

Action Short of Strike Action FAQs (Northern Ireland)

Frequently asked questions about action short of strike action in Northern Ireland from 10 February 2025

My principal has asked teachers to implement a new or existing working practice which has not been the subject of consultation and agreement with NASUWT. What should NASUWT members in my school do? (Northern Ireland)

Every existing school policy and working practice should have been evaluated for its impact on teachers' workload, working time and work/life balance before being implemented.

This must be done in agreement with NASUWT School Representatives after consultation with the members in the school.

Where this has not happened, NASUWT is instructing members to 'cease and desist' any existing policies, initiatives or working practices that have not been agreed and not to implement any new initiatives or working practices that have not been workload impact assessed and agreed at school level with our members.

The time required to fulfil these new or existing policies, initiatives and working practices should appear in each teacher's individual time budget before NASUWT members should agree to implement them.

Time budgets should be issued before the first teaching day of the academic year.

Should we write Personal Learning Plans? (Northern Ireland)

This is covered by instruction 5, which is:

'Members will not implement any existing or new initiatives from the Department of Education or other arm's length bodies (ALBs) which have not been workload impact assessed and agreed with NASUWT.'

The new Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) have not been workload impact assessed and agreed with NASUWT. Therefore, Phase 1 PLP schools should 'cease and desist' from filling in PLPs and revert back to IEPs.

In Phase II PLP schools, members should refuse to comply with PLPs and revert to using IEPs.

I have been directed to take on a responsibility which a colleague had previously been paid a responsibility point for. What should I do? (Northern Ireland)

This is covered by action instruction 7:

'Members will refuse to undertake any existing or new unremunerated duties or responsibilities which are not required of all classroom teachers.'

If you have been asked to carry out such responsibilities in your school, without being in receipt of a Teaching Allowance to accompany it, then you are being instructed in action 7 to stop carrying out these duties until such time as you have been awarded adequate time in your time budget for each duty AND a Teaching Allowance to accompany it.

Do I have to do Performance Review and Staff Development? (Northern Ireland)

Members who have reached UPS3 or are at the top of their Individual School Rate (ISR) should not participate in Performance Review and Staff Development (PRSD) as reviewees.

Members should continue to act as reviewers and observers of colleagues not yet at UPS3 or at the top of their ISR band.

The time required to act as a reviewer, including all administration tasks, and the time needed to carry out observations of colleagues not yet at UPS3 should be included in members' individual time budgets.

Can I be observed as part of a trusted colleague network instead of Performance Review and Staff Development? (Northern Ireland)

No. This is covered by the instruction on observation:

'Members will refuse to accept or co-operate with any classroom observation outside of Induction, Early Professional Development and the PRSD scheme which stipulates classroom observation of one hour per year with a maximum of two visits.'

Can I be observed by a student teacher as part of their professional development? (Northern Ireland)

Yes. It is important to support the development of student teachers.

An educational psychologist wishes to observe a child in my class. Can I be observed? (Northern Ireland)

NASUWT is prepared to make an exception in this case as the intent is not to form a judgement of the teacher.

This exception does not apply to learning walks by members of senior management team:

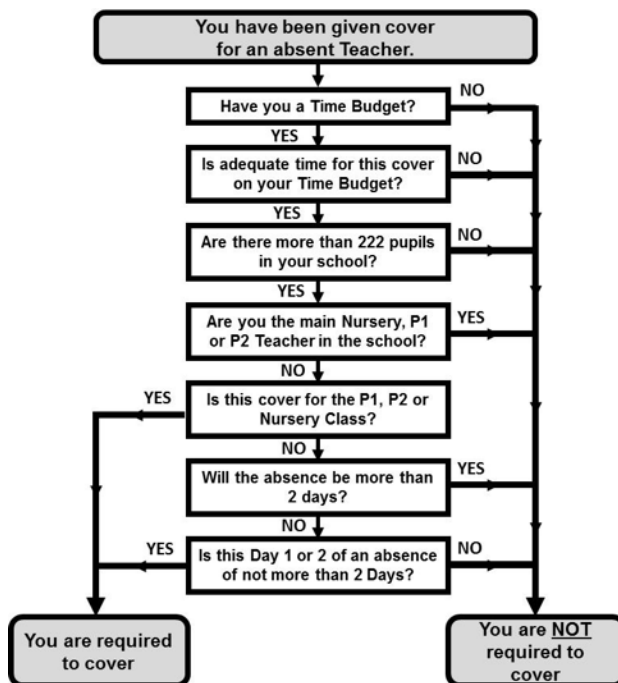
'Members will refuse to accept or co-operate with any classroom observation outside of Induction, Early Professional Development and the PRSD scheme which stipulates classroom observation of one hour per year with a maximum of two visits.'

I've been given a class to cover. Do I have to do it? (Northern Ireland)

Members are directed to work strictly to their contract on cover.

The amount of cover must not exceed the weekly limit of pupil contact time of 23.5 hours a week in post-primary and 25 hours a week in nursery, primary and special schools.

Members should consult the diagram below when given cover.



If a pupil is absent, what do I do? (Northern Ireland)

When a pupil is absent, the teacher should record the absence using the school registration system.

NASUWT members will ask once for a note from returning absent pupils during registration.

Members will record the code for the reason of the absence contained in the note on the school's IT system.

If no note is provided, NASUWT members will not contact parents to chase up the reason for the absence.

Can I be asked to invigilate an exam? (Northern Ireland)

Teachers should not undertake invigilation of public examinations.

This instruction does not extend to internal exams, the arrangements for which should be agreed under instruction 1.

The exception would be a practical or oral examination which requires a specialist teacher to be present. In this case, the time needed to carry out this activity should be clearly identified in the teacher's individual directed time budget.

Can I be asked to act as a scribe during an exam? (Northern Ireland)

No. This is covered by instruction 4:

'Members (unless paid a specific teaching allowance and time is allocated on their individual Directed Time Budget) will refuse to carry out any routine non-Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) administrative or clerical tasks.'

Do I have to make samples of pupils' work, including internal assessments available to others? (Northern Ireland)

No. This is covered by Instruction 21:

'Members will refuse to co-operate with the scrutiny by other staff of pupils' books, nor conduct scrutiny of the books of pupils of other staff.'

Some schools periodically collect samples of pupils' written work. Such practices are often described as 'book looks', 'book scrutinies' or 'book audits'.

Book looks are often used as a strategy by schools to form judgements about the effectiveness of teachers. This action instruction is intended to prevent the abusive use of these practices to form erroneous judgements about the performance of teachers.

Should NASUWT members take part in pupil tracking which can include assessing and recording pupil progress on multiple occasions over the school year? (Northern Ireland)

This is covered by the bullet point in instruction 1:

'This includes refusing to comply with any existing or new marking, assessment, homework and tracking policies which have not been agreed with NASUWT and are not included in members' Directed Time Budget.'

NASUWT believes that tracking assessments outside mid-year (Christmas) and end-of-year tests (summer) generate excess workload for teachers and members should refuse to participate in them.

Members will only write one annual report comment for each pupil.

Your school may decide that for some pupils, (Year 10, 12 and 14), this report writing may happen mid-year (Christmas). If this is the case, members will not make a second written comment at the end of the year (summer) for these groups of pupils.

Members without an individual time budget are instructed not to participate in this activity at all.

How much time should I spend marking, uploading and writing reports of pupils' assessments to SIMS? (Northern Ireland)

The time you are to spend marking, uploading and writing reports is limited to the actual time specified in each teacher's individual time budget.

This will vary from teacher to teacher depending on the number of pupils taught and the nature of the subject to be assessed.

Members are instructed to spend only the time allocated in their individual time budgets for these activities and to stop this activity when they have exhausted their allocation of time, even if they have not completed the activity for all pupils.

Members are instructed not to accept changes to their individual time budgets for the specific purpose of redirecting members to carry out or complete this task.

Members without an individual time budget are instructed not to participate in this activity at all.

What meetings are included in those 'limited to one meeting per term of no more than one-hour duration'? (Northern Ireland)

Reference to 'meetings' includes any meeting which you are directed to attend outside the normal pupil session times.

NASUWT recommends that the principal nominate the one meeting per term which members will attend. Where the principal does not nominate this meeting, members should attend the first meeting as it appears on the calendar.

Members are not to attend any further meetings outside the pupils' session times for the remainder of that term.

Members may attend meetings during the normal pupil day that are allowed for within a competent time budget or where cover arrangements have been made. Teachers' PPA time is not to be used for such meetings.

I had a meeting last week. Does this count as my one meeting per term? (Northern Ireland)

Any meeting since the start of term counts towards this instruction.

Do I have to accept an instruction to remain on school premises outside the pupils' session times when not attending meetings covered by instruction 8 or during PPA time? (Northern Ireland)

No. Under the action instructions, members can choose to carry out their duties at a place of their choosing.

However, pre-existing duty arrangements which are related to safeguarding of pupils, e.g. school bus duties, are exempt from action.

Teachers who are not engaged in pupil contact time should not be part of the plan to safeguard pupils in the event of a critical incident.

Just as teachers cannot be part of a safeguarding plan of pupils during the teacher's lunch break, so they should not be expected to be part of a pupil safeguarding plan when they are not teaching pupils.

Safeguarding of pupils during a critical incident should ensure that pupils are continually supervised. This should require their class teacher to stay with their teaching group.

What do I do if the principal has replaced an INSET day with a parent teacher meeting or open day? (Northern Ireland)

NASUWT members are instructed to attend only one parent teacher event per year outside normal pupil sessions.

Please note that the five professional development (Baker) days are considered outside the normal pupil session times and members are not to accept the use of these five professional development days for such events.

However, schools have at their disposal five additional school development days beyond the five professional development days. When a school uses a day or part of

a day that would normally be a pupil session time for parent-teacher events, NASUWT members will attend these events.

Open nights/days that occur outside the pupils' session times are currently exempt from this action but arrangement for these events must be agreed with NASUWT at school level under the provisions of instruction 1.

I am in a school that is in formal intervention and is seeking to exit it and I need to submit a school development plan. What should I do? (Northern Ireland)

Where a school is in formal intervention, the elected NASUWT Workplace Representative should [contact NASUWT](#) to discuss the specific situation in the school.

If no NASUWT Workplace Representative has been elected in your school, please contact your [Local Association Secretary](#) as a matter of urgency.

I am a head of department or curriculum area leader and I have been instructed to provide my line manager with targets and target evaluations of my area of responsibility. What should I do? (Northern Ireland)

This is covered by action instruction:

'Members, including principals and vice-principals, will refuse to complete any part of the School Development Plan (SDP).'

Department or curriculum area targets and evaluations are a critical aspect of school development plans. If asked to provide any material that is part of the school development plan, members are instructed to refuse this request.

I teach in a special school. Should I participate in Q Skills? (Northern Ireland)

In special schools, members need to meet and agree collectively if they want to participate in Q Skills in their special school.

Members should only agree to participate in Q Skills if the time taken to complete all aspects of this participation is included in their individual time budget.

What data should principals supply to the DE or employing authority or any DE-sponsored 'arm's length' body? (Northern Ireland)

Principals **should only** provide data where a failure to do so has the potential to negatively impact the payment of teacher and support staff wages.

Principals should continue to facilitate the sending of the Annual Census and the monthly returns and the signing off on supply teachers through NISTR.