

## **ATL and NUT**

Plans to establish a new education union will be agreed following ballots of ATL and NUT members which close on 21 March 2017. The new union will be called the National Education Union (NEU), and will include teachers and support staff in membership.

## **Why is the NASUWT not part of the NEU?**

The NASUWT is already the largest union representing teachers and headteachers/principals throughout the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and Gibraltar. As such, we are dedicated to serving the interests of the teaching profession and to putting teachers first.

## **Doesn't the NASUWT agree that 'professional unity' is important in securing a stronger voice for teachers?**

The NASUWT is a strong, influential and united teachers' trade union. One thing we can be sure of is that the NEU will not be that. Instead, it will combine teachers and support staff who, whilst all being important members of the schools' workforce, will have different concerns and interests.

The most effective way to secure a stronger voice and the best deal for teachers is by being united as members of the only union dedicated to teachers – the NASUWT.

Whilst the ATL and NUT use the language of ‘professional unity’, the NEU is being established in order to compete against the NASUWT and other unions representing the education workforce.

### **Is the NASUWT opposed to working with support staff?**

The NASUWT isn’t opposed to working with support staff. Indeed, we have a strong track record of working alongside support staff unions to improve the status, pay and conditions of support staff who are key members of the school workforce. Many teachers and support staff will remember that it was the NUT who opposed working together in the interests of support staff and teachers when they chose repeatedly to oppose the formation and the work of the School Workforce Social Partnership in England and Wales.

Dedicated support staff unions such as GMB, Unison and Unite, are best placed to represent the interests of support staff in schools and colleges and only these unions have national negotiating rights for school support staff.

The NASUWT remains committed to continuing to work closely with GMB, Unison and Unite.

## **Will the NEU become the largest teachers' union?**

The NEU will not be UK's largest teachers' union. Indeed it won't actually be a teachers' union. The NASUWT currently is and will remain the largest teachers' union, as the NEU, with a mixed membership of teachers and support staff, will be a general education union. Nor will the NEU be the largest education union.

Teachers who are members of the NEU will not be members of a teachers' union. Instead, they will be members of a general education union that will include a wide range of staff (teaching and non-teaching) working in schools, colleges and universities.

Only the NASUWT exclusively has in membership those who have a current contract of employment to teach, lecture or instruct.

The NASUWT believes that teachers have distinct conditions of service, distinct professional standards and entry qualifications, and distinct professional roles and responsibilities. Being a member of the NASUWT means that teachers can be assured that they will be led and represented by a union that understands fully the issues affecting teachers and that is wholly and solely committed to putting teachers first.

## **Will the NEU be an effective union for school support staff?**

Neither the NUT nor the ATL are recognised as unions representing support staff for the purpose of negotiations with employers. In accordance with a national agreement to which both the ATL and NUT are signatories, only GMB,

Unison and Unite can represent support staff in collective bargaining with employers and in matters concerning redeployment or redundancy. Support staff who pay to join the new union therefore risk becoming second-class members of the NEU.

### **Will it cost teachers less to join the NEU than to be a member of the NASUWT?**

It is already the case that membership of the ATL and NUT is more expensive than membership of the NASUWT by around £30 a year on average. Only the NASUWT offers totally free membership (without strings) for members in their first 12 months of membership. This is in addition to free membership for student teachers. No other union offers better value for money compared with the NASUWT.

It should also be borne in mind that an agreement between the ATL and NUT means that membership subscription rates for the NEU could increase by a further 25% once the new union has been formed, according to decisions taken by both the NUT and the ATL at their special conferences on the formation of the NEU held in November 2016.

With the NASUWT, there are no hidden costs (e.g. the NASUWT does not require members to pay a local membership levy), meaning that the price you see is the price you pay.

## **Will the NEU be better able to campaign on the issues of greatest concern to teachers?**

We believe that the NEU is likely to be more distracted from the issues that matter to teachers. Unlike the NASUWT, the NEU will also have to deal with competing requirements of their teacher and support staff members.

The process of merging together the ATL and NUT unions to form the NEU seeks to bring together members of unions that have very different traditions. This is likely to mean that the new union will have to cope with internal divisions and tensions, which, together with the inevitable reorganisation and restructuring which arises from merging two organisations, will mean that over the next few years (or longer) the NEU will be distracted from focusing on the everyday concerns of its members.

The formation of a new union will also mean that members' money will be spent on costly reorganisation, restructuring and back office deals as the ATL and NUT establish new internal structures. This will be time-consuming and costly, and divert resources away from campaigning on the concerns of teachers. It is also likely to mean that staff in the ATL and NUT will be more focused on concerns about their own jobs in a new union structure than on their members.

**Won't the NEU be more effective than the NASUWT in campaigning for improvements to teachers' pay, pensions and conditions of service?**

Only the NASUWT is engaged in national industrial action in response to attacks on the pay, pensions, working conditions and jobs of teachers. Indeed, no other union has taken more industrial action to defend teachers individually and collectively. The NASUWT has unwaveringly focused on the interests of members at a time when teachers have faced unprecedented attacks on their pay, pensions, working conditions and job security.

Instead, the ATL and NUT have been spending their time in recent months campaigning to persuade government, employers and the public that schools cannot afford to employ or pay teachers and support staff as a result of their highly misleading Schools Cuts website. Their campaign has already led to the confirmation of plans by some schools to cut the jobs of teachers and support staff.

It is also important to bear in mind that the establishment of the NEU will mean that members of that union could not automatically take part in national industrial action to protest against government cuts or changes to pay, pensions, working conditions or jobs. Whilst the NEU would need to ballot members for national industrial action on these issues, all members of the NASUWT, including all new members, are automatically protected by our continuing national industrial action and trade dispute with ministers.

If members of the ATL and NUT are currently engaged in local industrial action, this will come to an end once the NEU is established.

## **Should NASUWT members attend meetings organised by ATL or NUT to find out more about their plans?**

We are aware that the ATL and NUT have issued campaign material to their representatives, which calls on them to engage in a series of school-level actions, including appealing to NASUWT members to attend their meetings and to join the NEU.

This 'poaching' of members from another union is not acceptable under the Rules and obligations of the TUC. Unions that engage in poaching of members of other unions may be subject to disciplinary action by the TUC. The NASUWT has made representations to both unions reminding them of their obligations in this regard and has drawn this to the attention of the TUC.

NASUWT members should notify the NASUWT as a matter of urgency if they are approached to attend meetings organised by the ATL or NUT or asked to join these unions or the NEU.

## **Why should teachers continue to join the NASUWT?**

The NASUWT is led by teachers for teachers. The NASUWT is the largest union dedicated to representing teachers and headteachers/principals. Whether you teach in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales, or in the Channel Islands, Isle of Man or Gibraltar, you can be a member of the NASUWT.

Aside from being great value for money and providing first class legal support, CPD and a wide range of exclusive membership benefits, the NASUWT offers the most competitive membership subscription rates and membership is also free for 12 months for all new members.

No other union offers teachers more. And, whilst others are focusing on other priorities, our priority is, and will always be, putting teachers first.