



# NEWSLETTER 1: JULY 2016

Welcome to the launch of our Newsletter which we hope to be issuing monthly to keep you updated with what is happening in the branch.

## SSA

Unison is dealing with many members who have had their posts downgraded, changes to their JDs and those who are facing ring fencing and job matching with selection. Job evaluation in terms of new JDs is a big issue. There are discrepancies between Wandsworth's pay scales and Richmond's which despite management's assurances that no member of staff will lose out under restructuring, is happening. Members are being asked to consider a job at one grade lower as a match. Weekly consultations continue to forge new policies that satisfy both sides. Policies discussed so far: Disciplinary; Grievance; Flexible Working and Dress Code.

## Libraries

Staff in libraries are facing similar problems. Management are tweaking existing JDs to reduce pay grades. Experienced, long serving staff have seen their numbers reduced and some staff are being asked to accept a 20% cut in pay. A survey has found that there has been a 94% drop in library visits since the closure of Heathfield Library in Richmond.

## Achieving for Children (AfC)



After a massive overspend in its finances, AfC, Richmond council's flagship Social Enterprise Company delivering children's' services in Richmond and Kingston, has to make

£7.5m cuts to its services. Consequently, the company is undergoing a reorganisation affecting its 600 staff. A 'hub and cluster model' has been proposed with three main places of work. No redundancies have been announced so far but there will be some changes to upper management posts. Chief Executive Nick Whitfield is taking early retirement from his post as Chief Executive of AfC, for which he will receive a £52,000 pay off. Unison Richmond branch chair has secured some extra facility time for the duration of the consultation.

## Schools

An MAT (Multi Academy Trust) is on our doorstep, joining existing academies Waldegrave School, Teddington School and Nelson Primary School under the title Richmond West Schools Trust (RWST). Waldegrave, Teddington and Nelson will be joined by Hampton Academy and Twickenham Academy which



have both had continuing problems since becoming academies with the Learning Schools Trust five years ago. After receiving scathing Ofsted reports and poor results both Hampton and Twickenham Academies will undergo an organisational wide review and restructure after transfer to RWST. We are involved with the TUPE transfer for all schools involved to ensure that nationally agreed T&Cs will follow all support staff. It has to be asked though that if the



LST could not achieve improvements at the schools in 5 years, then what is to say that the RWST will do any better. Evidence suggests that Academies are not always the answer to poorly performing schools and the NUT and Unison continue our opposition to academy status whilst doing all we can to protect the T&Cs of our members working in them. Did you know that Academies employ unqualified teachers? We see this as de-professionalising the teaching profession and teaching assistants are taking on more responsibilities often without a pay increase or recognition of new roles.



**Another MAT is due to be established** joining Strathmore and Clarendon SEN schools. After an Achieving for Children (AfC) strategy for SEN provision in the borough was launched in March, a proposal is going ahead to form the Auriga Trust, which will

concentrate the provision under the new trust. This has led to the closure of other smaller sites and units in mainstream schools which will be incorporated into the trust. The Newhouse Centre for older children with behavioural problems has closed; the Russell School SEN unit is closing and the unit at St Mary's Primary School in Twickenham has closed temporarily whilst its future as a special needs provider goes under review. The consultations on these changes have not been satisfactory. Involvement of Unison has only occurred as we hear about the consequences from our members. Worryingly, the closure of these smaller units and the displacement of support staff is part of the AfC strategy that will see the opening of two SEN **Free Schools** which will be sponsored by the Auriga Trust. Now the principle of integration into mainstream classrooms for children with SEN seems to have been abandoned as the free schools that will be under the governance of the Auriga Trust, will be primary and secondary through schools. SEN schools attract more funding than SEN support in mainstream classrooms; enough said!

TAs in schools continue to suffer loss of hours as school budgets are cut and have to stretch further. The funding for free school meals for all infant aged children is being withdrawn and schools themselves will have to find the money if they want to continue.

### **Richmond upon Thames College**

RuTC is still open for business next academic year despite the mountains of rubble to be seen from the A316. In the autumn of 2017, The Richmond Education and Enterprise Campus will be the site of a new Secondary Academy; a new Sixth Form College; a new home for Clarendon SEN School and a 'hub' for the Haymarket Media Company.

Unison attends regular JCC meetings at the college to discuss issues affecting the staff both now and in the future. Support staff agreed to waive their pay claim last year on the understanding that a better offer would be made for 16/17 and 17/18. With additional cuts to FE funding, we hope this pay rise will materialise. A head is already in post for the new secondary school; to find out more follow the link <http://www.reec.org.uk/>



Next edition will be in September. If anyone would like to contribute to it, please send comments or articles to [maggie.fordham@richmond.gov.uk](mailto:maggie.fordham@richmond.gov.uk)