governing body makes an informed decision.

Email Peter at [pmorris@atl.org.uk](mailto:pmorris@atl.org.uk).



# Exam officers have their say

Andrew Harland, CEO of the Examination Officers' Association explains the findings of their recent survey



The latest survey of our members not only reflects on the last academic year for 2009/10 but looks back over 10 years of activity. When the EOA was set up as a lobby group in response

to the pressures being imposed on the system by 'Curriculum 2000', most of the exam office community was made up of teaching exam officers. The role was portrayed as stressful, isolated, poorly resourced and undervalued against the obvious priority given to teaching and learning which drives the teaching profession.

Ten years down the road, that exam office community, now dominated by support staff, is managed by over fifty different types of management across schools and colleges. Add to that the pressures on centres and local authorities to cut

budgets resulting in key exam office staff being re-graded, relocated or in some cases being made redundant, therefore pushing even greater accountability back onto teaching staff for exam delivery.

The good news is that the EOA has established a solid, well established core community which is totally committed to staying in post, at least for the next few years and to continue to build on developing a more sustainable professional workforce that can provide greater support and help to their teaching colleagues.

The bad news is that this core community is on the edge of retirement and/or on the verge of resigning as a result of being totally burnt out by the constant bombardment of change in the exam system. In response to their workload increasing year-on-year, their salaries have been cut or frozen while in contrast they see their teaching colleagues continue to prosper.

The withdrawal of government funds on exam centre support has left the EOA, with its limited resources, as the only independent organisation to represent its community's needs and concerns.

After 10 years many exams office staff are beginning to feel, understandably, that in some areas things are beginning to go backwards. But there is also much to celebrate in the recent EOA report such as the awarding of an MBE to Jan Martin for her services to the exam office community. There is also an increase in members taking professional qualifications to help them become better professionals and there is greater connectivity being encouraged across the stakeholder community which must be secured if this community is to survive.

For further information and the full report contact [virginiacashin@examofficers.org.uk](mailto:virginiacashin@examofficers.org.uk).

## Fight for your right to libraries



A new statement, *School libraries: a right*, from the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) on the role and value of school libraries has been published. It sets out the core entitlements that every child, school's teaching team and wider school community should expect from their school library and puts forward the case for a properly resourced, professionally staffed school library.

"At this time of unprecedented threats to library services across all sectors, we hope that this set of entitlements will be endorsed by education providers, nationally, regionally and locally," said Sue Jones, Chair of CILIP's Youth and School Libraries Joint Committee. "If we are to realise our ambitions for

our children and young people, it is essential that all schools provide access to appropriately resourced and professionally run school libraries."

The statement was drawn up by a small team from CILIP's School and Youth Libraries Groups as part of their work in support of the Making School Libraries Statutory campaign. It is designed to be used by school librarians as part of their advocacy and marketing activities within schools, demonstrating to headteachers, governors and parents the scope and value of their work and the contribution they make to the overall success of the school.

To view a copy of *School libraries: a right*, please go to the CILIP website at [www.cilip.org.uk/schools](http://www.cilip.org.uk/schools).



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