

News Release

Association of Teachers and Lecturers

Annual Conference • 21 - 24 March 2005 • Torquay



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For education correspondents / newsdesks

Teachers debate whether to take strike action against proposed pensions scheme changes

Delegates at ATL's annual conference tomorrow will show their disgust at the proposed detrimental changes to the Teachers' Pension Scheme, and debate possible courses of action including industrial action. An online survey of ATL members found that 87 per cent of teachers intend to press on with the letter writing campaign organised by the TUC in a joint campaign with 19 other unions. Members are also willing to set up meetings with their local MPs to get a commitment for action against the proposals.

According to ATL member, David Hytch:

“There is a moral, if not contractual, *imperator* to maintain the status quo for those already teaching, since they joined the profession in that expectation.” He also points out that new entrants to the profession may think twice about becoming teachers in the light of the proposed changes to pensions.

Teachers have been shown to suffer from stress and depression due to pressures of the job and delegates will urge Conference to monitor the effects of the changes on teacher recruitment and retention in a profession that requires the health and energy associated with youth. With two-thirds of teachers in England over the age of 40, retention will be even more difficult and costly for government. A young male teacher who has been in the profession for seven years said:

“After seven years, let alone 37 years of teaching, I'm barely in a fit state. Our students deserve more. Who will foot the bill for ill-health retirement and sickness absence?”

A 56-year-old teacher commented:

“I know that I could not carry on in my job for very much longer. To be frank I do get senior moments and look at the people in my secondary school and wonder who the Government are visualising as this super-human workforce of senior staff.”

Teachers entering the profession from 2006 will be £100k poorer and ATL, via the Public Service Pensioners Council, is calling for increases in the state retirement pension for older pensioners who suffer the most from additional costs for work they are no longer able to carry out themselves, like gardening and home maintenance.

Ends

Notes to Editors

1. The Government's planned changes include:
 - i) The imposition of a normal pension age of 65 for new entrants to the profession from 1.9.2006. For existing teachers the pension age will rise to 65 in respect of service after 1.9.2013;
 - ii) A requirement to work longer to receive the same levels of benefit currently payable at 60;
 - iii) A worsening of the pensions entitlement of current and future employees; and raising the age limit to the age of 55 for premature retirement from 2010.

2. The 20 public sector unions involved are as follows:

Association of College Management
Association of Teachers and Lecturers
Association of University Teachers
Educational Institute of Scotland
First Division Civil Servants
Irish National Teachers Organisation
National Association of Head Teachers
National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education
National Society for Education in Art & Design
National Union of Teachers
NIPSA
Principals' Professional Council
Prison Officers Association
Prospect
Public and Commercial Services Union
Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association
Secondary Heads Association
UCAC
Ulster Teachers' Union

3. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers' Annual Conference is taking place at the Riviera International Conference, in Torquay, from Monday 21 March to Thursday 24 March 2005.

4. The ATL Annual Conference will be broadcast live on the internet at: www.atl.org.uk
5. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) is an independent, registered trade union and professional association, representing approximately 160,000 teachers, lecturers and support staff in maintained and independent schools, sixth form, tertiary and further education colleges in the United Kingdom.
6. ATL exists to protect and improve the status of teachers, lecturers and other professionals involved in delivering education to further their legitimate professional interests.
7. ATL is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC). It is unaffiliated to any political party and seeks to work constructively with all the main political parties.
8. ATL members receive a regular magazine (Report) reflecting ATL policy and other issues affecting the education sector. If you would like to receive a copy of this please call 020 7782 1589.
9. Further information and all press releases are available on ATL's website: www.atl.org.uk