

CAMPAIGN TOOLKIT

Addressing Class Sizes in Schools

Introduction

NASUWT recognises that excessive class sizes significantly impact teacher workload, wellbeing and the quality of education provided. Large class sizes can compromise health and safety, diminish the quality of pupil-teacher interactions and exacerbate existing pressures on education staff. This toolkit offers a structured approach to tackling these issues through evidence collection, advocacy and legal support, ensuring manageable class sizes and a safe, productive learning environment.

This toolkit has been developed to empower Workplace Representatives to advocate effectively for smaller class sizes. It provides a comprehensive guide, equipping you with the knowledge, resources and strategies needed to bring about positive change.



Why this issue matters

- **Teacher wellbeing:** Excessive class sizes increase stress and workload, particularly in practical subjects requiring individual supervision or in classes with mixed ages or pupils that: have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) (England and Northern Ireland); require additional support for learning (ASL) (Scotland); or have additional learning needs (ALN) (Wales). Teachers face challenges ensuring the safety and effective learning of every pupil when stretched too thin, leading to burnout and decreased job satisfaction.
- **Student outcomes:** Larger class sizes reduce opportunities for individual attention and tailored teaching strategies. Pupils with SEND/ASL/ALN or those requiring additional support are particularly disadvantaged in overcrowded classrooms.
- **Health and safety compliance:** Employers are legally obligated to manage risks, including those arising from overcrowding, under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Risk assessments for practical subjects, such as science or physical education, often recommend significantly smaller class sizes for safety reasons.

Toolkit components

This pack includes:

- 1 **Campaign actions:** Step-by-step strategies to assess, advocate and resolve class size issues.
- 2 **Evidence collection tools:** Practical methods for documenting the impact of large class sizes.
- 3 **Legal guidance:** References to laws and regulations supporting the campaign.
- 4 **Template materials:** Ready-to-use communication tools for advocacy and awareness.

How to use this toolkit

The toolkit is designed to be flexible, allowing you to tailor actions and materials to your specific workplace. Whether you're raising initial concerns with leadership or escalating unresolved issues to regional or national levels, these resources will guide you at every stage.

Thank you for your commitment to improving working conditions for all NASUWT members.

Let's make a difference – starting now.

Campaign actions:

Step-by-step strategies to assess, advocate and resolve class size issues

This section outlines actionable steps to raise awareness, engage stakeholders and drive improvements. These strategies are designed to help NASUWT Representatives navigate challenges and secure meaningful outcomes.

Step 1: Assess the current situation

Objective: Identify the scope of the issue and gather evidence to support your campaign.

Actions:

- Conduct anonymous surveys to gather data on average class sizes, workload impact and safety concerns.
- Use observation checklists and risk assessments to identify specific hazards related to overcrowded classrooms.
- Compile a report detailing the problems, supported by data, testimonials and photographic evidence.

Step 2: Raise awareness among staff

Objective: Inform colleagues about the importance of the campaign and build collective support.

Actions:

- Host meetings to share findings from surveys and observations to build collective understanding of the issue.
- Use anonymised testimonials to illustrate the personal toll of large class sizes on teachers and pupils.
- Encourage staff to join the campaign and share their experiences to strengthen collective advocacy.

Step 3: Engage school leadership

Objective: Secure a commitment to address the issues.

Actions:

- Request a meeting with leadership, such as the headteacher or governors.
- Present your evidence report, highlighting legal obligations and the impact on staff wellbeing.
- Propose practical solutions, such as:
 - reducing class sizes to meet recommended limits;
 - employing additional staff or reassigning resources; and
 - using larger spaces for lessons with high student numbers.
- Emphasise the long-term benefits of improved teacher morale, safety and educational outcomes.
- Follow up with a formal letter summarising the meeting and agreed actions.

Step 4: Leverage NASUWT support

Objective: Escalate unresolved issues or seek additional resources.

Actions:

- Report unresolved concerns to your NASUWT National or Regional Centre for further advice and intervention.
- Collaborate with NASUWT's Legal and Health and Safety teams to ensure compliance with regulations.
- Request union-organised inspections or audits to support your case.

Step 5: Escalate when necessary

Objective: If necessary, ensure compliance through external enforcement.

Actions:

- Report breaches to your National Executive Members who may raise them with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or local authority.
- Highlight potential legal and reputational risks for the school.
- In severe cases, escalate to NASUWT for consideration of industrial action.

Step 6: Monitor progress

Objective: Ensure agreed changes are implemented effectively.

Actions:

- Regularly review class sizes and assess the impact of implemented changes.
- Solicit ongoing feedback from staff to identify any remaining issues.

Step 7: Celebrate success

Objective: Acknowledge progress and build morale.

Actions:

- Publicly thank staff, leadership and other supporters for their contributions to the campaign.
- Highlight positive outcomes through posters, newsletters or social media.
- Share your success story with NASUWT to inspire similar actions in other schools.

Evidence collection tools:

Practical methods for documenting the impact of large class sizes

This section provides practical tools to collect evidence about issues and their impact on staff. Gathering detailed and organised evidence is crucial to building a strong case for change.

Anonymous staff survey:

Include questions such as:

- What is your average class size?
- Have you experienced increased workload or stress due to class size?
- Are there safety concerns with your current class size?

Observation checklists:

Use these to assess:

- Classroom space and layout.
- Supervision challenges due to overcrowding.
- Any risks or hazards created by excessive numbers.

Risk assessments:

- Tailor these to specific classes or practical subjects to document hazards and space limitations.

Incident logs:

- Record dates, locations and descriptions of issues caused by large class sizes.
- Document the impact on teaching, safety or learning outcomes.

Legal guidance:

References to laws and regulations supporting the campaign.

This section outlines the key legal standards and regulations that require employers to provide a safe working environment for staff. These laws provide a strong foundation for advocating for improvements in your school or college.

Workplace Reps in Scotland should familiarise themselves with the nationally agreed guidance on class sizes in the SNCT Handbook, at this link: snct.org.uk/wiki/index.php?title=Appendix_2.9

1. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974:
Employers must ensure safe working conditions, including managing risks related to overcrowding.

2. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999:
Risk assessments are required for all workplace hazards, including class sizes.

3. Building Bulletin Guidelines:
Provide recommendations on space requirements for different activities and age groups, supporting smaller class sizes for safety.

Practical Application

- Use these legal references to support discussions with leadership.
- Escalate unresolved issues to NASUWT or external authorities for enforcement.

Template Materials

Ready-to-use communication tools for advocacy and awareness

Letter to leadership

Subject: Request for risk assessment and review of class sizes

Dear *[Headteacher/Principal/CEO]*,

I am writing to raise concerns about the current class sizes at *[school/college name]*. Overcrowding has significant implications for teacher wellbeing, student outcomes and compliance with health and safety regulations.

I request a formal risk assessment of class sizes and the implementation of measures to reduce risks. Smaller classes are essential for maintaining safety and ensuring high-quality education.

I look forward to your response and proposed actions.

Yours sincerely,

[Your name]

NASUWT Workplace Representative

[Contact information]

Template: Social media post

Post text:

'Smaller classes mean safer schools! NASUWT is campaigning to address excessive class sizes that harm teacher wellbeing and student outcomes. Join the fight for #SafeClassSizes. Learn more: *[link]*.'

Poster for staff areas

A poster for staff areas can be found on the following page.

SMALLER CLASSES, SAFER SCHOOLS

Did you know?

- Smaller class sizes improve safety and learning outcomes.
- Large classes lead to increased stress and reduced teaching quality.

What can you do?

- Share your experiences with your NASUWT Representative.
- Join the campaign for smaller and safer class sizes.

Contact your NASUWT Representative
for more information

nasuwt.org.uk

