



**SCHOOLS' SUMMIT:**  
Brian Garvey, president of NASUWT, at the Waterfront Hall

Picture: Bernie Brown

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# Teachers tackle hot topic in classroom

TEACHERS in Northern Ireland will today call for a maximum temperature in school classrooms to be legally enforced across the Province because of concerns over health and safety.

At the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers' annual conference, taking place for the first time in Northern Ireland, the issue of classroom temperature is high on the agenda.

Seamus Searson, Northern Ireland organiser of NASUWT told the News Letter that some schools in Ulster are operating in intolerable conditions.

Despite having regulations on minimum temperatures within classrooms, he said none had yet been enforced on maximum temperatures.

"In some schools across Northern Ireland it is a real problem because of the nature of the buildings and it's unreasonable to expect teachers and children to work in very humid conditions," he said.

"We have got rules on minimum temperatures for working in classrooms but not on maximum."

"We are putting forward a motion, which is to recommend an enforceable maximum temperature for work rooms. We are hoping to get a change in the law."

**BY KATE CHAMBRÉ**

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Fred Brown, Northern Ireland president of NASUWT said that pupils shouldn't be subjected to such conditions.

"Pupils can't be expected to learn when temperatures are too hot or too cold and the same goes for teachers. It is a health and safety issue," he said.

Over a thousand delegates and guests are expected to attend the NASUWT annual conference at the Waterfront in Belfast from today until Friday.

"NASUWT members will be attending the event from all over the United Kingdom. With 251,000 members it is the only teachers union that covers the four nations," Mr Searson said.

Union national president Brian Garvey said he was pleased the conference had come to Belfast and delegates were looking forward to a productive summit.

He arrived at the venue yesterday in preparation for the start of the conference.

Yesterday, delegates at the National Union of Teachers' annual conference in England also backed a motion urging staff to abandon their

classrooms when temperatures are hotter than 26C (79F).

Poorly-designed buildings can send heat levels soaring union leaders said, leading to pupils fainting and having problems concentrating in lessons.

Pat Sexton, a maths teacher from East Sussex, said: "There are times when the temperatures are well over 80F and that seems to me to be the time when we are less effective."

During the winter, extreme cold weather forces schools to close.

"So in the summer if temperatures soar then it may be necessary to disrupt children's schooling," she said.

She suggested that lessons in classrooms which become particularly hot - such as science labs and computer rooms - should take place "first thing in the morning when temperatures are cooler".

Dave Brinson, a delegate from Eastbourne, told the conference: "The problem is only going to get worse."

"Climate change is a long-term problem that is going to require action across the world."

The motion called for ministers to draw up new regulations requiring schools to make sure temperatures do not rise above 26C.

## Union warns of staff being bullied by pupils

SOME teachers are being bullied by their colleagues because of their weight, sexuality or religious beliefs, union delegates will warn today.

The NASUWT has warned that the problem of "prejudice-related bullying" by pupils in the playground must be tackled.

Teachers will discuss how to address similar issues in the staff

**BY TIM ROSS, PA**

room at a fringe meeting at the union's annual conference in Belfast.

The meeting's organisers said: "The meeting will explore how prejudice-related bullying manifests itself and consider effective strategies for tackling this damag-

ing problem in the workplace and the wider society."

The meeting will be followed by a speech to the conference from Education Secretary Alan Johnson.

Mr Johnson is expected to tell NASUWT members in the city's Waterfront Hall that he wants to protect teachers from bullying by their pupils.

Last week, he told another union that he would make it "a priority" to deal with pupils who post rude remarks and inappropriate pictures of their teachers on the internet.

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers warned last week that it would consider suing any website which published libellous material about its members.



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