

NORTHERN IRELAND TEACHERS' COUNCIL

18th December 2023

PRESS RELEASE

Strike 18th January 2024

On 20th November 2023 the 5 constituent members of the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council informed the employing authorities of their intention to escalate their industrial action and instruct their members in Northern Ireland to, in addition to the half-day strike on 29th November 2023, withdraw their labour for a further four full days in the spring term.

While the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and all the political parties, have agreed that Public Sector workers should receive a cost-of-living uplift, to date no pay offer has been made in relation to teachers' pay, and no talks around same have been tabled.

In line with communications made, NITC therefore has no option but to once again instruct our members to engage in strike action commencing at 00:01 on Thursday 18th January 2024 and ending at 23:59 on Thursday 18th January 2024.

Jacquie White, General Secretary of UTU and Chair of the Council, said:

"Almost unbelievably we are entering 2024 with no resolution to this issue since 2020 and it's now accepted at all levels that teachers' pay needs to be addressed. Yet despite the fact that funding for the Public Sector pay claim has been identified within the initial offer which now sits with the Secretary of State, the ultimate irony remains that because of the current situation in Stormont there's no apparent movement or will to deliver it. Meanwhile teachers continue to hold together a system which is crumbling beneath the weight of long-term under-investment, a system which is short-changing our children and risking our future socio-economic success as a country."

Justin McCamphill, NASUWT and Vice-Chair of NITC said:

"Every day that passes without a decent pay offer increases the anger felt by teachers. Teachers should not be pawns in a political game. Teachers want a return of government in Northern Ireland but also want to be fairly rewarded for the work that they do. Teachers are fully prepared for strike action but should never have been put in this position. The Secretary of State needs to fully fund a Public Sector pay settlement now so that teacher unions and employers can bring this dispute to a satisfactory conclusion."

NAHT President, Liam McGuckin, said:

"We know that the employing authorities recognise the harm that has been done to the teaching profession in recent years, both in terms of pay and workload. The profession also recognises it and, as a result, the trade unions have developed significant momentum and are collectively, in a position to deliver industrial action on an unprecedented scale. This moment must therefore mark a turning point for management side, and a resolution that undoes that damage that has been done must be tabled at speed."

Pauline Buchanan and Mark Langhammer, joint Regional Secretaries of NEU, commented:

"The Independent Review of Education confirmed that our education system has been grossly under-funded for years. Teachers pay falling behind and strike action is the inevitable consequence. In the absence of devolved government, we urge the Secretary of State to "get on with it". Pay up now!"

Mark McTaggart, INTO Northern Secretary and Secretary of NITC stated:

"The ongoing discussions around finance indicate that a figure of approximately £600 million is to be allocated to solve the public sector pay disputes. Time is long past that the decision makers detach themselves from the notion that this funding is subject to the restart of the Stormont Institutions, and we demand that the necessary funding is immediately released to resolve the issue of teachers' pay.

A just pay solution cannot be dependent on the action or inaction of any politician or political party."

ENDS