

Confidential

Support Staff union staff-side members
United Learning Academy JNC

4th October 2024

Dear colleagues,

Academy Support Staff Annual Pay Offer 2024 - Revised

Thank you for taking the time to meet and discuss our pay offer for support staff working on United Learning contracts in our academies.

As we outlined at our meeting on Wednesday 2nd October, we welcomed your challenge of our original offer, and we are delighted to be able to provide a revised pay offer. We believe this is a significant improvement on our previous offer and on the national NJC pay award offer for local government support staff. It reflects our continued commitment to recognising the hard work and ongoing contribution of our Academy Support Staff.

The new pay offer is an increase of £1,290 per annum or 5.5% (whichever is greater) to all United Learning support staff FTE salaries. Uplifts in Outer London will be £1,489 per annum and Inner London £1,572 per annum as per the GLPC methodology. This means that support staff with an FTE salary above £23,455 per annum outside London, £27,073 in Outer London and £28,582 in Inner London, will receive an increase of 5.5%.

As previously stated, we will revisit this pay offer should the NJC pay award exceed our offer when this is settled, although we do not anticipate that this will be required.

This offer would ensure a minimum FTE pay rate of £24,203 per annum (£12.41 per hour) outside London, £27,756 per annum (£14.23 per hour) in Outer London, and £29,301 per annum (£15.02 per hour) in Inner London. This equates to an uplift of 5.6% for the lowest paid members of staff. These rates are above the government's current National Living Wage (NLW)¹, the Living Wage Foundation's rates², and the proposed 2024 NJC³ rates. It also puts United Learning in a strong position ahead of the increase in the government's NLW rate in April 2025.

We also propose (in addition to the £1,290, £1,489 or £1,572 uplift) to increase the minimum FTE rate of pay for classroom-based support staff to £24,921 per annum (£12.78 per hour) outside London, £28,576 per annum (£14.65) in Outer London, and £30,154 per annum (£15.46 per hour)

¹ NLW 2024 rate is £11.44ph.

² Living Wage Foundation 2023/24 rate is £12.00 out of London and £13.15 in London.

³ NJC minimum rate offer is £12.24ph.

in Inner London. This reflects the importance of these roles, which directly support and enhance our pupils' education.

The rest of our pay offer, and response to your pay request, is unchanged but set out below for completeness.

Alongside this pay award offer, we are also delighted to confirm that we have introduced, for all support staff in our schools, one personal leave day per year from 1st September 2024, in line with the academic year. This can be used for any reason i.e. to celebrate a birthday or pursue a personal interest/hobby. Whilst this isn't an addition to contractual annual leave entitlement, the personal day is designed to offer flexibility to those support staff who work term time only and can't usually take any time off during term time (although all support staff are eligible). The personal leave day forms part of our commitment to support staff wellbeing and work-life balance.

To further support our staff, we have also recently introduced a Health Cash Plan which enables staff on a United Learning contract to claim money back against the cost of optical and dental checks as well as other medical expenses such as physiotherapy and provides the ability to book same day virtual GP appointments. This is in addition to the flexible benefits that are already available to staff via Perkbox, which provides access to discounts for everyday spending including groceries and salary sacrifice schemes such as cycle to work, gym membership, and car leasing.

In response to the other points submitted as part of your pay claim that have not already been addressed by our offer above, please see below:

Reviews of the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps

United Learning is committed to fairness and equal treatment of all employees, so we view pay gaps as a matter of concern. We will continue to review our gender pay gap data annually and perform in-depth analysis to examine the reasons for the pay gap across different groups of staff. This enables us to put in place targeted actions to reduce the gap, whilst recognising that societal and sectoral factors beyond the control of any single employer contribute to the gap. We are also working to develop our reporting and analysis of ethnicity pay gap data, which we hope to be able to share an initial view of during the course of this academic year, and improve the quality of our disability data, which will include encouraging staff to disclose any disability, to ensure that we can effectively analyse this data and take appropriate actions to address any pay gaps that exist.

A reduction in the full-time equivalent (FTE) working week to 35 hours

We have carefully considered your request to reduce our working week to 35 hours, but this is not something that we plan to take further. The full-time working week is 37.5 hours for all staff on United Learning contracts (teachers, support staff and central office) and this reflects the reality in most organisations. However, we are keen to ensure that all staff have a manageable workload and positive work/life balance. To support this, we increased the annual leave entitlement by one day last year, at your request, and as detailed above, have introduced an

additional personal leave day (to be taken during term time) from this academic year. We encourage flexible working options to be considered for all roles and recognise that term time working is an attractive pattern for many people.

Action on workload

We are committed to ensuring that all staff have a manageable workload and work/life balance and that they feel their school and United Learning take workload and wellbeing seriously. We identified from our staff survey in 2023/24 the schools that scored lower in workload/wellbeing questions and conducted deep dive reviews in these schools and roundtable meetings with different staff groups. The messages from these reviews will inform our continued focus on this area in 2024/25. Another priority this year is to ensure that every member of staff has experience of excellent line management and as part of regular one-to-one discussions staff should be discussing their workload and wellbeing.

For the trust to agree to become an accredited Living Wage employer

United Learning considers the Foundation Living Wage when determining pay awards and believes that the offer we have made is strong, whilst retaining the flexibility to respond appropriately to our context. Therefore, we will not be signing up to become an accredited Living Wage employer, but we will continue to monitor their pay rates and improve ours wherever possible and will review the issues that have previously arisen with contractors.

A phased approach to reaching a minimum pay rate of £15 an hour in a maximum of two years, sooner if possible

United Learning believes that our minimum rate of pay for support staff remains competitive despite the financial challenges which schools face. Our proposed new minimum rate of pay, which would take effect from 1st September 2024, will continue to exceed that of the current NLW, Living Wage Foundation rates and the proposed 2024 NJC minimum rate. We will continue to review our minimum rate of pay annually as part of our approach to pay and will continue to actively explore opportunities to raise our minimum rates of pay.

An implementation date of 1 April 2023 for the cost of living pay award

As you will know from previous discussions, we have thought carefully about this request but for the reasons we have previously set out we will continue to retain the contractual implementation date for pay awards for support staff on United Learning contracts as the 1st September. Unlike local authorities, our financial planning, funding and budgeting cycle align with the academic year, so it makes operational sense for our pay award to continue to run from September to August each year.

Summary of the United Learning Pay Offer for Academy Support Staff on United Learning contracts

1. £1,290 per annum (Outer London £1,489 per annum and Inner London £1,572 per annum) applied to FTE salaries or 5.5% uplift (if greater) with effect from 1st September 2024.

2. New FTE minimum rates of pay of £24,203 per annum (£12.41 per hour) outside London, £27,756 per annum (£14.23 per hour) in Outer London, and £29,301 per annum (£15.02 per hour) in Inner London, with effect from 1st September 2024.
3. New FTE minimum rates of pay for classroom-based support staff of £24,921 per annum (£12.78 per hour) outside London, £28,576 per annum (£14.65 per hour) in Outer London, and £30,154 per annum (£15.46 per hour) in Inner London, with effect from 1st September 2024.

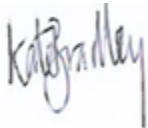
We were pleased that you welcomed our revised offer and hope that it will be positively received by your members and seen as a reflection of our commitment to ensuring that employees are appropriately compensated for their efforts.

We are keen to apply this pay award for our support staff at the earliest opportunity. We would need to conclude our consultation process by 1st November 2024 in order to implement the pay award in the November payroll.

Regarding our TUPE support staff on NJC terms, we await confirmation of the national award and will implement this when national negotiations have concluded. As with our staff on United Learning contracts, we wish to apply this award as soon as possible and hope final agreement is not too far into the 2024/25 academic year.

We look forward to hearing from you in response to this offer, but in the meantime if you have any comments or queries, please do let me know.

Yours sincerely



Kate Bradley
Director of Human Resources