

Action gets results

NUT members at Thorp Academy in Ryton, Gateshead, have been involved in strike action this term, in defence of teachers threatened with compulsory redundancy, and their action has saved jobs and showed that when school groups organise together they can win important concessions on workload and pay and conditions too.

Teachers and parents were rocked by the announcement in January that the school would have to make savings of more than £500,000 and that this would threaten the jobs of 22 teachers and 10 support staff. In addition, the school announced that it would 'delete' all 46 TLR positions in the school and replace them with a much smaller number of Faculty Leaders and Lead Practitioners on the leadership spine, and therefore without STPCD protections. The story became front-page news in the Newcastle Journal as the Academy Sponsors, Northern Education Trust, botched the presentation of swingeing cuts, with the Principal quoted as describing the move as 'an exciting development in the enhancement of teaching and learning for our students'.

Angry union members from all areas of the school, from the classroom to the administration office, joined a mass meeting to call for their respective unions to organise a ballot for industrial action up to and including strike action. They also demanded a formal letter

of complaint be sent to the Academy Chief Executive, in protest at the failure of the school's management to avert the school's financial problems. Indeed, as late as October, the school was still recruiting full time teachers.

NUT members then took the initiative, balloting for action and delivering a unanimous 'Yes' vote. As pressure on NET mounted they announced that the Principal would be leaving his post with immediate



effect. As the formal consultation period ended, they offered a revised staffing structure with more posts for former TLR holders and the offer of important concessions on workload safeguarding. These concessions, together with some staff choosing voluntary redundancy and others deciding to move to other jobs, brought the number of threatened compulsory redundancies eventually down to two part time teaching staff.

Yet when members met to decide whether to accept the latest offer by management, they were adamant that they were going to

apply the principle that 'an injury to one is an injury to all'. They opted to strike on 1 May. NASUWT members then also gave notice that they were prepared to take action.

A terrific turnout of almost 40 NUT members picketed the school, enjoying a picket line breakfast of bacon butties, as well as the warm support of local parents and commuters.

The result was that the threat to make the two members compulsorily redundant was withdrawn. Instead, they would be retained as teachers to teach wholly or partly across other subjects. In addition, the action forced NET to accept that Faculty Leaders and Lead practitioners could retain their TLR conditions for 3 years without losing their STPCD protections. Further guarantees of limits on after-school meetings and fairer approaches to marking and scrutiny were also offered.

The next year at Thorp will still be difficult. Class sizes are set to rise, there are fewer teachers, and more of those remaining will be on the maximum number of contact hours. NUT members feel more confident about challenging new management initiatives, however. They've been emboldened by the feeling of solidarity their action created, and they have set down a marker that they are not prepared to be walked over.

by Tony Dabb, Gateshead NUT Assistant Secretary

People's Assembly demo

AFFORDABLE HOMES FOR ALL * FUND OUR NHS
* NO MORE CUTS * REVERSE PRIVATISATION

END
AUSTERITY
NOW

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION
SATURDAY 20 JUNE 2015
12PM BANK OF ENGLAND & MARCH TO PARLIAMENT
THEPEOPLESASSEMBLY.ORG.UK

AGAINST AUSTERITY
THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

"We need a first class education system to support economic recovery."

On the day, demonstrators gathered outside Newcastle City Hall before marching down Northumberland Street to the Monument. As they passed the Sports Direct store, the crowd paused briefly to chant their protest to the use of exploitative zero-hour contracts by billionaire Newcastle United owner Mike Ashley's firm.

The Newcastle event was held as part of the build-up to the national demonstration called by the People's Assembly for Saturday 20th June in London, where hundreds of thousands of people from around the country will join together to protest against cuts and demand an alternative to the Government's austerity policies.

The NUT is among dozens of organisations which are supporting the People's Assembly as a popular movement against cuts and privatisation, and there is set to be a strong presence from the Union at the national march.

The assembly point for the demo is outside the Bank of England, Queen Victoria Street, City of London, at 12noon and it will finish at Weavers Fields in Tower Hamlets, where there will be a free music festival.

Transport to the national demo is being arranged from across the country, including a coach from central Newcastle. Details are available at: www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk/end_austerity_now_transport and www.facebook.com/events/336107616577968/

For further details visit www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk/end_austerity_now_national_demonstration_saturday_20th_june



Teachers were among more than 1,000 demonstrators gathering in Newcastle to protest against Government cuts.

Hundreds of trade unionists, community activists, politicians and members of the public joined the North East People's Assembly march and rally on Saturday 6th June.

They called for an end to the disastrous and unfair programme of cuts to public sector funding, wages and welfare benefits carried out by the Coalition and continuing under the new Conservative Government.

Reversing cuts to funding for education and ending the privatisation of the schools system were among protestors' key demands.

Tony Dabb, Gateshead NUT Assistant Secretary, was among speakers on the platform at Grey's Monument. He spoke of the struggle of members at his school, Thorp Academy, to resist redundancies and told those assembled how the trust which runs the academy takes around £250,000 a year from the school's funding.

Despite pre-election promises to protect spending on pupils aged between 5 and 16, the Conservatives have declined to increase school funding to take account of inflation or rising National Insurance and pension contributions. Chancellor George Osborne has also said that cuts of £450m

will be made to the non-schools education budget, including post-16, this year. Meanwhile money will be made available to open 500 new free schools, while up to 1,000 so-called "failing" or "coasting" schools will be forced to become academies.

At this year's Annual Conference in Harrogate, NUT members voted to make campaigning for more funding to be made available to schools one of the union's key priorities.

General Secretary Christine Blower said: "Many schools have seen real-terms cuts in their budgets, and have seen valuable local authority services cut back or lost altogether. The budget for 16-19 education has been cut by 14% in real terms. Overall funding for schools in Wales has been cut in real terms. In addition to cuts to day-to-day funding, capital funding in education has been cut by more than a third in real terms despite rising pupil numbers and the shortage of school places. Instead, the Government has wasted money on its ideologically-driven academies and free schools programme.

"Teachers and students have been hit hard by the cuts. Teachers have seen job losses, worsening working conditions and restrictions on pay progression. Many serving teachers have been driven out of the profession, and many potential recruits to teaching lost.

Baseline Assessment

The baseline assessment will test children's abilities in literacy and numeracy within weeks of them entering school in reception. Assessment is part of education, but only when assessments are used to support children, not for 'accountability frameworks'.

If you think four is too young to test, find out more about the Better Without Baseline www.betterwithoutbaseline.org.uk campaign and what you can do to get involved. The NUT is working with a range of organisations, including the Save Childhood Movement, Pre-School Learning Alliance, and Association for the Professional Development of Early Years Educators (TACTYC) to fight for the best interests of children. See how you can get involved by visiting the campaign website.

On this page you'll find a range of resources to help you in your local campaign, including letter templates for head teachers, parents and governors to explain why baseline testing is wrong. We've also answered some of the common myths and misconceptions on baseline testing. Our myth busters document, and other useful materials, can be found under the 'Campaign Resources' tab.

There are also links to different local campaigns to help you get involved in opposing baseline assessment and provide ideas for things you can do in your area.

What is the baseline assessment?

The baseline assessment is a 1:1 formal test that will take place within a few weeks of them starting school in reception. It will focus on a child's literacy and numeracy to generate a 'baseline' against which to measure progress to Key Stage One and Two. There will be more than one form of test and schools will have to choose a test from a range of approved providers.

The baseline test is due to be introduced from September 2015.

The test is, in theory, optional; however, from 2016 the baseline test will be the only method the DfE will use to measure the progress of children from reception to the end of Key Stage Two.

If a school chooses not to administer

the test they will be considered 'failing' unless 85% of their pupils reach the expected level at the end of Key Stage Two, irrespective of their intake. The vast majority of schools do not currently meet this threshold.

The Union is opposing the introduction of baseline testing in England. A national baseline test in Wales was withdrawn after teacher opposition.

Why does the Union oppose the baseline testing?

The NUT believes that teachers should be allowed to exercise their professional judgement in how best to support the children they teach. Teachers should be able to establish the capabilities and development needs of children in a way that is appropriate for that child and that does not label children as failing or below expected levels from the start.

Researchers believe it is likely a baseline check will be unreliable and statistically invalid due to the age of the children and the fact they will be in a new and unfamiliar setting. There are also concerns the check will be damaging to children's wellbeing, engagement and attitudes to learning.

A 1:1 test will be time consuming and impact on the time school staff can spend settling children, most of whom will still only be four, into their new environment and routine.

Early years settings will need to resist the pressure to narrow their focus in order to prepare children for the test, and families may face anxiety and confusion if their child is found to be 'failing'.

The Union believes that teachers need to protect reception children starting school from the stress and potential damage to their wellbeing, engagement and attitudes to learning of having to undergo formal testing.

The NUT is hoping to encourage the Government to change this policy before it is introduced by showing the scale of opposition to the check from teachers, parents and early childhood education researchers.

Who is involved in the campaign against baseline testing?

The NUT is not alone in opposing baseline testing and in believing that there is a fundamental contradiction between the principles of early education and administering a formal assessment of four year olds as they enter school. A wide range of organisations, from professionals and academics to parents, are coming together to challenge the government's notion that a test of children as they start school is beneficial in any way.

These presentations from the Save Childhood Movement, Early Education and TACTYC demonstrate why baseline testing is damaging to children, why it doesn't help teachers and early years professionals, and also why it is an ineffective accountability measure. Union members are welcome to use them in their school and local association.

We have signed an open letter alongside TACTYC, Early Education, Save Childhood Movement, Early Childhood Forum, Cathy Nutbrown, NAPE, ATL and others voicing our opposition to baseline testing. Read more arguments against baseline testing here www.teachers.org.uk/baseline.

The Save Childhood Movement's Too Much, Too Soon group have collated the evidence against the baseline check on their campaign page Say No to Baseline Assessment.

TACTYC have produced a summary, position statement, and lobbying support pack.

Writer and teacher trainer Sue Cowley has written an analysis of the flaws in the rationale behind baseline assessment and a critique of the tests approved by the DfE for use as baseline assessments.

Pam Jarvis, in an article titled 'Neurons and Narratives: The Human Need for Free Play in Early Years Development', argues that an overwhelming body of evidence indicates that the provision of time and space for collaborative free play is a non-negotiable developmental requirement for young children.

Campaign Resources are available from www.teachers.org.uk/baseline.



NORTHERN Teacher



NEWCASTLE
PRIDE 2015
45TH ANNIVERSARY OF WORLD PRIDE



CELEBRATE WITH US FRIDAY 17TH - SUNDAY 19TH JULY

Sponsored by NUT Northern Region

Join the NUT on Saturday 18 July 2015 at 11.00am onwards at Newcastle Civic Centre for the Pride Parade to the Town Moor.

Newcastle Pride returns for its 8th year on 17th, 18th & 19th July on the Town Moor.

The NUT will have a stall at Exhibition Park from 1.00-5.00pm on Saturday and 10.30-4.00pm on Sunday.

If you would like to assist with the NUT stall please contact Ian Grayson i.grayson@executive.nut.otrg.uk.

Full details of Newcastle Pride can be found at www.northern-pride.com.

MIKE McDONALD
Regional Secretary

Comment on examinations

It takes years to prepare for GCSE, AS and A2. It takes hours to mark each examination paper.

BUT IT COULD TAKE JUST A FEW MINUTES OF YOUR TIME TO INFLUENCE FUTURE PAPERS BY TELLING STANDING JOINT COMMITTEES JUST WHAT YOU THINK!

The Teacher Unions/Associations maintain Standing Joint Committees (SJs) to let the awarding bodies know the views of Teacher Union/Association members about GCSE, AS and A levels

SJs are completely independent and, when they comment, awarding bodies take notice. A written response to SJC comments is then made available to schools and colleges.

Two of the members on the AQA SJC are Rita Morris and Mike Crilly.

Download and print a poster for display on your staff noticeboard from teachers.org.uk/commentonexams.

You can also go directly to the comments form from this link. Please submit your comments as soon possible after the conclusion of the examination that you are commenting upon.

Not only the biggest, but also the best!

The National Union of Teachers is both a professional association and a trade union. It is the largest and most influential teachers' organisation in Europe, recruiting only qualified teachers, or those who are on courses or in posts that will lead to teacher qualification. **Complete Protection.** Being a member of the NUT brings access to the very best legal and professional protection. It gives you a service unrivalled in the teaching profession.

Support and Advice. The NUT has a network of regional offices in England and NUT Cymru in Wales. Each office has experienced casework officers and solicitors, as well as other expert staff to give confidential advice, information or assistance on employment rights and other matters relating to your professional life.

Campaigning. The NUT campaigns for a reduction in working hours, the removal of excessive workload, and a better work-life balance. We also campaign for fair pay and reform of the assessment system.

Experts in Education. We work on curriculum issues as well as pay and conditions of service.

Continuing Professional Development. Our continuing professional development programme is recognised as one of the best in the country.

Benefits and Services. We offer a wide range of membership benefits and services. Our members save hundreds of pounds a year by accessing discounts available through their membership.

Equal Opportunities. Our groundbreaking policy work on equalities issues has been adopted by schools, local authorities and other government institutions.

Young Teachers. We have a thriving young teachers' section for all full members under 36. To find out more, visit our website www.teachers.org.uk.

One Union for all Teachers. The NUT campaigns consistently for professional unity in the teaching profession. We believe that a single professional body, articulating the views of the profession, would benefit both children and teachers.

Education for All. We campaign for a good local school for every child and for every community. We are also a member of the Global Campaign for Education, working for every child in the world to have a primary school education by 2015.



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