

# A *new deal* for school support staff ✓



## Negotiating school support staff pay

## School Support Staff Negotiating Body: Briefing for members

### What is the School Support Staff Negotiating Body?

UNISON is at the forefront of work on exciting new legislation for school support staff in England. We're working with the Labour government to create a new negotiating body tasked with establishing fair pay rates and routes to career progression for school support staff. This new School Support Staff Negotiation Body (SSSNB) will bring together recognised trade unions,<sup>1</sup> bodies representing employers across the schools sector and the government, to decide pay, terms and conditions for school support staff, as well as taking a new approach to staff training and development.

### What difference will a new negotiating body make for school support staff?

At the moment, the majority of school support staff are covered by the same negotiating body as council workers (the

National Joint Council or NJC). The SSSNB will be a negotiating body that only talks about school support staff, which means that you and your colleagues will have a louder voice

and together we can focus on issues that really affect staff working in schools.

The new negotiating body will cover pay, terms and conditions, and access to training for school support staff. We plan to use the new negotiating body to call for better pay, action on term-time only contracts and improved access to training and development for those who want it.

Staff working in academies will also be covered by the new body. This means they will be guaranteed the same pay and conditions as those working in maintained schools. Academisation meant academies had the power to decide if they wanted to sign up to the pay, terms and conditions that were negotiated through the NJC – and while many academies voluntarily offered the same or similar pay and conditions, some workplaces saw school support staff being asked to do more for less. Improving the working life for staff in academies should be a key part of this work.

### What will UNISON's role be?

UNISON was instrumental in getting a commitment to the SSSNB in Labour's manifesto, and now they are in government we are working closely with the Secretary of State and Department for Education officials to get it set up.

This summer and autumn, we have been involved in detailed discussions on how to ensure the new law can give school support

*“Teachers get their voice heard in the national conversation but too often support staff don't. That's why the last Labour government was right to create a negotiating body to look at their terms and conditions across our country, and that is why the next Labour government will do the same.”*

**Bridget Philipson MP,**  
Secretary of State for Education,  
in a speech in September 2023

<sup>1</sup> The legislation will specify only three recognised unions who will be able to negotiate on behalf of school support staff – UNISON, GMB and Unite. As is the case currently, the NEU will not be able to negotiate pay for school support staff.

*“I was UNISON’s lead negotiator when the last Labour government was about to bring in the SSSNB. After the 2010 election the Conservative-led coalition got rid of it, and this meant 14 years of pay stagnation for school support staff – and very little acknowledgement of the essential work you do.*

*I am committed to this new SSSNB and want to make sure it delivers the pay, conditions and training that our members in schools need.”*

**Christina McAnea,**  
UNISON General Secretary

staff the greatest voice and has the most effective structure for fighting for better pay, terms and conditions.

Once the SSSNB is up and running, UNISON will be the largest of only three unions to sit on the board of the body, alongside employer representatives. This means senior activists and staff will have seats on the body and

UNISON will be able to consult and ballot school support staff.

## What needs to happen next for the SSSNB to become law?

In the King’s Speech, where the government set out its priorities for the upcoming year, the SSSNB was referenced – showing that the government is serious about working with unions early on to ensure fair pay and progression for school support staff.

The SSSNB will be in the Employment Rights Bill, a flagship piece of legislation which the government has promised to publish within 100 days. Once the draft law is published, MPs debate it, examining it line by line to make sure it is fit for purpose. It’ll be voted on and then go to the House of Lords for further discussion before returning to MPs for a final vote.

Once it has been agreed by MPs, the work to get it up and running begins with unions and employers identifying their representatives to sit on the body and agreeing the detail of how negotiations will take place.

UNISON will be taking part in the process every step of the way, ensuring that there are

opportunities to members to get involved in shaping the law as well as asking your help in getting MPs to turn up in support.

## How can I make sure my priorities are heard?

UNISON will make sure there are lots of opportunities to help shape this new negotiating body.

- Sign up here to express your interest in getting more involved:  
<https://survey.alchemer.eu/s3/90751227/School-Support-Staff-Champions>
- Take our short survey here to let us know your priorities for the SSSNB:  
<https://s.alchemer.eu/s3/SSSNB>

In 2024, UNISON’s Local Government Conference agreed clear policy in support of the creation of the SSSNB. Conference made clear that the final say will lie with UNISON members – so any final proposal will be put to our members before we agree it.

## Do I need to do anything to avoid missing out?

No! All school support staff in state funded schools, whether you’re in an academy, a faith school or a maintained school, will be covered by the new negotiating body. Any transition period will be carefully managed to ensure that no staff lose out – we hope that the current pay, terms and conditions agreed through the NJC will be carried over and provide a minimum standard which the new negotiating body can build on and improve.

## Recruit a colleague!

As with any bargaining process, the stronger we are, the better the outcome. So please encourage UNISON colleagues to join UNISON so together you can win a new deal for school support staff.

<https://join.unison.org.uk/>

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