

Classroom Teacher

Action and Change for Teachers

No. 6



Step up the action until the Government listens!

BUILD NATIONAL ACTION ON PAY & WORKLOAD !

THE NUT'S NATIONAL STRIKE

made sure that teachers' anger about our deteriorating pay and conditions hit the headlines.

Pay may have been the issue on our first ballot paper, but teachers also went on strike because they have had enough of intolerable workload and class size numbers that, in schools in areas like St.Helens, can be well over 30.

Teachers are now taking stock over where our campaign goes next. For some workload may be the main concern, for others pay. Let's not waste time debating which is the top priority - we can fight on both!

School groups have been asked to focus on key workload targets like the 21 tasks, meetings, cover, PPA, 'Management Time' and planning.

The NUT advice that "plans should

not be very long and complex" and not to "prescribed formats" will need a determined campaign to secure. Rather than fighting alone, schools should follow Union advice and try to group together to take joint action to enforce this policy.

But, like pay, the real solution to excessive workload lies with the Government. They need to provide the funds to employ the teachers needed to reduce class sizes and cover and provide the additional non-contact time teachers need.

That's why we need to follow the policy agreed at NUT Conference - for a ballot for a national strike on workload, combined with pay.

As the national slogan says, our demands are "good for children, good for teachers". Let's win them!

Robin Pye, St.Helens NUT

'NATIONAL CHALLENGE': AN EXCUSE TO PRIVATISE SCHOOLS

Labour's "improve or close" ultimatum to 638 English schools is a thinly-disguised plan to accelerate the privatisation of secondary education.

Under their "National Challenge Strategy", schools that have failed to meet the imposed GCSE target have been put on a hit list. The price of continued 'failure' (even when OfSTED has graded some as being 'good' or even 'outstanding') will be to become either a privately-sponsored Academy or a Trust backed by a business or university.

Either way, the control of many schools, including staffing and admissions, will be taken out of the hands of an elected Local Authority. Instead of planning for the interests of the community as a whole, individual sponsors will put their own interests first. The fragmentation of education into the control of many different employers is also a clear threat to collective union organisation.

The policy is driven by political, not educational, concerns. There is no evidence that Academies offer pupils a better education than community schools. After all, how does the Government explain why 26 of the schools on the list are already Academies? ...

Young Teachers call for action

THE FANTASTIC ATMOSPHERE

throughout June's NUT Young Teachers Conference was due in no small way to April's national strike action which brought many young members into union activity for the first time.

The main themes of the conference were the union's pay and workload campaigns. There was no shortage of teachers wanting to express their views on both!

Many were disappointed by the decision not to re-ballot as soon as possible and strike again before the summer but, despite this, the mood was to make sure the next

action was as big as possible, and hopefully alongside other unions.

Speakers who discussed teachers' excessive workload, and rightly stressed the need for collective solutions to a problem we all face, struck a chord with the audience .

I hope our leadership will display some of the determination shown by the young teachers present and sanction national action on pay and on workload that will really make a difference on vital issues such as management time, teacher numbers and class sizes.

Phil Clarke, member of the Young Teachers Advisory Committee

Agree? Disagree? What do YOU think? Send in your views to classroom.teacher@yahoo.co.uk

Get ready for national action next term

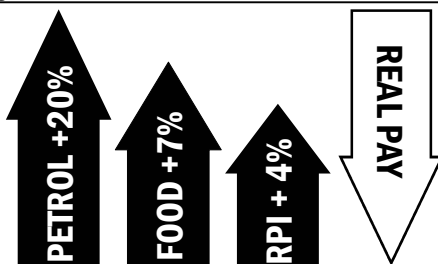
Name the day for a joint national strike

THE STRENGTH OF OUR APRIL STRIKE has not gone unnoticed by nervous Ministers. It has also encouraged others - like UNISON and UNITE - to ballot over pay.

Why should any of us put up with below-inflation pay awards ?

This September, the teachers' pay award will be 2.45% when the Retail Prices Index stands at over 4%. That's one more year with a real terms' pay cut, one more year when Ministers break their promise to review our pay if prices rise higher than expected.

It 'gives' at 2.45% but when it comes to the interest on student loans, the Government 'takes away' at a rate of 4.8%. 'The Observer' calculated that the high interest rates and low pay means many young teachers will still have about 90% of their original loan to pay off after 10 years!



Rising food and fuel prices are hitting people worldwide yet MPs still want to try to blame inflation on our pay rises! Even the Bank of England has said that's rubbish!

But when the Government tries to cut the pay of every public sector worker, surely the best response is to organise a joint fightback. At the rally before the June 9 Lobby of Parliament, the best applause was given to General Secretaries who called for co-ordinated action on pay across the public sector.

Now it's time to name the day!

Nicky Downes, Coventry NUT

No more missed opportunities

AN OUNCE OF EXPERIENCE is worth a ton of theory. Thousands of teachers all over the country woke up on April 24th to find out that they are part of a massive union which will fight for them. Together we are strong.

So it's a pity the NUT Executive decided not to ballot for more action this term. We could have acted in unison with support staff colleagues in UNISON and other public sector unions balloting for action in July. An opportunity for united school action was missed.

Our opponent - a Government staggering from crisis to crisis - is on the ropes. But now the next

NUT ballot has been postponed until the Autumn term, we will have to wait until November to try and deliver a knockout punch!

Some on the Executive are also talking about balloting selected schools rather than all of us. But it was national action that gave our stand so much publicity on April 24 and encouraged teachers in Sussex to take part. We're not going back to sleep now!

It seems some of the Executive need a little encouragement from classroom teachers. Tell them we are ready for national action!

Derek McMillan and Angela Ahern, West Sussex NUT

CHALLENGE PRIVATISATION

... Ed Balls claims that the policy will help "break the link between poverty and attainment". But a market-driven school system will make divisions greater, not less.

Consistent research demonstrates that the main factor influencing a school's position in the league tables remains the social class of its pupil intake. That's why it is so unfair to impose a common target on schools, without looking at the particular circumstances each one faces. Without a major injection of funding, above all to reduce class sizes to a maximum of twenty, there is no chance that schools can overcome factors such as poor housing and rising poverty which inevitably discriminate against pupils from working-class communities.

But, while waving the big stick, the Government is offering little in the way of real resources. Much of the £400 million 'National Challenge' funding is earmarked for Academies and Trusts - not at helping schools stay as community comprehensives.

The unjust labelling of schools as 'failures' may well dissuade some families from applying to them. Staff face even greater workload.

Trade unionists need to expose the real aims behind this divisive scheme. We must use our collective strength to defend staff in the 638 targeted schools and to oppose the plans to break-up local authority schooling. The strike action taken by NUT members in Bolton to oppose their possible removal from council employment shows the way forward.

Martin Powell-Davies, Lewisham 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 ? How do we build action that can win a real change for teachers? Read more views, join the debate on Classroom Teacher's blog: www.classroomteacher.org.uk

Would your school like a regular copy ? Send details to us at: classroom.teacher@yahoo.co.uk