

# Classroom Teacher No. 4

## Action and Change for Teachers

**TEACHERS TAKE ACTION ACROSS ENGLAND & WALES -**

# ***MAKING A STAND AT LAST!***



**R**IGHT ACROSS ENGLAND AND WALES, the NUT's national strike is giving classroom teachers the chance to make our voices heard at last!

The Government wants us to carry on working ourselves into the ground meeting their targets when the best they can offer in return is year after year of below-inflation pay awards. Our action is sending a clear message to Ministers - they'd better think again!

*Headteachers want to know how many teachers are taking strike action - but the numbers keep going up! If we can get a result on pay then it will boost our confidence to win on workload and class sizes too.*  
Robin Pye, St.Helens NUT

**AFTER OVER TWENTY YEARS** without a national NUT strike, there were bound to be colleagues who weren't sure about taking action. But many more have decided that it's time to make a stand. Thousands of classes are being sent home for the day. Thousands of us are joining marches and rallies - alongside civil servants, lecturers and others taking their own action today.

*It's taken hard work to get round all the members but most are striking and my school will be closed. This strike is long overdue. It's time to get up off our knees and fight to defend our pay and conditions of service.*  
Dylan Murphy, Honley High School, Kirklees NUT

*The mood for action has been growing. It looks like most of our schools will be closed to pupils. But many local parents understand why we're having to strike. Some have even taken the opportunity to organise their own anti-Academy protest on April 24th!*  
Alison Long, Lewisham NUT

**LET THE GOVERNMENT COMPLAIN** about pupils being left without teachers for a day - it is their policies that are to blame for half of new teachers being driven out of the profession within three years of qualifying. How can they claim inflation is running at only 2% when real living costs are rocketing? Did they really expect teachers - and our colleagues across the public sector - just to sit back and accept these pay cuts? If they did, then our strike shows they have misjudged us.

*I couldn't be sure how teachers were going to vote in my school, where there's no tradition of union action. But the response has been excellent. Small towns like Eastbourne and Worthing will be hosting strike rallies.*  
Phil Clarke, Lewes, Eastbourne & Wealden NUT

**OUR NATIONAL STRIKE** shows how strong we can be when we take action together. It's high time that we used that strength to change things for the better for teachers and education. Let's take the confidence we can draw from today back into our schools. Let's make April 24th the day we started to stand up for ourselves!

Martin Powell-Davies, Lewisham NUT

**- STEP UP THE ACTION TO WIN ON PAY & WORKLOAD**

**Classroom Teacher** is a campaigning newsletter written for, and by, classroom teachers. If you want help organising a union in your school, if you want to take action to defend teachers and education, if you want to give us your views about the pressures teachers face:

**Write to:** [classroom.teacher@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:classroom.teacher@yahoo.co.uk) <http://classroomteachers.blogspot.com>

# ***Where next after April 24th ?***

## **Will the Government have to listen to us ?**

- **Yes – but only if today's strike is the start and not the end of the matter.** Ministers will want to sit it out, and hope that, having let off some steam, we will settle back to "normality". We can't let that happen. We have to step up the action.

## **What will make them think again ?**

- **The threat of a strike across the whole of the public sector.** Today we are joined on strike by 30,000 UCU college lecturers and 100,000 PCS civil servants across ten different sections from the Home Office to the Department of Work and Pensions. But government pay restraint also applies to our teaching assistants and support staff. It applies to hospital staff, fire-fighters and the police too. We need all the unions to threaten a massive public sector strike. This could push the other teaching unions, the NASUWT and ATL, to come on board.

## **When could the next NUT strike take place ?**

- **As soon as the NUT wins another ballot - which needs to be held straight away.** It should be for 'discontinuous' action. This allows a union to call a series of strikes rather than having to re-ballot each time. If the NUT acts quickly, we could strike again in June when the TUC is planning a lobby of parliament. Then, instead of a low-key event, tens of thousands could march in London and put the government under real pressure. Above all, the leaders of today's action should take the initiative, name the day for a public-sector wide strike - and go out to build the biggest support possible.

## **Does the NUT have to wait for other unions to act ?**

- **No - the NUT has a quarter of a million members.** There is a school in every community. Even if joint union action does not come off, we have enormous potential power. We need the courage to use it. With the credit crunch heralding a period of serious economic instability we must fight now to defend our pay and conditions. In 2002 the NUT called two strike days for an increased London Allowance and achieved some real gains. If you do nothing, you are guaranteed to get nothing. If you fight, you can get something.

## **Can we win support for more strike action ?**

- **Yes – especially if the next NUT national ballot is not just about pay, but also about workload.** This would inspire even wider layers of teachers into activity. We should fight to win NUT Conference policy - for a 10% pay increase, at least 20% non-contact time and reducing class sizes down to 20.

## **What can teachers in my school do to help ?**

- **Don't settle back to "normality"!** Keep informed. Get the 'Classroom Teacher' emailed to you regularly. Discuss the key issues with colleagues, especially in school meetings. Contribute to our blog. Tell us about what teachers in your school think. Make time for your union. Ensure at least one person from your school attends local NUT association meetings. Make demands on the union leadership. Prepare now for the next strike and campaign for joint action across the whole public sector.

*Linda Taaffe, Waltham Forest NUT*

## **Classroom Teacher**

**is a new initiative by, and for, classroom teachers ... based on the concerns and experiences of classroom teachers.**

An editorial team of Tim Woodcock (Greenwich NUT) and Martin Powell-Davies & Faith McGrath (Lewisham NUT) compiles articles and Derek McMillan (West Sussex NUT) manages the Classroom Teacher blog and e-group.

**Do you want to have your say ?** Contribute to the blog via [www.classroomteacher.org.uk](http://www.classroomteacher.org.uk)

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