




Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association

Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association
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NEWSLETTER OF THE SCOTTISH SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION - JUNE 2021

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to our Summer newsletter for 2021.

This session, without stating the obvious, was dominated by the Covid-19 virus that swept around the world and came to our shores. As a result, we have gone through an unprecedented turn of events. We have had two extended periods of school closures and two continuous years of final exam cancellations.

Learners and teachers had to react quickly and effectively to a new learning environment. Our vocabulary and phrases in the educational lexicon expanded to include terms such as:

home schooling, blended learning, and remote teaching.



John Guidi, President

We have also become all too familiar with technical terms such as: teams, zoom, google classroom, poor internet connection, slow download speeds and the all too familiar phrase "You're muted!".

We experienced the computer screen replacing the classroom at various stages. We adapted to educational change that was enforced by extraordinary settings rather than the traditional route of planned changes by local or central directives.

Many teachers had to develop new skills, use their own equipment, and produce or adapt materials for their pupils to ensure that learning in some form or another was not completely lost during school closures.

Teachers lead effectively both in self-organisation in a new working environment and delivered learning for the pupils they served. The response of the teachers adapting to the needs of the pupils was a major strength of the teaching profession.

One thing was clear from the effects of Covid -19 is that all the support for remote learning cannot replace the pupils experience in the classroom. There are too many factors affecting learning remotely; access to IT equipment, broadband connectivity and home circumstances are just some of the plethora of obstacles pupils and teachers faced.

Once the schools reopened, teachers and young people faced another challenge: the Alternative Certification Model (ACM). The workload involved in developing, marking, and moderating of assessments was extensive and increased the stress levels of pupils and teachers alike. The two additional in-service days and £400 offered fell well short of the timescale and budget required, in many respects a symbolic token gesture for an overworked and underpaid workforce.

As the strength of the teaching profession was to adapt effectively in ever changing circumstances, there also is a requirement to raise some questions on fundamental issues in Scottish Education such as: culture, leadership, the role of external agencies and the status of the teaching profession. And in the middle of all this, the findings of the OECD review on the Curriculum for Excellence have been published. The conclusions and views of an independent body regarding the strength and areas of

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

improvement of our curriculum at all levels of Scottish Education and in particular the senior phase will require careful thought and due process to make changes for the benefit for all.

Hopefully we can return to a new “normal” next session and by October our Professional Association will be participating our second part of Congress for 2021. It will be our opportunity to discuss and debate about the present and future of Scottish Education.

Our strapline for Congress is:

Teachers leading learning

What would most certainly be of greatest benefit to Scottish Education is to hear the views and voices of secondary teachers from our Professional Association.

Have a wonderful summer and have a well-deserved break before a fresh new start next session.

John Guidi
President

76th SSTA CONGRESS 2021 (Part I)

The Covid-19 Pandemic created many difficulties and challenges to the work of the Association and the preparations for Congress 2021. It was decided to hold the 76th Congress in two parts, on two separate days. Part one was held as a virtual event on Saturday 15 May 2021. To be followed by Part two on Saturday 2 October 2021. It is hoped this will be an in-person event in Glasgow (Covid restrictions permitting).

Congress (Part 1) was a private session and restricted to Congress delegates only. The main business was the receiving of the Finance Report and the adoption of a revised SSTA Constitution.

President, John Guidi , managed the proceedings excellently and will remain President until the second part of congress in October. At this point Catherine Nicol (President elect) will commence her term as SSTA President.

[The SSTA Constitution](#)

The main changes to the constitution included:

- Membership of the Association will be open to all teachers qualified for, or employed in post-primary work in schools in Scotland.
- Two or more Districts may decide to operate as an Area for the purposes of organisation and administration if approved by SSTA Council
- The Finance committee to be known as Finance and General Purposes committee to increase the membership from Council from four to six
- The requirement that the General Secretary shall report to and act on behalf of Congress, Council and Executive
- A right of appeal against a decision to suspend or expel a member to a Disciplinary Committee
- Introduction of a complaints and appeal procedure

The adopted SSTA Constitution now requires the Association to review and introduce revised Standing Orders, Rules for Ballots and a Complaints procedure. A working group has been established to undertake this work before presenting to a future Council meeting.

MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

As we approach the end of an extremely challenging school year, and this year without doubt has been the most challenging for teachers and pupils, some things remain the same and yet major change is on the way. Unfortunately, as so often before, the changes arrive at the very end of the school term or school year.

The expectations on teachers remain the same and slow progress on teachers' pay is not an unusual event. However a new course for fundamental change has been set by the recent Scottish parliamentary election, a new Cabinet Secretary for Education (Shirley-Anne Somerville), and the publishing of an international report.

Teachers' pay for 2021 is tied-up with COSLA and its demand for a single pay policy for all local authority staff, and trying to seek additional funds from the new Scottish Government whilst teachers wait for a pay increase that reflects their efforts not only in the past but throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

As the Alternative Certification Model (ACM) reaches its conclusion – appeals process to come – the unnecessary bureaucratic pressure on both pupils and teachers has highlighted the problems of national qualifications. The SSTA welcomes the Government announcement that the arrangements for 2022 will be known before schools restart in August.

The new Cabinet Secretary has been tasked with taking forward not only education recovery and qualifications but the recommendations of the [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development \(OECD\) review of Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence \(CfE\)](#) which was published on 21 June.

The review praised the “basic ideas of CfE as still valid” and “inspiring,” almost two decades after it was conceived. However, the OECD review highlighted the fundamental flaws in the implementation of CfE – including a wide divide between its aspirations and the demands of the heavily exams-based system in the senior phase of secondary school.

The review also says that assessment approaches in the senior phase should be “fully aligned to match CfE ambitions” – it suggests this could include more continuous teacher assessment, externally marked projects and extended essays, and oral and practical presentations.

The [Government's response](#) included:

- the reduction of teacher class contact time by 90 minutes a week to allow greater collaboration between teachers and schools
- the adaptation of the senior phase to match the vision of CfE
- to move the role of inspection out of Education Scotland
- the ‘replacing’ of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) with a new agency for both curriculum and assessment
- develop qualifications and assessment for better alignment with the Four Capacities and CfE philosophy

It is worth noting that the OECD review was extended to include the exams and assessment system but this work is not expected to be published until the autumn.

There is no culpability on the part of the secondary classroom teacher for the failings of the past; this lies with those in positions who believe they know what is best for teachers. Many teachers have been calling for these changes and, had we been listened to, the OECD review may not have been needed at all. Teachers must be at the centre of all new initiatives and structures as, if we want to get it right, ‘ask the teachers’. The SSTA insists that teachers are at the centre of all these developments as they are the experts and that will be our position when we meet with the new Cabinet Secretary for Education.

You have all done enough, have a good vacation and remember Take a Break.

SSTA says ‘Put Teachers at the Centre’

There's never been a better time to get involved!

When it comes to forming educational policy, it is important for specialist teachers to ensure their priorities are discussed. Being active in a union means that they can bring specialist perspectives to what are often general discussions.

“There has never been a more important time to get more involved in a union,” argues Euan Duncan, Assistant General Secretary of the Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association. Many teachers pay their union dues in the same way they pay for home insurance, a necessary expense they hope they'll never need. Of course union membership gives teachers access to confidential advice and support if things go wrong, and knowing you can be accompanied in formal processes with employers can be a tremendous comfort. Unions also engage in collective bargaining with employers, constantly keeping pay and pension agreements and conditions of service under review. But, perhaps unsurprisingly, teacher unions are also passionate about education and learning.

“As well as looking after members' interests, we also work with Government and employers to try and improve education,” says Euan. “Because of COVID restrictions this has been a particularly challenging year and we have been working hard to ensure teachers and their pupils are as safe as possible.”

One of the challenges that came to light this year arose from the use of face coverings; on the one hand the SSTA was keen that everybody in schools should wear one, but on the other hand they quickly became aware of the isolating effect covered faces can have on people with hearing impairment, many of whom rely on visual cues to communicate.

“We had members getting in touch seeking advice so we decided to reach out to the British Association for Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD) for guidance. Being able to discuss and understand the issues with experts was very helpful. We made sure that members who were nervous about having pupils in some of their classes without face coverings understood that sometimes they presented a major communication barrier.” Thanks to this, the SSTA was able to contribute more effectively to national risk assessment guidance.

The SSTA also became aware of employers redeploying teachers from specialist learning support roles into whole class teaching roles, often at very short notice. In many cases this was very stressful for members who had not been involved in whole-class subject teaching for a while (years in some cases) and of course quite detrimental to those young people entitled to specialist support. We intervened in a number of situations where such proposals would have had a negative impact on teachers and learners.

Union membership should not be seen as an alternative to a specialist body such as BATOD, but as complementary. Governments, education authorities and employers frequently consult and collaborate with teaching unions on educational issues because of their expertise and representative nature. There are clear advantages to everyone when a range of voices is heard, and teaching unions perform a vital, well-organised stakeholder role.

The SSTA is concerned that, once we begin to move on from the COVID-19 crisis, national and local government will start considering how to foot the considerable bill which has accrued. Previous experience has shown that budget reductions tend to fall on specialist provision. “In Scotland, for example,” says Euan, “the latest figures show that although the number of pupils identified as having additional support needs has almost doubled, the number of ASN teachers has already fallen from 3,389 in 2012 to 2,811 in 2020. Although the SSTA has been campaigning to improve these numbers, national and local government remains intent on paying lip service to inclusivity, and continues to focus resources on the majority while excluding minorities.” Having active union members with this specialism really makes a difference when it comes to halting or even reversing the withdrawal of such resources.

In the SSTA, national policy begins at local level, covering a wide range of issues including pay and conditions, health and wellbeing, education, additional support needs as well as being proactive in current innovations. “Sometimes people think that strong political opinions are a prerequisite of union activism, but what really matters is a desire to improve the conditions in which teachers and learners teach and learn. Every one of our members is an expert in their own way, and each of them knows what changes could make a difference.” A union's strength comes from its membership, and a more active membership has a louder, more effective collective voice.

There's never been a better time to get involved!

HMRC – TAX RELIEF

We wrote to all members last year after we saw evidence indicating over 50% of taxpayers in the teaching profession have been given the wrong tax code by HMRC in the past 4 years causing them to pay too much tax.

Apart from explaining the problem is caused because HMRC relies on you checking your tax code and informing HMRC if they give you the wrong code, we also offered members the opportunity to receive a free online review of their current and last 4 years tax codes.

The review, provided by leading PAYE tax specialists, The Tax Refund Company, identifies any errors that caused an employer to deduct too much tax and will help get your money back from HMRC where this has occurred.

Since then, hundreds of members have taken advantage of this new service and gone on to request a full tax review. Of those that have finished their review, 65% have found they were owed money back from HMRC. So far, the average tax refund is £178 each, but some members have received over £2,550 back!

There is no charge for this 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 try and 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 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. In the rare event the review concludes you have underpaid, only you will be told, not HMRC. However, 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&C's apply)

To take advantage of this new service, please go to www.sstatax.co.uk You will find out within a few minutes if you might 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 reclaiming 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.

SSTA MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

Have any of your personal details, contract or place of work changed recently or will be changing over the summer? Have you informed the SSTA of these changes?

You can let us know about any changes by completing a form on the SSTA webstie at: www.ssta.org.uk/updatedetails or by emailing info@ssta.org.uk



SSTA

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FINANCIAL INFORMATION YEAR 2020

SCOTTISH SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

STATEMENT TO MEMBERS FOR PERIOD ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

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 £969,470 This amount included payments of £920,264 in respect of membership income of the union. The union's total expenditure for the period was £ 885,847

Political Fund

The Association does not maintain a political fund.

General Secretary Salary and Other benefits

The General Secretary of the union was paid £102,451 in respect of salary and £0 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.

Independent auditors' report to the members of SCOTTISH SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of SCOTTISH SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION for the year ended 31 December 2020 which comprise the Cash Flow Statement, the Income and Expenditure Account, the Balance Sheet and notes to the financial statements, 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 FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) to the extent that the standard is relevant to the association.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the association's affairs as at 31 December 2020 and of its surplus for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- have been prepared in accordance with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (amended 2016).

Independent auditors' report to the members of SCOTTISH SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION *(continued)*

Basis of 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 Auditor's 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 UK, including the FRC'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 auditor's 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.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2008

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

- the information given in the Finance Committee's report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Finance Committee's report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the association and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Finance Committee's report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of Finance Committee's remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of the Finance Committee

As explained more fully in the Finance Committee's responsibilities statement, the Finance Committee members are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they 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.

Auditor's 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 auditor's 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.

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

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the association's members, as a body. 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 auditor's 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 association and the association's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Stephen Grant, Senior Statutory Auditor
for and on behalf of Tindell, Grant & Co Limited
Statutory Auditors
6 Munro Road, Springkerse
Stirling FK7 7UU

Office Bearers 2021 -2023

President, John Guidi
President Elect, Catherine Nicol
Vice President, Stuart Hunter
Past President, Kevin Campbell
General Secretary, Seamus Searson
General Treasurer, Elaine Henderson
Minutes Secretary, Alan Taylor

National Executive 2021-2023

Elected Members:

Paul Cochrane, Inverclyde
James Cowans, East Renfrewshire
Monique Dreon-Goold, Lothians
James How, Glasgow
Ward McCormick, Ayrshire
Gordon West, Aberdeenshire

SSTA Committee Conveners


ASN Committee	TBC
Education Committee	James Cowans, Renfrew Area
Equalities Committee	Maggie Nesbitt, Central Area
Finance & General Purpose Committee	Elaine Henderson, Aberdeenshire
Health, Safety & Wellbeing Committee	Grant McAllister, Fife
Recruitment Committee	tbc
Salaries & Conditions of Service Committee	Paul Cochrane, Inverclyde
Senior Managers Advisory Committee	Tbc

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.

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SSTA District Secretaries

Argyll and Bute Donald Holmes	Highland Sandra Mills
City of Aberdeen Jason Currie	Inverclyde Paul Cochrane
Angus Kevin Madill	Midlothian Sandra Richardson
Aberdeenshire Barbara Adams	Moray Vacancy
Clackmannanshire Maggie Nesbitt	North Ayrshire Catherine Nicol
Dundee City Peter Thorburn	North Lanarkshire Peter Brandon
Dumfries & Galloway Jay Young	Orkney Shona Ferguson
East Ayrshire Ward McCormick	Perth & Kinross Matthew Mackie
City of Edinburgh Lynn Myles	Renfrewshire Jane Liston
East Dunbartonshire Sally Shearer	South Ayrshire Ruth Nicoll
East Lothian Monique Dreon-Goold	Scottish Borders Duncan Taylor
East Renfrewshire John Guidi	Shetland Chris McGinlay
Eilean Siar <i>Vacancy</i>	South Lanarkshire Karen Dickson
Falkirk Christopher McDonald	Stirling Gavin Black
Fife Kevin Campbell	West Dunbartonshire Claire Mackenzie
City of Glasgow James How	West Lothian Douglas Bringhurst

SSTA Legal Services cover more than you think



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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.