

# Campaigning to Protect Pre-School Provision and Stop Redundancies

Towards the end of the last academic year and the start of this one UNISON members facing redundancy have been contacting us.

This is particularly the case in the Wednesbury area where St.John's CofE Primary Academy plans to close their nursery provision, and Moorlands Primary School were planning to close their playgroup because of the building used by the playgroup had been condemned.

## Bright Futures

In addition, Bright Futures Daycare at Hateley Heath is planning to close at Christmas with the loss of 52 childcare places.

Moorlands Playgroup parents, supported by Sandwell UNISON, led the way in campaigning against the planned closure. Parents organised a petition and press release. They lobbied Councillors and their picture hit the local press. The pressure they created resulted in Sandwell's Cabinet Councillor for Children's, Simon Hackett, intervening to find a solution, resulting in the redundancies being withdrawn.

Bright Futures Daycare Parents also started a petition and contacted Councillors. Again, Sandwell UNISON supported parents and a meeting was arranged with Cllr Simon Hackett. Officers proposing the redundancies created outrage when they blamed the budget deficit on 'over-inflated salaries of staff'. It is clear that plans to privatise this service are about driving down wages. At the time of writing the campaign continues.

UNISON will continue to support any campaigns that protect pre-school provision and challenge any redundancy proposals of support staff in schools.

If the austerity cuts are affecting your school and you face restructures, redundancies or variations to contracts – get in touch straight away. Simply call UNISON on 0121 569 5996 and ask for Marie.

## Another Campaign Success as Living Wage to be Paid by Sandwell Council

UNISON has been demanding that as a Labour Council Sandwell should be paying the Living Wage as its minimum pay level and become an accredited Living Wage employer.

5 years later and Sandwell Council has just agreed to 'top up' the salaries of those paid below the Living Wage level to the Living Wage amount. Prior to the new pay rate to be announced in November the Living Wage amount outside London is £8.45 per hour.

This means that all Sandwell Council employed staff, including support staff in Community Schools, that are currently on Grade A will receive a 'top-up' payment from 1 April 2018. So too will many on Grade B as anyone below scale pay point 13 are set to receive a 'top-up' to the Living Wage level.

Whilst it is disappointing that the Council is not becoming an accredited Living Wage employer UNISON welcomes this important step in the right direction.

West Midlands Regional Secretary, Ravi Subramanian, who met with the Council Leader to try and persuade Sandwell Council to become a Living Wage employer stated,

"This will put money in the pockets of low paid workers making a real difference to the lives of hundreds of workers and their families. The council should be commended for taking this important step towards full Living Wage accreditation."

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