

## A Guide to Picketing



### Why should we have a Picket?

With the NASUWT not joining us in this strike, it is all the more important to hold a picket line at your school. This will have two effects; to encourage other teachers to join the NUT and join our action and to encourage members of other unions to put pressure on their leadership to join the fight.

### What are you planning to do on the strike day?

The wrong answer is to stay at home. Striking is above all about doing something collectively and putting pressure on the employers or the government. It's not just having a day off. There's not much point in losing a day's pay without having the biggest possible impact!

Striking is also about people feeling their strength when they do something together. That means organising to make sure the biggest number of people are involved. You want to make the strike as effective as possible. That means making sure that everyone who should be on strike is out.

Making the strike as visible as possible can boost its impact too. A picket line can help achieve these things, as well as going to the organised rally and demonstration.

Pickets can talk to anyone going into work. They can argue that all workers should respect the democratic decision to strike and remind other staff that they should not be covering your lessons.

Other union members may genuinely forget the strike is on. A picket line can stop them going into work.

Some workers may fear that they will be disciplined if they strike. You need to explain that **this is not true** and they can't be disciplined for joining a strike covered by a legal ballot.

Workmates who are not in the union might think they have to go in to work. But if they join the union on the picket line they can strike without being disciplined.

The government characterise pickets as bullies. The truth is that pickets defend the democratic, collective decisions of workers.

The real reason the government hates picketing is because they know it makes strikes stronger—and that effective picketing can make our victory more secure.

## Simple Steps to Organise a Picket Line

### Planning

1. Hold a meeting in your school (or nearby) – discuss and agree what you plan to do on the strike day.
2. Have you got a workplace banner or placards? Why not see whether people might like to make some — you'd be amazed at the hidden talents that emerge. Home-made banners and slogans were a massive part of the successful Junior Doctors' campaign. (For slogans, let imagination run free. All sorts of people can come up with good ideas) Alternatively you can collect some from the union office.
3. Collect leaflets from the union office to hand to parents / colleagues.

### On the Day

1. Meet at the school gates at the agreed time. (You could organise people to bring flasks of coffee or snacks for the picket)
2. Although there is no legal limit, guidance says that at any one time there can be six official picketers, handing out leaflets to parents and colleagues going into work. The rest of the people there are supporting the picket. You can take it in turns to be the official picket.
3. You should stay outside the school gates and whilst you can ask colleagues in cars to stop to receive a leaflet, you should not cause an obstruction to the entrance to school.
4. You can try to persuade any doubtful members that they shouldn't cross and join you (you have a right to do this). Pickets should not *physically* attempt to stop a person or vehicle from entering an office this may only be done by speaking to people, or it may involve the distribution of leaflets or the carrying of banners or placards putting the Union's case.
5. Members of other teaching unions can join the NUT at any time, even at the picket line, and join our strike. Take some Membership Forms for the day in case anyone wishes to join.
6. The picket only needs to go on until around 9.00am, by then all of the parents will have dropped off any children and all non-striking colleagues will have gone into work.

### Then go to the Rally and Demonstrations in Coventry & Birmingham

1. Given the scale of the strike there will almost certainly be other workplaces and picket lines within walking distance of you. Why not contact people in advance and arrange to meet up?
2. You may wish to arrange a meeting time and place for people from workplaces in the area to come together to travel to the demo. You could then all grab a coffee or a bite to eat before travelling together to join the demo and rally.
3. Any members not able to join a picket line can go to the demonstration outside the DfE offices at The Butts from 8am
4. ***Try to make it to the local rally in Broadgate for 9.30am. Look for the Coventry NUT banner and come to meet up with other teachers from the city.***
5. After the Coventry rally we will be heading to the regional demo and rally in Victoria Square, Birmingham at 12 noon. There will be a march, local and national speakers, music and other entertainment. Why not come along as a school group?

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**Can non-union members strike?** Anyone eligible to join any striking union can join at any time—up to and including the day of the strike. Then they can legally join the strike, even if they were not balloted.

**Are you doing anything illegal?** The strike is perfectly legal. You can't be disciplined or sacked for taking part, as long as your union has balloted and called you out.

**What do you do if managers ask you if you're going on strike or pressure you not to?** You don't have to tell them, and the union does not have to give names. Just refer the manager to local union officers.

<p><b>Our message to members who have been balloted is to support the dispute. Our message to non-members is to join the Union and join the dispute.</b></p>
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