



NUT Strike Action: Questions & Answers for NUT Representatives Strike Day 5 July 2016

NUT members in England have voted overwhelmingly in favour of strike action to protect pay and working conditions with 91.7% voting in favour of strike action.

The NUT is calling the first day of strike action on 5 July. The NUT is calling on Secretary of State Nick Morgan to increase funding to schools and education, guarantee terms and conditions in all types of schools and resume negotiations on teacher contracts to allow workload to be addressed.

Our strike action is happening alongside our wider campaign in relation to Government education policy which is harming children and threatening the very future of State education.

Nicky Morgan's announcement on 5 May, abandoning her White Paper proposals for forced academisation of all schools, does not represent any change in her ambition to make every school an academy - it is simply a change of tactics. It also makes no concessions on the matters about which we are in dispute. For that reason our strike goes ahead and our campaign continues.

We need to work together to ensure the strike is a success. NUT representatives will play a vital role in ensuring the highest possible turnout for action. In every school, NUT representatives should:

- **Go along to your local division meeting which will talk about building the strike and the campaign;**
- **Hold a school meeting to explain the campaign and build for the strike;**
- **Work with colleagues to ensure every NUT member is willing to join the strike – we need the biggest possible turnout;**
- **Recruit non-members to the NUT; and**
- **With colleagues, speak to parents and carers and circulate the NUT leaflet – and approach local councillors about supporting the NUT model motion.**

This document will hopefully help NUT representatives answer any questions that teachers may have.

This is a very important campaign for teachers and for the NUT. By acting decisively now we can make our voices heard. Working together we can make a difference.

THE ISSUES

Why are we taking strike action?

The NUT strike action is part of our trade dispute about funding, pay and conditions.

Real term cuts in funding will have major effects on schools and teachers, whether academy or maintained. They will further erode terms and conditions, increase workload and impede pay progression for teachers. As more schools become academies, the coverage of the national STPCD and Burgundy Book will narrow and these protections will gradually wither away.

This is a threat to teachers in local authority schools. It is also a threat to teachers in academies - most academies have so far stuck to the national pay and conditions - and to other teachers whose pay and conditions are based on those for school teachers.

Nicky Morgan's announcement on 5 May abandoning her White Paper proposals for forced academisation does not represent any change in her ambition to make every school an academy - it is simply a change of tactics. She has made no concessions on the matters about which we wrote to the Secretary of State on 21 April to declare the dispute. In that letter we demanded that she should provide additional funding for schools and take a range of steps to restore and improve pay and conditions (below). Nicky Morgan has said nothing to resolve our dispute. Her arguments that she is offering meaningful talks to the NUT are simply not valid.

What are the issues on funding?

Funding cuts for schools and academies are happening because the Government is freezing funding per pupil and imposing higher NI & pension costs. This will cut the value of funding by 10% or more by 2020.

The proposed "national funding formula" goes further - it will actually take money away from around half of all schools. Funding pressures already threaten pay increases and pay progression in schools and academies alike. The NUT is seeking full funding, not just "fair funding".

Without more money and the protection of national pay & conditions, things will get worse much faster for teachers and children.

What are we seeking on pay and conditions?

We are demanding that Nicky Morgan should take necessary steps to ensure:

- national collective bargaining on pay and conditions in all schools and academies;
- pending a new collective bargaining structure, for pay and all other terms and conditions to be no worse than those in the STPCD and Burgundy Book;
- a significant improvement in the conditions of employment under which teachers work, in particular a limitation on class sizes to no more than 30 in the first instance;
- reduction in teachers workloads, in particular through limitation on marking, data handling and planning;
- reintroduction of pay portability, the pay spine points, fixed pay scales and removal of the requirement for all pay progression to be performance related; and
- a significant improvement in measures to ensure teacher retention, including security of employment.

All the protections offered by existing national pay and conditions would be at risk.

The STPCD gives us:

- a national pay structure for all schools
- the right to pay progression - even if it's performance related
- the limit of 195 working days and 1265 hours of directed time a year
- the right to a minimum 10% PPA time
- protection against cover and administrative tasks.

The Burgundy Book and local authority agreements give us:

- sick pay – full pay from day one for six months and half pay for six months
- maternity pay significantly above the legal minimum
- the current notice periods
- existing policies on leave of absence, paternity, adoption pay etc
- existing procedures for discipline, grievance, capability etc.

Will strike action have any effect?

Yes! The NUT firmly believes it will. We've made your case to Government and it's a very strong case. It is important that the Government now sees the strength of feeling amongst teachers on the issue.

Nicky Morgan's climb down on academisation - although it doesn't represent any change of policy as yet - follows other successes such as the scrapping of Baseline Assessment testing in April. This was a policy the Secretary of State was committed to, but because of the strength of our campaign the Government was forced to do a U-turn on this as well as on testing. We know the Government is in turmoil with its divisions over Europe. We strongly believe that if we apply enough pressure the Government will also back down on its policies on funding, pay and conditions.

Why did the Union oppose the White Paper proposals so strongly - and why does it still oppose the continuing academisation programme?

The Union particularly opposed to the White Paper proposal for forced academisation of all schools. In terms of its impact on education, we said that:

1. It's the wrong priority -

The Government should be dealing with the real issues facing schools and parents – the growing teacher shortage, the lack of pupil places, the curriculum chaos and the funding crisis.

2. It's ineffective -

The Government hasn't produced evidence that becoming an academy improves standards of education. Professor Stephen Machin says: "I don't think we have any evidence on that so far. We certainly have no evidence at all for primary schools." Meanwhile, Ofsted says that many academy chains are performing very badly.

3. It's undemocratic -

This proposal wasn't in the Conservatives' manifesto last year. Over 80% of local authority schools are good or outstanding and have chosen to stay with their local authority. The Government still wants them to become academies. Parents will lose the right to elect parent governors and will be denied any say over who runs their child's school.

4. It's expensive -

Estimates are as high as £1.3bn for the process of academisation – mainly spent on lawyers, not on education – while schools are facing huge funding cuts. Academy chains pay their chief executives very high salaries – some more than the Prime Minister – and there are many cases of financial irregularity.

We were also concerned about the impact of these proposals on teachers' pay and conditions which are the basis of our trade dispute and our ballot for action.

Forced academisation – by other means – is still a real threat to democratic oversight of education. The Government's plans will continue to narrow the curriculum, encouraging the consequential growth of Exam Factory culture. We will continue to work with all those who oppose the Government's education policy. You can read more at <http://www.teachers.org.uk/campaigns>

Is the NUT the only teacher union proposing to take strike action?

Yes at this stage. Other teacher unions haven't ruled it out though - and the GMB and Unison support staff unions are making preparations for possible strike action ballots - so this is why it's extremely important for us to have a strong turnout in our ballot to encourage others to follow suit.

The NUT is working to secure unity of purpose among the teaching profession. All of the teacher unions have expressed the same opposition to the Government proposals. Other unions and their members will have to take their own decisions about how and when to show their opposition but we believe that a strong stand by the NUT will encourage them as well as showing the Government the strength of opposition among NUT members.

Are there enough of us for a strike to make an impact in my workplace?

This is a national strike in England. Even if the number of NUT members in your workplace taking action is small, every one of them will be part of a national declaration of strength of feeling. It matters much more that you should be part of that, than that you should have an immediate impact in your own workplace.

Suggest to your colleagues that they join the NUT - it may be that non members aren't aware of the issues involved and don't know about the threats to their terms and conditions. All members of the NUT are encouraged to help recruit new members. Non members can join by calling 020 7380 6369 Monday - Friday, 9am - 5pm or by visiting the NUT website www.teachers.org.uk. To take part in the strike they need to join the NUT before the day that action takes place.

We don't have an NUT representative – what should we do?

This is an ideal time to elect an NUT representative and to get yourselves better organised and secure a stronger voice in your workplace. The role of NUT representative is not onerous – it can be shared - and is very rewarding. You can rely on the full support of the Union at all levels to assist you.

Does the NUT plan to take further strike action?

The NUT ballot asks members to support “discontinuous strike action” commencing with a day of national strike action in early July. This means that if the Union decides it is necessary to take further strike action, then a further ballot of members is not required – indeed we will be announcing at least two further dates for strike action in the autumn term.

A lot will depend upon the attitude of the Government, which has the power to end the dispute by withdrawing its proposals and reaching a negotiated outcome.

THE STRIKE AND YOU

What does it mean when you go on strike?

Strike action means you do not go into work on the day the action is taking place. You do not have to phone your school on the day to tell them you are not coming in.

Who is being called on to strike?

All members of the NUT in England who are working in local authority schools or academies are being called on to strike.

This includes all NUT members employed as:

- teachers in local authority maintained schools, whether community, voluntary controlled, voluntary aided or foundation schools; and
- teachers in academies;

It excludes supply teacher members, members in central support services, members in other independent schools, and members not employed as teachers in schools and academies.

Can new members of the NUT take part in the action?

Any new members joining the NUT before the day of the strike can participate in the strike action with the same protection as all other NUT members. Any non-members who wish to join should call 0207 380 6369 or visit the NUT website to join online.

Can lapsed members, as opposed to new members, join the action?

Only if they rejoin the NUT first. Any lapsed members rejoining the NUT before or on the day of the strike can participate in the strike action with the same protection as all other NUT members. They should contact the NUT membership enquires line on 0207 380 6366 before the day of the strike in order to restore their membership status and make good their subscriptions. They should be prepared to enter into direct debit or pay their subscriptions by credit or debit card over the telephone. We would not be willing to accept cheque payment in such cases.

Can I strike if I didn't vote in the ballot or if I voted against?

Yes, you certainly can. The majority vote in the ballots gives legal authority for you to take part in the strike action. We want the action to be supported by everyone authorised to take action - including those who didn't vote and those who voted against but accept the democratic majority decision.

Do I have to join in the strike as an NUT member?

The NUT does not instruct members to take industrial action and individual members have a legal right to decline any call to take industrial action. The NUT always uses industrial action as a last resort but we believe that our action is essential to make the Government understand teachers'

determination to defend their profession and to persuade the Government to enter into constructive negotiations. The collective decision by NUT members was to support the action. We hope you will join in the action - by acting together we are more effective.

Why aren't teachers in Wales taking strike action?

The situation in Wales is different, with the Welsh Government having delegated control of many areas of education policy (there are no academies in Wales) and with delegation of powers over pay and conditions being proposed. The Union is keeping matters in Wales under close review.

Can supply teachers and teachers in central support services join in the action?

NUT members recorded as supply teacher members and centrally employed members were not included automatically in the ballot because the NUT cannot demonstrate that it knows that they will be working in the employment of a relevant employer on the strike day.

However, if you are a supply teacher or centrally employed teacher and:

- you know or anticipate that you will be working on the planned strike date;
- you know the specific employer for which you will be working on that day and that you will be employed directly by a local authority, school governing body or academy trust (and NOT by a supply teacher agency or some private sector body);

then you can contact the Union's ballot hotline and can be included in the action.

The NUT would welcome the support of all supply teachers not already contracted to work on the day the strike takes place. They can participate in local activities on the day instead of accepting work. Although (as with all members) the NUT won't pay anything towards lost wages, the NUT's advice on hardship payments applies to supply teachers as well.

I'm an academy teacher employed on my academy's own contract, which is different to the national contract in schools - can I take part in the industrial action?

Yes you can. The Union's industrial action covers all NUT members in state funded schools, whether local authority schools or academies. Our dispute is with the Secretary of State for Education. Our instructions on strike action apply to all NUT members in academies, whether on TUPE transferred contracts or academy contracts, and we have sent notice of our action to all academy employers. The fact that some members may have accepted an academy contract does not mean they have excluded themselves from the industrial action.

I am an NUT head teacher. Can I take strike action?

A very definite YES. The NUT recognises the special position of its head teacher members but believes that it is in all members' interests for action to be effective and secure protection for our terms and conditions.

Is there any reason why NQTs should not join in the strike?

NUT members who are NQTs are in the same position as any other member. They are not prevented by any term of their contracts from going on strike. The Induction Regulations provide that teachers may have up to 30 days absence in the induction year without any effect upon the induction process.

What about NUT members on the Graduate, Overseas or Registered Training Programmes?

Yes, they can take part in the action.

Can teachers on the School Direct or Teach First programmes take part in the action?

Members on the “*salaried route*” of the School Direct programme can take part in the strike. They have an employment contract with their school or authority, so are directly affected by the attacks on teachers’ pay and conditions. Members on the “*training route*” of the School Direct programme are not employed by their school or authority – and so are not able to take part.

Members on the Teach First programme can take part in the strike action if they have an employment contract with their school or authority, on the same basis as those on the School Direct “*salaried route*” (above)..

Can teachers on capability procedures take part in the industrial action?

Yes teachers on capability procedures can take part in strike action.

What about fixed term or part time teachers?

Yes, they can take part in the strike action.

I am employed on a fixed term contract for a year and worried I may not get a renewed contract. Should I go on strike?

It is not lawful for your employer to select you for dismissal or to decide not to renew your contract because you have taken part in industrial action, so you should not be victimised for taking part in the strike. You can participate in the industrial action in the same way as your colleagues. If there were to be any suggestion that your contract is not to be renewed because of this you should contact your NUT Division or Association Secretary. The NUT would take any such move by an employer very seriously.

What about NUT members in sixth form colleges?

Sixth form college (6FC members) were not be included in this strike ballot. They will, however, be balloted at the start of the autumn term for further strike action in pursuit of the existing NUT dispute on sixth form colleges and any strike action will be called on the same dates on which strike action is called in schools.

The reason for not including 6FC members in the same strike ballot as in schools is that there is already a separate existing trade dispute in relation to 6FCs based on the impact that funding cuts have already had, and are continuing to have, on pay and conditions (P&C) in 6FCs. There are also other issues relevant to our campaign and dispute in the 6FC sector which do not apply in schools, including area reviews, possible mergers/closures and 6FCs’ own form of academisation programme. Many parts of our trade dispute in schools and academies are similar to those in 6FCs given the influence of national P&C in schools on the 6FC P&C structure, and the impact of abolishing QTS on the use of qualified teachers in the 6FC sector as well as in schools.

THE STRIKE AND YOUR WORKPLACE

Will my workplace close on the day of the strike?

That's up to the head teacher or whoever else is responsible. They need to decide (having conducted proper risk assessments) whether the health, safety and satisfactory education of students can be guaranteed in the absence of the teachers taking strike action. They will also need to take into account that other unions' members will be asked not to undermine our action by undertaking our members' work. Many school and college leaders who are themselves NUT members will also be taking part in the action.

Should we hold a picket line on the strike day?

The NUT does not have a fixed policy on picket lines – it's entirely a tactical question. If your school or college will be closed, there is no point in a picket line. If it will be open, then it would be a good idea for you and your members to hold one.

Remember that only members of unions taking action should join the strike. Anyone else who refuses to cross a picket line could be subject to disciplinary action. Teachers who want to join in the strike as NUT members can legitimately do so if they join the Union on a strike day, so remember to have some membership forms with you if you are holding a picket. And whether or not you hold a picket line, you should encourage all members to attend any local campaign activity on the day.

My head teacher has asked me to prepare work to be delivered by other staff on the strike day. What should I do?

If your head teacher or manager asks you to prepare work to be delivered by other staff on the strike day, you are within your rights to refuse. The NUT ballots provide immunity in law for withdrawal of labour – which relates to all aspects of the work you would have done on the strike day. You can, therefore, safely refuse to set cover work for your pupils to be delivered by other staff on the strike day.

I have Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time timetabled for a strike day. Will I lose this time or can I take it on a non-strike day instead?

There is no requirement for your head teacher to allow you to postpone your PPA time if you withdraw your labour on the day that it was timetabled. However, your head teacher may in some circumstances choose to exercise his/her discretion to allow you to take your PPA time on a different day if it can be re-arranged to fit around other timetable commitments.

Will the NUT tell my employer and head teacher/principal that I'm taking part in strike action?

The NUT is required by law to give employers 7 days' notice of the number and description of members it is calling upon to take strike action in each workplace. NUT HQ sends this information to each employer (the LA, governing body, college corporation or academy trust) as required by law. NUT HQ also sends a copy to each head teacher or principal. The NUT will send notice to employers of strike action on each occasion of strike action.

The above information is the only information which the law requires to be provided by anyone. The NUT does not have to provide the names of individual members to the employer. Individual workers are not required to provide any information whatsoever. If a head teacher or principal attempts to circulate details of trade union membership or information confirming which members have participated in strike action, the NUT representative should notify the NUT Regional Office for a robust response

Do I have to tell my head teacher/principal whether I personally intend to take industrial action?

Individual NUT members do not have to tell their employer whether they personally intend to go on strike. If your head teacher or principal asks you to tell them or sign a form, you DO NOT have to do so. The law does not require you to do so, no matter what you are told. The NUT nationally, as required by law, gives employers 7 days' notice of the number of members it is calling upon to take action in each workplace. If individual NUT members are asked whether they personally intend to take strike action, the NUT representative should advise the head teacher/principal that the information legally required has been provided by the NUT nationally and advise NUT members to ignore any such request. If a head teacher or principal attempts to circulate details of trade union membership or information confirming which members have participated in strike action, the NUT representative should notify the NUT Regional Office for a robust response.

Can non-striking teachers or support staff be asked to cover our classes?

The NUT does not expect non-striking staff to be asked to undertake work of striking colleagues. Any request or direction to non-striking teachers to cover for striking colleagues - whether by teaching their classes or by taking charge of larger aggregated groups - must, under the terms of the STPCD, be "reasonable". Relevant matters in considering reasonableness will include the teacher's experience, normal duties, qualifications and workload, and the fact that the head teacher can of course close the school.

Health and safety considerations (see the advice on large groups below) also apply when teachers or support staff are asked to supervise others' classes. And there are the professional and educational implications of directing support staff to undertake the duties of a striking teacher. Such a request could breach the Education (Specified Work) (England) Regulations 2012. If a member of the support staff takes the class of a striking teacher, the support staff member would not be assisting nor supporting the work of the qualified teacher in the school and neither would they be subject to the direction or supervision of the qualified teacher as is required by the Regulations.

Other unions advise their members that the usual convention is that their members will not undertake work normally undertaken by those who are taking strike action. For example ATL advises its members as follows:

"ATL would normally consider it unreasonable for you to be asked to:

- take over the work of colleagues engaged in industrial action, other than in exceptional circumstances such as genuine emergency*
- undertake a teaching load greater than usual or to accept additional responsibilities or duties as a result of colleagues taking industrial action*
- agree to the amalgamation of groups of pupils or students or to the division of one group between others as a result of colleagues taking industrial action."*

Can we be replaced for the day by supply teachers?

“Employment businesses” (eg supply agencies) which supply temporary teachers are still prevented by law from supplying teachers to cover the work of regular employees taking industrial action. Any infringement should be reported to your NUT Division or Association Secretary.

I am a supply teacher – what should I do if I am asked to cover for strike action?

Any supply agency which sends you to undertake work covering for strike action is likely to be in breach of the law. If you are asked by your agency to cover for strike action, you should refuse to do so. If you realise during the day that you are covering the work of someone on strike, you should ask to be given other work.

If you have been working at the school on a longer term basis for reasons unrelated to strike action (e.g. covering a vacancy or long term absence), the situation is different. You are not being engaged to cover the duties of a striking teacher so these provisions would not apply in the same way.

Can the absence of striking NUT members be covered by aggregating classes for sports activities and/or in large groups in the hall?

Head teachers must make their own judgments having conducted proper risk assessments. It would be very unwise for any head to be influenced in this judgment by a desire to try to minimize the effect of the strike. The safety of children on the premises must be the deciding factor.

Can disciplinary action be taken against me for striking?

We don't expect that any member will be threatened with disciplinary action for taking part in NUT industrial action. Our ballots and action are organised in accordance with all of the relevant laws. Industrial action is accepted as a legitimate means of expressing opinion and workers have legal protection against action being taken against them selectively due to participation in industrial action.

Any member who does experience threats or pressure from their head teacher, line manager or governing body should contact their local NUT secretary immediately. The NUT is very well equipped to assert your legal rights and will give you strong support.

What if I come under pressure from colleagues to work on the day of the strike?

The NUT does not instruct members to strike and we equally resist members being put under pressure not to strike. The decision is yours and you should be able to make it freely. In our view there are good reasons why you and your colleagues should join in strike action. If the Union's campaign succeeds, it will benefit all teachers and the education service in which they work. Any attempt to victimise, threaten or bully you should be drawn to the attention of your local NUT secretary.

THE DAY OF THE STRIKE

What should I do on strike day?

On the day of the strike, you can join hundreds of thousands of other teachers in demonstrating your support for our cause and for the principles and values which brought you into teaching. NUT organised activities will be taking place all over England. Information will be distributed locally but will also be placed on the Union's website at www.teachers.org.uk in advance of the day. Please find out about local activities and join in.

Can other unions' members or non-union members take part in the strike too?

Only NUT members and members of other unions which have balloted for strike action should join the strike. Anyone not in a union which has balloted for action could be subject to disciplinary action. Teachers who want to participate in the strike as NUT members can legitimately do so if they join the NUT on or before a strike day. Have some membership forms ready!

What about the publication of SATs results on 5 July?

Tuesday 5th July is the day that the DfE will inform schools of their pupils' SATs results. There is no demand on schools to tell pupils their results on the same day, and ministers – who have often stressed in the words of Nick Gibb that 'the tests have no consequences for the children involved' – have no grounds for complaint if they don't. Many schools will distribute the results as part of pupils' annual reports, later in the term. This will not be impeded by the action on 5th July.

What about off-site trips/school events organised for the day of a strike?

The NUT accepts that, in some exceptional circumstances, disruption to planned events would be undesirable. For some off-site trips or in-school events, schools may have entered into contracts which cannot be cancelled without substantial costs. NUT members intending to take strike action who are due to be involved in such an event should inform the head teacher of their intention to take strike action. For the event to go ahead as planned, the NUT would expect every effort to be made to secure alternative staffing permitting minimum requirements to be maintained without their involvement. Only if this has not proved possible – and if substantial costs would be incurred by cancellation - should those NUT members agree to forgo their right to take strike action.

Any NUT member who works as a consequence on a strike day is encouraged to support the NUT by donating their pay to the local NUT association hardship fund.

What happens if there are or OFSTED or ESTYN inspections on the day of the strike?

The Union has asked that no inspections take place on a strike day. Should this be ignored, members are free to take action and this should not adversely affect any inspection report.

What about parents' evenings already being arranged for a strike day?

You should seek to have the date changed. If your head teacher or principal refuses to change the date of the parents' evening, he or she will need to recognise that if it goes ahead NUT members will not be present. If there are particular difficulties please seek guidance from your local NUT secretary.

What if there are public examinations arranged to take place on the day of the strike?

The Union does not wish to disturb pupils' examinations and the timetable for the strike has been drawn up with the intention of avoiding any risk of doing so. Members should therefore co-operate with the exams calendar. This only affects a limited number of exam boards, if any.

What if I am due to be on a training course/at a job interview on a strike day?

Strike action means refusing to carry out your employment duties. Attending a job interview would not fall within that, although you should check whether the interview is being rearranged in case other applicants are absent or the establishment closed. Attendance at a training course related to your job will be covered by your action, so you should ask for it to be rearranged.

Should NUT student members attend school/go into college on the day of a strike?

As an NUT student member, you are not an employee and so you cannot be balloted and cannot be on strike yourself. If your school is open and you are scheduled to be there on the day of a strike, the head teacher may ask you to come in and carry on your teaching practice but you should not be expected to cover classes or teach classes where the teacher is on strike. If your school is closed on the day of the action and you have no other college commitments that day or your college term has finished, please join in with any locally organised NUT activities. If you are due to be at college or have some other college commitment, we are not asking you to boycott lectures or miss those commitments. The NUT website will have information about events taking place on a strike day or you can ask your NUT school representative for details.

IMPACT ON PAY, PENSIONS AND EMPLOYMENT**Will the NUT pay me anything towards my lost wages?**

You won't be paid by your employer for a day on which you withdraw your labour. The Burgundy Book national agreement provides that for a strike day your normal pay will be reduced by 1/365th, one calendar day, of your annual salary. (Part time teachers should not expect their employer to make deductions for any day they are not contracted to work.)

The Union cannot compensate members for loss of pay in a national strike. A 1/365th deduction in respect of the strike day is a sacrifice. For teachers on UPS3, the loss in take home pay would be around £70 after tax and other deductions. For NQTs on M1, the loss in take home pay would be around £40.

The Union believes it is a sacrifice worth making. There is a lot at stake. However, NUT associations may have hardship funds to assist any members suffering particular hardship as a result of losing a day's pay - contact your local NUT secretary if you wish to seek such assistance.

What impact will the strike have on my teachers' pension?

Very little - for most teachers the impact of going on strike will be negligible because you will simply lose the pension you would accrue for the day you take strike action. Any loss would probably be between £1 and £2 a year in today's terms for most teachers. Teachers with higher or lower salaries will be affected proportionately.

I am close to retirement: if I strike, will there be any extra effect on my pension?

Following pension changes introduced in 2007, the NUT has been able to withdraw its previous advice that teachers in their final years of service should not go on strike.

Your pension when you retire is now calculated according to the better of the following two calculations:

- your total pay received over the last 365 days of reckonable service; or
- your best three consecutive years in the last ten years re-valued in line with inflation.

If you go on strike, the day of the strike is disregarded from the periods in questions and the calculations are simply worked out by going back one day further.

Even for teachers who are within a few years of retirement, going on strike will add only a further negligible cut in pension - in most cases as little as 10p a year or even less. Teachers with higher or lower salaries will be affected proportionately.

Will my continuous service be broken by taking strike action? How will any future redundancy payment be affected?

Continuous service is not broken by strike action - but any week during which you take part in a strike will not count towards your total final length of continuous service. Redundancy payments are based on full years of service, so they can be affected if strike action reduces the number of full years of service completed at the date of dismissal. If you have worked as a teacher for exactly 20 years, for example, taking strike action on three separate days during your employment would reduce your total service by three weeks to 19 years and 49 weeks, so that your redundancy payment might be based on 19 full years of service not 20 full years of service.

This is relevant to any teachers who are to be dismissed on redundancy grounds at the end of the academic year, if taking strike action would reduce the number of full years of service. If you have previously taken strike action during their total period of employment, of course, then taking further strike action may not have this effect.

Some employers will agree to extend service for one or more days to take account of this problem. It is also possible for employers to give 'notice of extension' requiring you to extend your service by one day to replace the day of strike action and, if you fail to comply, reduce or even refuse to pay you a redundancy payment. If this happens to you, seek advice from your local NUT secretary.

I am pregnant – will going on strike affect my entitlement to maternity benefits?

Most pregnant teachers can join a strike without affecting their maternity entitlements. Your entitlements are based on length of continuous service. Although the week of the strike will not be included in your length of continuous service, this will not affect the vast majority of pregnant teachers since continuous service is not broken by taking strike action.

The qualifying period for statutory maternity pay is 26 weeks' continuous service. The qualifying service for contractual maternity leave under the Burgundy Book is 1 year's service by the end of the 11th week before the beginning of your EWC. To qualify for Maternity Allowance (MA) you must have worked and paid full national insurance contributions for at least 26 of the 66 weeks before the week in which the baby is due (part weeks will suffice).

One day of strike action will reduce your continuous service for these purposes by one week. If taking one day of strike action will reduce your continuous service to less than any of these necessary qualifying periods, you should not take action.

I am pregnant and have an irregular working pattern - will going on strike affect my entitlement to contractual maternity pay under the Burgundy Book?

Most pregnant teachers can join a strike without affecting their maternity entitlements. If you take strike action immediately before going on maternity leave, your employer should base your contractual maternity pay on your current contractual salary in accordance with paragraph 10.1 of the Burgundy Book maternity scheme. If there are significant variations in your salary, for example, if you have an irregular working pattern, your employer may base your contractual maternity pay on the reduced salary, if you take strike action during the 12 week period immediately before going on maternity leave. Teachers, whose salary varies significantly, should therefore be aware that there is a risk that your employer may seek to base your contractual maternity pay on your reduced salary. The Union would of course support you if you are threatened with this action.

Will going on strike affect my entitlement to statutory paternity leave and pay, shared parental leave and pay, or statutory adoption leave and pay?

The answer is no for the majority. Your continuity of employment isn't broken by taking strike action. The week of the strike will not be included in your total length of service for the purpose of qualifying periods but this will not affect the vast majority of teachers. The qualifying service for statutory paternity leave and pay, shared parental leave and pay, and statutory adoption leave and pay is 26 weeks. One day of strike action will reduce your continuous service by one week. If taking one day of strike action will reduce your continuous service to only 5 months and 3 weeks by the end of the 14th week before the beginning of your EWC or the week you are matched with your child, you should not take action.

I am on long term sick leave. How will the strike affect me?

If you are on long term sick leave that covers a strike day, you will be treated as if you are on sick leave. If you are off sick on just a strike day, it is likely that your head teacher may ask you some further questions about this. Any NUT member who receives sick pay for a strike day is encouraged to support the NUT by donating that pay to an NUT local association hardship fund or to the NUT national hardship fund.

AND FINALLY

Where can I find more information on the issues we are in dispute about?

Go to www.teachers.org.uk/campaigns to find more information and campaign resources.

What else can I do to assist the campaign?

You can find a range of suggestions (eg attending NUT events, helping with street stalls, writing to or lobbying your local MP, signing petitions etc) at www.teachers.org.uk/campaigns

National Union of Teachers
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