

Classroom Teacher

NUT Conference Edition April 2011

**All out to win the ballot
TOGETHER, WE CAN STOP
THE PENSIONS ROBBERY!**

**Make sure you are
on the CLASSROOM
TEACHER mailing list**



Now out every month!

Classroom Teacher is the only regular monthly rank-and-file newsletter sent out by email to teachers across England - and now supplemented by a termly 'Classroom Teacher in Wales' too.

Since the last NUT Conference, we have written on all the main battles facing teachers - SATs, Academies, Workload, Pensions, Cuts, Management Bullying... We have reported on protests and strikes from across the country.

Classroom Teacher needs to be on YOUR staffroom noticeboard to keep colleagues informed about the action we need to take.

If you want to get a regular copy, then make sure you give your e-mail address to Classroom Teacher. Why not have your say and send in an article too!

THE CON-DEMS wasted no time in going on the attack - on jobs, pay, education and all our public services.

They may have hoped that they were going to escape without a firm trade union fightback - but the scale of the March 26 demonstration should have told this millionaire's government that they are going to get one!

Protests, marches and local strikes have started the struggle - but now the trade union movement has a chance to stand firmly together and push this Government back: over their plans to rip-off our pensions.



MORE NEWS ON OUR BLOG

News and views that can't fit into the newsletter is posted on our blog. This month, read reports from the authority-wide action in Camden & Tower Hamlets, strikes in Coventry, and Darwen, and the ongoing dispute at Rawmarsh School, Rotherham.

Every NUT Conference delegate should proudly seize the chance to vote for a national ballot for the discontinuous strike action which can stop this pensions robbery.

The NUT will show that it's ready for battle - alongside other unions like PCS and UCU - and put out a call to other unions to join with us in action.

But the Conference decision will just be the start. Every delegate, every local NUT officer and school rep. must play their part in the next few weeks in making sure we win the ballot with a decisive majority.

Plans must be made immediately to update membership records, to call local meetings - inviting the PCS and UCU as well, and to visit every school to call for a massive vote for action.

Together, we can win on pensions - and go on to defeat all the cuts !

**'Classroom Teacher'
NUT Conference
Fringe Meeting**

MON 25 APRIL

**12.45 pm Holiday Inn
next door to the Conference**

WORKLOAD

**How can union action
win a real work-life
balance?**

www.classroomteacher.org.uk

**Action and
Change for
Teachers**

WORKLOAD: *Take action to win a real 'work - life balance'*

TEACHER WORKLOAD was already at unbearable levels before the Con-Dems were elected. Under Labour, teachers were already expected to maintain the drive for 'standards' by working 50 hours a week or more. Now the cuts to both council and school budgets will make things even worse.

It's not just the cuts in support staff, advisers and increasing class sizes that are making the job even more demanding, it's also the increased levels of management bullying. Like a factory-owner driven by 'competition' to speed-up the production line, too many senior managers are turning up the pressure on staff in order to improve their exam league table positions at any cost. However, stressed teachers do not make good educators.

The Head at Whitmore School in Hackney - where the NUT has recently taken strike action (*see picture*) to oppose excessive workload - even wrote to the TES to complain: "Yes, we are asking teachers to work hard, but surely this is the reason why we all entered the profession? Yes, we do work long hours; we do make sacrifices to give children the best".

So 'for the good of the children', should teachers have no protection from stress, no family life nor any right to the 'work/life balance' set down in our national conditions?

To make sure that staff can't use even such limited legal protections to limit workload, the Government wants the School Teachers' Review Body to recommend even "greater freedoms and flexibilities". As Lord Hill's letter on Academy status has shown, their real aim is to get rid of national conditions altogether. Safeguards such as guaranteed PPA time and limits to directed time could all be under threat.

But we shouldn't just defend those limited gains. We also need to act on NUT policy to implement a National Contract that sets down real limits on workload.

With national action on pensions rightly to the fore, there is a danger that workload campaigning could be forgotten. But national action doesn't only have to have one objective, or one sanction. The NUT will have to consider widening national action to include pay and conditions. As part of that, non-strike workload sanctions could also be included alongside national strike action.

Local action can also play its part in defending members against excessive workload. In particular, NUT groups should follow the lead of members in Hackney and elsewhere in demanding schools and Local Authorities agree to a work-life balance policy that can turn the 'right' in the Pay and Conditions Document into reality.

The NUT should draw up a model "Work-Life Balance Policy" based on the one that was successfully won at Morningside School in Hackney thanks to the pressure from a strong 17 to 1 ballot in favour of strike action. Get in touch with Classroom Teacher if you want a copy sent to you.

As well as clearly defining the 1265 hours of directed time and confirming NUT policy over meetings and observations, the policy also set down limits to all those additional 'undirected' hours that are mainly responsible for the excessive hours that so many teachers endure.

It included a demand that all activities are time-audited and that no new initiative is introduced without considering their impact on work-life balance. It also gives teachers the ability to "exercise their own professional judgement and be able to use

the need to maintain a work-life balance as a legitimate reason to decide to limit the time taken on carrying out a task". For example, the policy states that "a teacher could decide to limit the number of books that they were able to mark in detail within a whole class set".

As with any policy, a strong union group is still needed to make sure it is implemented in practice. Other NUT groups should try to take the same approach, preferably in conjunction with other schools or as an Authority-wide dispute. We can't let our members be bullied into accepting excessive workload. It's time we imposed our will instead.



A special version of Classroom Teacher will also be distributed at the NASUWT Conference in Glasgow this weekend to appeal to their members to join the NUT and other unions in balloting for united strike action to defend our pensions.

Classroom Teacher

... is an initiative ...
by, and for, classroom teachers
... voicing the concerns and
experiences of classroom teachers
... so we can build action to win
change for classroom teachers

If you want :

... help organising a strong Union group in your school
... to share your views about the pressures teachers face
... to take action to defend teachers and education ...

Get in touch :

<http://classroomteachers.blogspot.com/>
classroom.teacher@yahoo.co.uk
Martin Powell-Davies - 020 8659 8478