

January 2020

Dear Member

NASUWT National Trade Dispute with the Welsh Government – UPDATE

I wrote to you in November 2019 (www.nasuwt.org.uk/walesmembersletternovember2019english) advising you of the representations that the NASUWT had been making to Minister Kirsty Williams on the issues that members had advised us were their top concerns about their job, workload, pupil indiscipline and pay.

The NASUWT had advised the Minister that there were deep concerns, in particular about:

- how the recommendations from the 'Teaching: A Valued Profession' Review were being handled by the Welsh Government;
- the impact of curriculum reform on the pay and working conditions of teachers, including the potential for the introduction of the new curriculum to add to the already excessive workload of teachers and to lead to redundancies and cuts in teachers' salaries, with schools restructuring in anticipation;
- the impact of pupil indiscipline on teachers, including the regular exposure of teachers to verbal and physical abuse, the culture of 'blame the teacher' which is pervading too many schools as a response to unacceptable pupil behaviour, and the adverse impact this is having on teachers' physical and mental health and wellbeing;
- the deeply disappointing response of the Welsh Government to the first year of the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body process, including failing to respect the Review Body's recommendations, and to the NASUWT's response to the consultation.

The Minister's response to these issues had been unacceptable and was, in the view of the NASUWT, contemptuous of teachers' genuine concerns.

The Minister had failed to engage seriously on any of the points raised, merely noting the issues on pupil indiscipline. In the light of this, members were advised that the NASUWT felt there was no alternative but to lodge a formal national trade dispute with the Minister on pay and conditions of service, as well as adverse management practices specifically relating to workload and ineffective management of pupil indiscipline.

The dispute was lodged on 4th November 2019 and a meeting with the Minister had been requested to seek to resolve the dispute.

Meeting with the Minister on the National Trade Dispute

The meeting with the Minister took place on 4th December.

Regrettably, the Minister continued to fail to engage on the issues of concern being raised by the NASUWT representatives.

No progress was made in the discussions. The NASUWT representatives concluded by asking whether the Minister was prepared to enable the NASUWT to meet with Government Officials to discuss the NASUWT's practical suggestions about how these issues of concern to teachers might be resolved. The Minister said she would let us know.

The NASUWT followed up the request for a meeting in writing on 16th December, reiterating again the concerns the Union had raised at the meeting with the Minister.

On 19th December, the Minister responded and again failed to address our concerns.

Moving towards a ballot of members for industrial action

Your National Executive Members for Wales and the NASUWT National Action Committee have reviewed the failure of the Minister to engage on these important issues. They feel that there is now no option but to move towards a national ballot of members across Wales in furtherance of the dispute and to enable the Union to put in place industrial action which will empower our members to make a stand in their workplace against the adverse management practices which are resulting in excessive workload, pupil indiscipline and pay inequality.

See over for The Next Steps.

THE NEXT STEPS

1. Members and workplace representatives/contacts will be receiving invitations to attend briefings on the National Trade Dispute and to discuss plans for the ballot for industrial action. The briefings will be spread across Wales so please make every effort to attend the one closest to you.
2. As part of our preparation for the ballot, members are asked to complete a short opinion survey which can be completed online or downloaded at: www.nasuwt.org.uk/nasuwtcymrupoll2020.
3. The NASUWT will continue to press for a meeting with Welsh Government Officials to put forward our proposals to address the concerns of teachers and will also be lobbying AMs about the unacceptable response from the Minister to a national trade dispute lodged by the largest teachers' union in Wales.
4. A HOTLINE for teachers in Wales **ON PUPIL INDISCIPLINE** is also being launched and the details are below.

Best wishes



Chris Keates (Ms)
General Secretary (Acting)

PUPIL INDISCIPLINE HOTLINE OPENS FOR TEACHERS ACROSS WALES

All members can take part in furthering our national dispute with the Welsh Government, particularly in relation to tackling pupil indiscipline, by using our dedicated hotline which opens on **Friday 31st January 2020**.

In order to gather further evidence on the scale of the problem relating to pupil indiscipline, one of the top concerns of teachers about their job, any teacher in Wales can use the hotline to:

- report by text or voicemail incidents they have experienced or witnessed;
- express their views on what they think about pupil indiscipline and, for example, restorative behaviour policies; and
- report whether they have experienced or witnessed behaviours, for example, where teachers rather than pupils are blamed for pupil indiscipline, whether they feel supported when they experience issues with pupils, or how issues are dealt with when they are reported.

Experiences can be reported anonymously by calling the voicemail on 029 2054 6099 or by texting 07860 017657.

Teachers have a right to a safe working environment, free from violence and disruption, regardless of whether they work in a mainstream school or specialist setting.

Gathering evidence on the hotline that they are not being afforded that right will enable us to demonstrate to the Welsh Government the scale of unacceptable practices and the need for Ministers to take action to tackle ineffective management of pupil indiscipline.

Please encourage as many teachers as possible to use the hotline.

Please note that the hotline is not an advice line. It is simply a quick and effective way of reporting and collecting experiences.

Any NASUWT members who would like help or assistance on this or any other issue can contact the NASUWT Cymru National Centre on 029 2054 6080 or email rc-wales-cymru@mail.nasuwt.org.uk. All contact is confidential.