

# Nationwide strike by UK teachers

By our reporters  
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Members of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) in England and Wales held a one-day strike on Wednesday. The NUT has some one-third of a million members and the strike led to the closure of thousands of schools. Originally the largest teachers union, the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) was due to join the action but reneged on the agreement for a joint strike.

The NUT held marches and rallies across the country. Part of an NUT press release stated: “Teachers cannot and will not take any more of the diktats from government that are ruining teaching and education. We will be continuing with our campaign of engaging parents and the public and applying pressure to politicians.”

The Socialist Equality Party distributed a leaflet at NUT rallies. It noted: “The changes the NUT is supposedly striking against have already been implemented...” These changes include teachers paying more for a pension that cannot be accessed until the age of 68 and pay rises linked to the exam results of their pupils.” The leaflet was entitled “Teachers need new perspective to oppose attacks on education.”

Around 10,000 teachers marched in London. *World Socialist Web Site* reporters spoke to teachers from Lambeth who raised some of the many issues which had caused them to strike.

Anne said, “The workload has increased dramatically. I no longer get to bathe my children and put them to bed because I am still at work. Two-thirds of the teachers at our school are planning to either leave the school and try to see if the situation is better anywhere else, or just leave the profession altogether.”

“There is no trust by teachers in school leaders and the government. Since the reforms have taken place it is all about data. Children are not at the centre of teaching any more. They are just numbers on a spreadsheet,” explained James, in a view that was

echoed by many strikers.

When asked about the strike, they commented: “It is a shame the other unions didn’t join us because we need to be unified. Many teachers are not in the NUT. Our head teacher was very supportive though because he is not happy with the changes either.”

Teachers complained that there was hardly any coverage in the media, but stated that there was “a lot of support from other professions and parents because they are feeling under pressure as well.”

Another said: “Parents don’t always know why we’re on strike, but they need to be involved. There has been a lot of apathy among people generally since the stock market crash, with people saying that we have to put up with things, but we need to get out of this now. It’s been six years.

“I was having a conversation with some people the other day, talking about the railway workers and their wages being £52,000. Instead of saying that is wrong because nurses don’t get that much they should be saying why doesn’t everyone get a decent wage.”

S. Rahman was at the march with a lively group from St Bonaventures Secondary School in East London. He explained, “We have to stand up because all the changes are affecting us. We do such a fundamental job. I work in the community where I was brought up and I see the value of what we do for our children. The harder the government make it for us, the more they affect the children.”

“The other unions need to step up,” he continued. “It’s not just about teachers but the whole public sector. We are at the forefront of the fight against what the government is doing but it affects everyone. I was talking to a friend who works in the private health sector who told me they are struggling because there is such competition for jobs and that is driving down wages. I have a 17-year-old brother and I see young people struggling because there aren’t any jobs for

them.”

“A one-day strike is not enough to make a real impact,” he concluded. “I will strike every time, but people are getting disillusioned. We need one union that protects and supports the whole public sector.”

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