

# Education cuts provoke school strikes across England

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Relentless cuts to education budgets by the Starmer Labour government mean thousands of schools in England are threatening to slash jobs and support services.

Nearly 60 percent of schools and trusts are unable to balance their budgets without making significant cuts, according to the National Governance Association. Up to 74 percent of schools are facing real-terms funding cuts, forcing many to slash budgets for teaching staff and teaching assistants. Nearly 50 percent of all schools are anticipating a financial deficit in their current spending.

A significant projected drop in pupil numbers over the next 5 years is set to have a catastrophic impact on school funding. In total the pupil population is expected to fall by around 436,000 between 2022/23 and 2028/29, with an additional 382,000 between 2028/29 and 2032/33.

The National Audit Office (NAO) estimates that a projected national drop of 56,300 primary pupils will automatically strip £288 million out of primary school budgets. Major multi-academy trusts (MAT's) and local authority schools have been actively restructuring, putting hundreds of teaching and support staff roles at risk of redundancy.

Schools have been forced to merge while some have been forced to close. Over the last five years, falling rolls have triggered approximately 90 school closures or mergers in England alone. The Education Policy Institute (EPI) warns that this trend will intensify through the late 2020s, with urban areas like London and the North East facing the steepest declines.

## Strikes erupt across England against redundancies and restructuring

The threats to jobs and working conditions have provoked a significant growth in strike action and efforts to fight back by educators. Dozens of isolated strikes have erupted across

England by teachers, teaching assistants and support staff involving several education unions. Despite all stemming from the same issue: budget cuts and an austerity driven agenda they are all isolated disputes, including within the same school with either teachers out and TA's working or vice-versa.

Some of these strikes include:

- In Reigate, National Education Union (NEU) members at the Royal Alexandra and Albert School carried out their first strike in the school's 200-year history. The action was against sweeping restructuring proposals, including up to 12 redundancies, cuts to pensionable allowances, and the imposition of market rents on staff housing. Six days of strike action was taken over April and May and the strikes have now been paused for "negotiations".

- In Weymouth, teachers at Budmouth Academy held four days strikes in late April 2026. The strikes were called by the NASUWT union following disputes over excessive workloads, restrictive teaching methods, and challenging management practices. NASWUT is in negotiations with the school, but the threat to jobs and conditions continues.

- Unison support staff at Ash Field school, part of the Discovery Schools Academy Trust (DSAT), have taken six days of strike action and announced a further 9 days of strikes in June and July. Staff are striking in defense of their union rep, Tom Barker, suspended seven months ago following a successful ballot for strike action over redundancies and restructuring. The school withdrew the redundancy threats and then suspended Barker in an attempt at harassment and union busting.

- In Dorset, teaching staff at Queen Elizabeth's School in Wimborne and Corfe Hills School have been striking over planned job losses, redundancies, and cuts to subjects by the Initio Learning Trust. Both the NASUWT and NEU held walkouts, prompting parent-led campaigns and local protests. The dispute has attracted significant community opposition, including protests, a parliamentary petition, and calls for an investigation into academy trust finances and executive pay.

- In Derby, support staff in Unison walked out at the St Ralph Sherwin Catholic (MAT), affecting 14 schools. NEU members held eight days of strike action over May. The Trust, which has schools in Derby, Derbyshire, East Staffordshire and Nottinghamshire is facing a deficit exceeding £10 million, the largest reported in England. The strike is spreading across the trust including St Joseph's Catholic Academy, Matlock and staff at St Anne's Catholic Academy in Buxton holding a formal ballot.

- In April staff across 20 Arthur Terry Learning Partnership schools walked out over planned redundancies. The trust, which runs schools in Birmingham, Coventry, Warwickshire and Staffordshire– which has a deficit of over £8 million – later “agreed to end all current consultations linked to staffing restructures”. The NEU called off the strike of 800 teachers claiming victory. However, the trust said it would continue to honour “all voluntary redundancy requests” as well as restructuring roles and responsibilities among central team members with the NEU overseeing the process.

- In Aylesbury, South England, the first of six scheduled days of strike action began at a senior school in Warwick over job losses. The NEU said 11 compulsory redundancies including key student-facing roles at Aylesford School were among initial proposals.

- Staff at Parkside School in Bradford voted for action over challenging student behaviour, alongside unsustainable workloads. The secondary school is run by the Wellspring Academy Trust, which operates more than 30 academies across Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, and the Humber. NEU members had suspended two planned days of strike action on June 1 and 4 following negotiations with the Trust. The NEU reported that the school has since reneged on its “commitments” and announced a programme of staff redundancies, so strikes will resume in the next weeks.

- Teachers at INOVA trust in Sheffield, South Yorkshire have walked out in a dispute over planned redundancies following the trust's rebrand in 2025. Five days of industrial action began on June 10, Some 18 Schools with NEU staff have participated in the action which will continue next week. The NEU stated that the dispute is over “the impact of Project Pioneer, which had placed support staff at risk of compulsory redundancies or being forced into reduced or downgraded positions.”

- In Rochdale, teachers at St Cuthbert's RC High School went on strike last month over allegations of “violent and abusive behaviour from some pupils”. NASUWT accused the trust, St Theresa of Calcutta, of stripping the school of staff and resources.

- In Hull, Hessle, primary school teachers have taken strike action over health and safety concerns linked to pupil

behaviour.

The drop in pupil numbers could be used to resolve the chronic underachievement of pupils in schools. The UK has the highest number of pupils per teacher in all of Europe, with over a million pupils taught in classes of over 31 pupils per class. It could be an opportunity to redress teacher workload and burnout which has seen new teachers entering the profession at the lowest level since records began 30 years ago. However, a government beholden to big business and not social needs has seized the drop in pupil numbers to slash public services to fund its key priority, military spending.

The education unions have played the key role in policing the imposition of austerity and the destruction of public education. It was the Blair Labour government in 2000, which first introduced the academisation of schools, which are publicly funded but privately run. Successive Tory and now Starmer's Labour governments have accelerated this process. Academies now run 89 percent of secondary schools and 48 percent of primary schools. They can set their own budgets and staffing structures. With reduced subsidies from the government, they are determined to maintain the massive salaries that have been granted to their managers and board members. The education unions did nothing to stop the wrecking operation. The state sector has not fared any better, with funding to education cut by £14 billion since 2010-11.

The unions are organising isolated strikes to let off steam, ensure that they protect their negotiating rights and prove they are a necessary tool blocking the deep-seated anger and opposition to the destruction of education.

The refusal of the education unions to mount a collective struggle against teacher shortages, workload, crumbling buildings and collapse in real term wages necessitates the building of rank-and-file committees to link the struggle of teachers, teaching assistant and support staff against the endless austerity drive. For more information, click here.



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