

Teachers seek ten per cent rise in pay

Striking teachers across Edinburgh have taken to the streets calling for an ‘across the board’ pay rise of 10 per cent.

Primary school staff in the capital walked out on Tuesday as part of industrial action taking place across Scotland after negotiations [failed](#) to reach a deal.

Teachers at secondary schools are due to follow on Wednesday with another walkout planned in Edinburgh on January 25 in a further wave of strikes, unless a new pay offer is agreed.

Secretary of teaching union Educational Institute of Scotland’s Edinburgh branch, Alison Murphy, said many teachers are “giving up” and “going to do other jobs” because of poor pay and terms and conditions.

She said a pay rise of 10 per cent for all teachers is “what we need to stop us getting poorer”.

Among the teachers who gathered for a picket in the rain outside local government body COSLA’s headquarters on Tuesday was Louise Bishop, an additional support needs teacher at schools across Edinburgh.

And she insisted teachers would not back down from their demand, and said the rise was vital to them being able to do their job.

“Teachers are not valued enough, our pay needs to be restored

to a reasonable pay," she said. "Teachers are very important to society – we aren't just teaching numeracy and literacy, we are health and well-being, we nurture, we are here from early years from birth to university.

"Last year we had to settle for 2.5 per cent which was very very low. The decision was made by the unions to accept on the basis that we would then be going to the 10 per cent this year. So this hasn't just suddenly come out of nowhere.

"The claim is about pay, but it's not just about pay – it's about terms and conditions and conditions in the classroom. We can't be good teachers, we can't solve societies ills, we are doing this for the kids.

"We're not going away, we're not going to just suddenly cave tomorrow. We will get our 10 per cent."

Addressing the crowd, Ms Murphy urged teachers 'to fight'.

"If we surrender, they are going to keep kicking us in the teeth, they are going to keep depressing our pay," she said. "They've been trying to do it for over a decade and we have to fight now – because if we don't fight, we lose."

Unions rejected an offer of five per cent which included an increase of up to 6.85% for the lowest-paid staff.

Mr Murphy told the Local Democracy Reporting Service: "Coming back and telling us: 'instead of five per cent you can have 5.04 per cent' and claim that that's an improvement – we're teachers, we do numeracy and we're not putting up with that nonsense.

"We are here today because teachers are sick and tired of getting poorer and poorer and poorer every year. Our salaries keep going down, austerity has driven our terms and conditions into the ground and we can't put up with it any more.

"We don't want to be here, we'd rather be in our classrooms –

we actually like teaching children. But we can't keep putting up with this, we have to fight and we have to fight back.

"We're here to make COSLA and the Scottish Government know they need to pay us a fair wage.

"We need across the board a decent pay rise – we are in this together and we need to have an undifferentiated pay rise, absolutely."

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon warned her government has "no more money" to offer teachers, although education secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville said she would leave "no stone unturned" to bring about a quick resolution, whilst acknowledging there remained "some distance" between unions and the Government.

by Donald Turvill

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