

BUILD THE WORKLOAD ACTION

The action launched by the NUT and NASUWT can roll back management on issues which have made teachers lives worse, and damaged students' education, in recent years.

It can forge more effective union organisation where it matters most – at school level.

Even before the action officially got underway, there was a thirst for tackling workload, with many associations reporting their biggest meetings for some time.

Across the country there are already reports of school meetings – in many cases joint NUT and NASUWT meetings – and staff approaching management to say they won't be doing any of the 25 things covered in the action. "We feel empowered," has been a common refrain.

The job now is to build the action in as many schools as possible – to win real gains.

That can build confidence and organisation, and also help press for Phase 2 of the joint action – national strike action which can beat Gove and his government on pay and pensions.

www.socialistteacher.org

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Guide to building the workload action

- Hold a school meeting. Make sure members have a chance to see and discuss the unions' guidance first. If needed ask the local association to send a speaker in.
- This is industrial action, lawful and legally balloted for. If management say following the unions' guidance would be breach of contract inform them that so is going on strike – which is why we have ballots to give legal protection to industrial action!
- We do *not* have to get management agreement – this is industrial action. Management may not like it, just as they may not like it when we strike, but that is not the issue. Our unions have called on us to take action officially and legally so we should do so – just as we would follow a strike call.
- Of course we want management to accept that there should be no going back – we want the 25 points to become the framework for normal working practices.
- There are schools where management have already agreed this. There is no reason why it shouldn't be agreed.
- In some schools management may make threats or seek to pressure teachers not to follow the guidelines. Make clear that any attempt to discipline or punish any member for following union guidance would be met with a serious response, possibly including official, paid, strike action. The unions do not need another ballot to call such strike action, they are authorised to do so by the existing ballots.
- Management may try and use spurious arguments, for example around the issue of not handing in planning – especially prevalent in primary schools. We should make clear that we are in favour of teachers planning, sharing and collaborating over planning – this is good professional practice.
But, as even Ofsted make clear, planning is for the teacher's own use in helping better learning in the classroom. Having to hand in planning to management for scrutiny has nothing to do with this, so we won't be doing it. And to suggest that unless teachers comply they won't plan properly is an unacceptable insult to our professional integrity.
- Similarly for "learning walks". We are for collaborative, supportive peer observation between colleagues so we can learn from each other. This is different from observations for purposes of management monitoring or appraisal and we are not prepared to have more than three observations and three hours maximum a year of this.
- If management try it on by saying, for example, that anyone they deem to have had a "satisfactory" lesson observation must have more than three observations a year this is an abuse which we will not accept and would see as a trigger for union action.
- It may be that members in some schools are not confident to tell management immediately that they will not be doing any of the 25 things. Then speak to your local union association for help.
- The association can call reps and activists meetings across sectors to discuss difficulties in implementing the action – and discuss strategies and tactics for coordinating and supporting each other.
- Above all, share stories of gains as widely as possible – as this encourages members, and puts pressure on management.

TIME FOR PHASE TWO

Building the workload action can win real improvements, and build confidence and organisation. But to shift the government on pay and pensions we will need national strike action.

Both the NUT and NASUWT have talked about the workload action as phase one of a campaign. We in the Socialist Teachers Alliance believe there must be a move to phase two – national strike action.

We will need more than a one day strike to win – and we need to explain this to members. But a good start would be a national one day strike this term. A petition calling on both unions to agree a date, this term, for such action has been launched.



It should be used everywhere to demonstrate support for national action and to pressure those at the top of both unions into calling it. School and association meetings should also send the same message.

Defend pay

We have had real pay cuts due to the pay freeze and now face more pay cuts with two more years of a 1 percent pay limit.

This autumn the STRB will report, almost certainly planning a major assault on national pay structures – possibly opening the way for heads to move people *down* the pay scale.

We need to stop this and protect members' living standards.

Defend Pensions

The Pensions Bill is changing our scheme for the worse. It is just beginning its journey through parliament – we can still stop it or win changes to it – for instance on the plan to force up retirement ages.

There are more contribution increases planned next April and the one after. We need to stop these, and reverse the ones we have already suffered.

The Tories want to wreck our lives...

MARCH FOR A FUTURE THAT WORKS SATURDAY 20 OCTOBER



- **Fight against austerity**
- **Join the TUC Demonstration**

Across Europe governments are out to make people pay for an economic crisis we did not cause. From Greece to Portugal, France and Spain workers have marched and struck saying no. We need to do the same. Join the march against austerity.

**London: Assemble 11am, Victoria Embankment. Called by the TUC
Glasgow: Details at www.stuc.org.uk/20-oct**

Campaign Teacher

Campaign Teacher is a grassroots network supported by 80 local NUT associations which produces a regular newspaper which goes into staffrooms across the country.

It is holding an open conference in Nottingham on Saturday 24 November. The conference will be a place for rigorous discussion and debate on all the key issues facing the union – the workload action, beating the government on pay and pensions and much more. Make sure your association supports the conference and agrees to send delegates.

To join the Socialist Teachers Alliance email: alex@elta.demon.co.uk

