

**Anti-apartheid heroes**  
London educators who took on  
racist regime. See page 20.

**Care4Calais**  
Supporting desperate  
refugees. See page 26.

**Benjamin Zephaniah**  
Tributes to the people's  
poet. See page 30.



# educate

March/  
April 2024

Your magazine from the National Education Union

**The right  
to strike**  
Challenging  
outrageous  
new law





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## Educate

March/April 2024

NEU members from across the country join thousands of fellow trade unionists in Cheltenham to protect our right to strike (see page 13).

Photo by Jess Hurd [jesshurd.com](http://jesshurd.com)

# Welcome



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WELCOME to the latest issue of Educate magazine.

Inside, we highlight inspiring stories of courageous members doing amazing things. Take the incredible story of teachers who travelled to apartheid South Africa in the 1970s to support the African National Congress. Our feature on the London Recruits tells a tale of selfless individuals challenging a racist regime thousands of miles from home, at considerable personal risk (page 20).

We meet members putting their weekends on hold to provide much-needed assistance to vulnerable refugees in Calais. See our interviews with volunteers for Care4Calais on page 26.

I hope that the news – which NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede highlights in his opinion piece on page 11 – that members have already raised more than £60,000 for our Save the Children Gaza appeal also makes members proud. Like Daniel says, educators are by instinct humanitarian – and have refused to look the other way as Palestinian children suffer under Israel's siege.

Closer to home, the NEU is launching a preliminary ballot for industrial action over pay and funding in March. The Government looks set to offer a pay rise of between one and two per cent this year, but your union – as well as the NASUWT – is prepared to take action to show educators' strength of feeling.

Achieving a 6.5 per cent pay rise last year took a lot of work, and the first hurdle is winning a resounding Yes vote in the ballot. Make sure you vote Yes and ask your workmates to do the same. See pages 6-7.

Like many of you, I was saddened to hear of the untimely death of the brilliant Benjamin Zephaniah. He did so much to inspire adults and children through his poetry, novels and activism. Educators and students share their memories of him on page 30.

We've got all your regulars – a class act, a cartoon, puzzles and pets – and don't forget the lighthearted side of being an educator (we need to laugh in these tough times), with classroom confidential (page 41).

Hope you enjoy it. Do send in your thoughts and comments to [educate@neu.org.uk](mailto:educate@neu.org.uk)

**Max Watson**

Editor, Educate







INDEPENDENT, THE SUN

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## The rest is history

### 30 April 1963

The Bristol bus boycott starts, in protest against the Bristol Omnibus Company's refusal to employ Black or Asian staff. It lasts four months. Youth worker Paul Stephenson and the West Indian Development Council lead the ultimately successful boycott, and are credited with helping to inform the Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1968, which made such race discrimination illegal.

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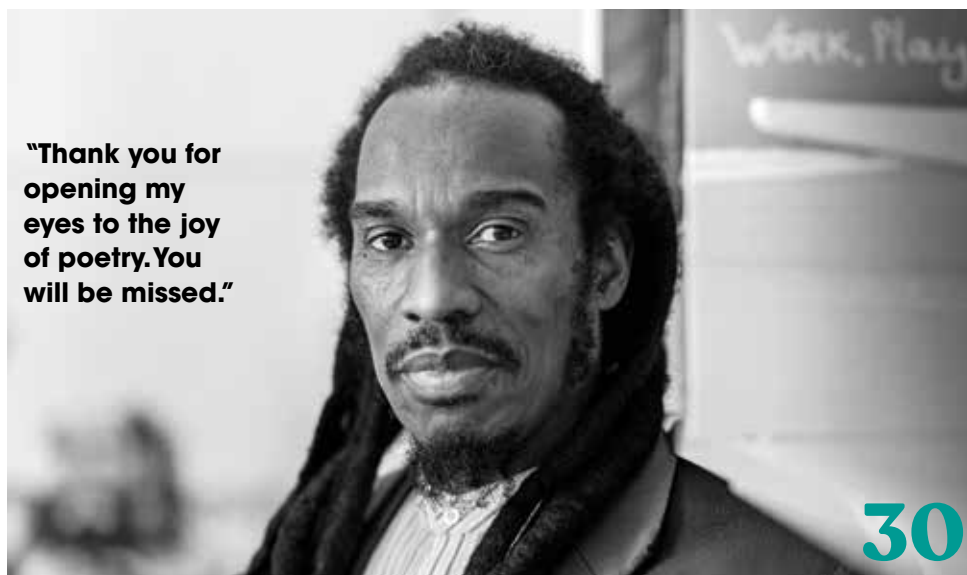
**'People have to see this and be outraged.'**  
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### 20 Teachers who fought apartheid

Work of activists shows a 'better world is possible' (above right).

### 26 Care4Calais

Life-changing trips to Calais to support refugees (above left).



**"Thank you for opening my eyes to the joy of poetry. You will be missed."**

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PHOTO by Adrian Pope

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### 50 Final word

Brighton and Hove integrates sustainability and environment throughout the curriculum.

**The union is urging teachers in England and Wales to vote for more action this year, if the Government fails to award teachers a fully funded, above-inflation pay rise for 2024/25.**

**As part of our Pay Up '24 campaign, the union will launch a preliminary electronic ballot on 2 March (see box).**

Sister union the NASWUT has also announced that it will carry out an indicative survey of its membership to see if it is prepared to strike over pay and workload.

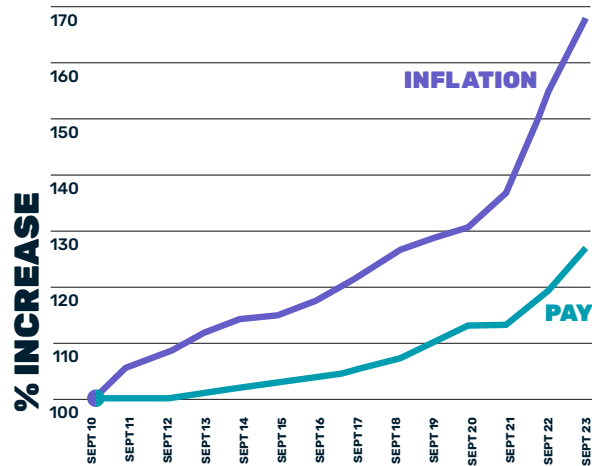
The decision to ballot, taken by the NEU national executive, follows indications from Education Secretary Gillian Keegan that she is likely to give teachers a pay rise of just one or two per cent in 2024/25.

In a letter sent to the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) in December, Keegan said she wanted it to consider the "historically high" nature of the award teachers received last year "in light of the extraordinary macroeconomic context" when making recommendations for this year.

The letter adds: "It remains important that the STRB carefully considers the Department's [for Education] evidence on the impact of pay rises on schools' budgets,

# VOTE YES FOR P

## TEACHERS' PAY COMPARED WITH INFLATION



alongside consideration of the Department's evidence on a fair pay award."

NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede and other education union leaders met the Education Secretary in early February to discuss the situation in our schools, including the recruitment and retention crisis, the lack of specialist teachers, the worryingly low number of new trainees, and chronic workload.

Daniel also spoke about the NEU's claim for a significantly above-inflation pay rise, as well as additional funding for schools and colleges to ensure the future of education.

But despite education union leaders taking the time to meet the Government, Gillian Keegan offered nothing. Nothing to stop the exodus from our profession and the chronic shortage of funds in our schools. The Government appears not to be prepared to listen so, once again, we must be ready to act.

"Last year, members' faith and dedication won more funding for schools and a significant uplift in pay," said Daniel. "In 2024, we need you to stand firm again to demand fair pay, decent school funding and fight for the education system our pupils deserve.

## 'LIVING FROM PAY CHEQUE TO PAY CHEQUE'

MATHS teacher and NEU rep Ella Fairley and her husband, also a teacher, are relying on her private tutoring work to pay for their weekly food shop. Their monthly bills have increased by £400 in two years – which doesn't include increases in the cost of food and petrol.

Ella, who has been a teacher for seven years, said a one or two per cent pay rise this year would have a detrimental impact on all teachers, adding that because there is nothing to suggest the cost of living is going to stop going up in the next year, such a small pay rise won't go far.

It's really stressful, added Ella, who has hypermobility, a condition affecting the joints that causes chronic pain and fatigue. She has regular physio appointments to

manage it and special equipment at work. Ideally, she would like to work part time, to benefit her physical and mental wellbeing, but it isn't financially viable and won't be unless teacher pay is restored.

On top of a 45- to 50-hour working week, including Friday and Sunday evenings, Ella has a 50-minute journey after work on Mondays to tutor two children. "We need the money to cover basic living expenses," she explained. "It makes an already tiring week even more exhausting, especially as someone with chronic fatigue.

"It's so disheartening to be in a profession where we have responsibility for shaping the future generation, but are struggling financially and living pay cheque to pay cheque.



"Our salaries don't reflect our immense dedication, expertise, and long hours. This is why it is vital that we fight for a fair pay increase from the Government that reverses the real-term pay cuts since 2010 and reflects the important work we do."

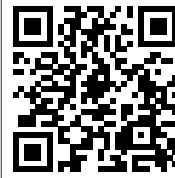
# PAY AND FUNDING

## SIGN UP FOR OUR ONLINE MEETING

OUR strikes last year showed that we are strong when we work together and act collectively.

It's really important we get a strong turnout in our preliminary ballot, so we can prove to the Government our campaign is not over and that we will push to get the pay rise you deserve and our education service needs.

Come to our **ONLINE MEETING VIA ZOOM ON THURSDAY 29 FEBRUARY AT 5PM** to hear directly from NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede about why the next few weeks will be so important and what you can do to help get the vote out in your school or college.



Asking members to take strike action is never easy and we are prepared to do everything in our power to solve the crisis in our schools. But educators and the children we teach deserve better, so our campaign continues.”

### FINANCIAL STRUGGLE GOES ON

Despite winning a 6.5 per cent pay rise for 2023/24, after eight days of strike action last year, the monthly financial struggle for most

educators is far from over. Many have found the extra money was immediately swallowed up by mortgage or rent hikes, energy and travel costs. Food prices also continue to rise, with many of our members using food banks.

The combined impact of falling teacher pay since 2010 and the worst cost-of-living crisis for decades means yet another pay award well below inflation for 2024/25 would hit members hard.

## ‘IMPACTS DISADVANTAGED PUPILS MOST’

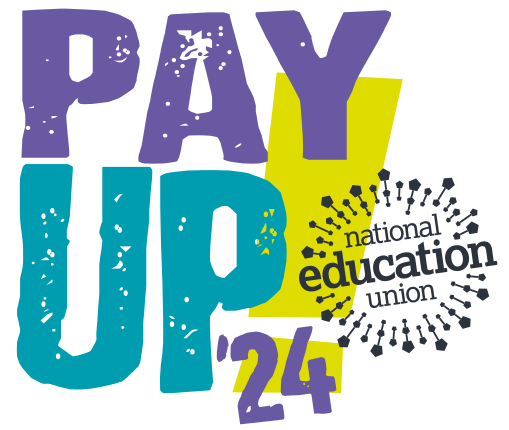


CHRIS Dutton (pictured above, during last year's pay campaign), a deputy head teacher at a secondary school in Wiltshire, urged members to vote in the ballot.

“It's really important to make your voice heard. It shows you are prepared to fight for proper funding for your school and college. We know how the lack of funding impacts on all areas of the curriculum and

impacts on disadvantaged children the most,” he said.

“Any offer has to be funded and one or two per cent will not be sufficient to attract trainees or help retain the staff we already have. Recruitment and retention is becoming more challenging every year and schools are not able to recruit at all levels, including head teachers.”



## LOOK OUT FOR YOUR EMAIL BALLOT SOON

**OUR preliminary electronic ballot opens on 2 March and closes 28 March.**

It will ask whether teachers in maintained schools and sixth forms across England and Wales are prepared to take part in industrial action in support of winning additional funding to secure a fully funded, above-inflation pay rise that constitutes a meaningful step towards a long-term correction in pay.

Teacher members in Wales will also be asked whether they are prepared to take strike action around the Welsh Government's proposed changes to the school year.

Salaried trainees (employed by your school) and early career teachers or newly qualified teachers in maintained schools in England or Wales will be included in the preliminary online ballot.

We will also be consulting support staff members as soon as we know the National Joint Council (NJC) employers' pay offer.

We need you to get ballot-ready by ensuring your contact details are up to date. To update your details, visit [my.neu.org.uk](https://my.neu.org.uk)

In the next few weeks NEU reps will be organising workplace meetings for NEU members, to update them on the campaign, the preliminary ballot and member consultation.





CELEBRATED children's author and activist Michael Rosen joined NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede (both pictured above) to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day on 29 January, alongside members from NEU London region. At the NEU headquarters, Hamilton House, Michael shared a collection of poems, pictures, letters and documents from his book *The Missing* – his personal story of a 30-year search for two uncles who “went missing” during the Holocaust.

PHOTO by Kois Miah

## MPs' Ofsted report falls 'well short'

**MPs have recommended that Ofsted scraps single-word judgements, but they have failed to grasp the “true scale of the problem” with the inspectorate, NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede has warned.**

His verdict on the Education Select Committee's report on reforming Ofsted, which was published in January, was that while MPs have suggested some important changes, they do not go far enough.

“These changes fall well short of the reforms we need and will not significantly reduce the pressure on schools,” he said. “This report clearly shows that the relationship between Ofsted and the profession has broken down.”

The committee's report is based on an inquiry into Ofsted undertaken last year following the suicide of head teacher Ruth Perry.

Committee chairman Robin Walker said: “The bulk of the evidence we received expressed widespread and deep concern about how the system works. We repeatedly heard that Ofsted has lost the trust of a significant

chunk of the teaching profession and leaders. Current and former inspectors suggested the organisation has become overly defensive.”

He added that on the “totemic issue” of single-word judgments, Ofsted and ministers should heed the widespread calls for change.

In early January, Ofsted's new chief inspector Martyn Oliver announced a two-week pause in inspections (see below),

while inspectors undertook mental health training. A snapshot poll of 4,668 NEU members on 13 January found 97 per cent believed the pause was inadequate to safeguard school staff in future.

One member who responded to the poll said: “No matter what training they have and how they come across, we will still be scared of them – it feels like our jobs are on the line.”

### NEU: Inspectorate clinging onto its delusions

THE union has accused Ofsted of “clinging onto its delusions” about its role and impact, after the inspectorate announced a range of changes in response to the coroner's report into the suicide of head teacher Ruth Perry.

NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede said Ofsted's planned actions “do not match the scale of problem it inflicts on schools”.

Included in its response, published on 19 January, was a pledge that all inspectors would be given mental health training so they can spot signs of anxiety and stress in educators during inspections. It also announced a Big Listen exercise, to gauge from educators, parents and children what they believe Ofsted's “strengths and weaknesses” are, which will be carried out by the end of June.

But Daniel said: “Ofsted claims that its work helps make sure children have the highest quality of education and care. This is the reverse of the truth and, as long as Ofsted believes it, the most important things will not change.”



York's Westfield Primary School is piloting free school meals for all in 2024, while Burton Green Primary pupils are all being given free breakfasts. Search 'York Hungry Minds'.

# Free school meals for another year in London

**THE NEU has won another victory in its Free School Meals for All campaign, as Mayor of London Sadiq Khan announced in January that funding for the scheme would continue into the 2024/25 school year.**

Funding per school meal will increase to £3, from the national Government standard of £2.53, to ensure that pupils throughout the capital have the high-quality, filling and healthy food they need to enable them to learn.

The scheme was launched in September to support families with the cost-of-living crisis and more than 280,000 children in the capital have benefited.

Sadiq Khan said: "I've spoken to teachers over the course of the last few months, and I've seen the difference the scheme makes in improving pupils' concentration, attendance and learning."

NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede said: "Child poverty leads to wasted human creativity. We see it in our classrooms every day. By extending free school meal provision by another year, the London Mayor will help alleviate that burden. Teachers and school



Mayor Sadiq Khan at Torridon Primary School, Lewisham

PHOTO by Greater London Authority

leader s know the difference a hot, healthy, free school meal makes to pupils' lives."

He urged NEU members to continue to support the NEU and the Daily Mirror Free School Meals for All campaign, which is calling on the Government to extend provision to all primary school children in England. "If it can happen in London, we know that it can

happen in Hull, it can happen in Manchester, it can happen in Birmingham, so keep up that pressure," he said.

The campaign has garnered support from charities, community groups, MPs and celebrities, including Kate Winslet, Gary Lineker and Olivia Colman.

■ Visit [freeschoolmealsforall.org.uk](https://freeschoolmealsforall.org.uk)

## Eight days of action over 'flawed' investigation into claims against rep

TEACHERS at a south London secondary school have taken eight days of strike action (pictured) to demand that their NEU rep – suspended since last September – is reinstated.

Alex Turpie has been employed at St Ursula's Convent School in Greenwich for 22 years and a rep for 15. His colleagues and fellow NEU members believe he is being

targeted by the school after opposing plans by the diocese to become an academy.

The staff's anti-academisation campaign forced the proposal to be dropped in 2022.

Michael Gavan, NEU regional officer for Greenwich, said: "Alex is an excellent teacher and outstanding union rep. He is popular with staff, students and parents. Senior

management don't want him at the school because they know that he will lead the fight to stop academisation."

Alex was suspended on 1 September for alleged gross misconduct following a complaint by a parent that their child had been shouted at and bullied. A senior staff member, appointed to look into the claims, took three months to complete an investigation and failed to speak to any pupils in the classroom at the time of the alleged incident.

A disciplinary panel met in early January, which concluded that the school's investigation had been flawed. It ordered another one be carried out by Greenwich Council. But three weeks after the hearing was adjourned, the investigation had yet to begin. Members have agreed to suspend their action while the new investigation takes place.

■ A petition by NEU members, calling for Alex to be reinstated immediately, has been signed by more than 1,000 people, among them former pupils.





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# 'An entire generation faces a calamitous future'



**NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede says educators worldwide are distressed by the plight of Gaza's children.**

IN my meetings with members and my visits to branches and picket lines, we discuss many things. Educators' pay, the state of school buildings, and the incompetence and cruelty of Ofsted are frequent topics.

But for the first time in my experience, members, wherever I go, also want to talk about an international issue – the growing catastrophe that is Gaza.

As educators, they are deeply touched by what is happening. They are distressed by thoughts of what may be coming next. Some of them recite the figures. In October, there were 737 schools in Gaza, with more than 625,000 pupils and over 22,500 teachers. As Educate went to press, all schools were closed, and 350-plus were damaged or destroyed. Every single one of Gaza's universities was in ruins. More than 4,000 students and 200 educators had been killed. Nearly two million people had been displaced, and 17,000 children were living unaccompanied or separated from their parents.

As the International Court of Justice noted, quoting the words of a high official of the United Nations: "For children, the past 12 weeks have been traumatic. No food. No water. No school. Nothing but the terrifying sounds of war, day in and day out." The absence of aid on the scale that is needed makes famine and disease a terrifyingly real prospect.

## **Generations of traumatised children**

As educators, it is not difficult to understand the long-term consequences for children's physical and mental health of trauma, the death of loved ones, and a dearth of food and water. An entire generation of children faces a calamitous future.

South Africa's case to the International Court of Justice included the words of a co-ordinator for Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders). "I'm speechless when I try and think of the future of these children. Generations of children who will



Save the Children staff in Egypt load a truck with water supplies for Gaza

PHOTO by Save the Children

be handicapped, who will be traumatised. Children in our mental health program are telling us they would rather die than continue living in Gaza now."

And as educators, whose instincts are humanitarian, members are appalled by the willingness of political leaders to let this situation go on. Why do arms sales continue? Why has the verdict of the International Court of Justice not restrained their behaviour? How can Britain, the USA and other states cut off funding to United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA), the agency on whose work Palestinians depend for their lives?

## **Trade unions of the world stand united**

Teachers' and trade union organisations across the world are of one mind in their response to the crisis. Where many governments behave like bystanders or accomplices, these organisations take a different view. Education International (the world federation of teaching unions) has called for a ceasefire. So has the British TUC. So has the American Federation of Teachers, and

our sister organisation in France, the FSU. Educators have played a prominent part in demonstrations across the UK.

## **Please donate to our Gaza appeal**

These demands for action are essential. As a union of educators, there is also much else we can do. The emergency appeal we have launched with Save the Children has raised more than £60,000. We need that figure to rise ([justgiving.com/campaign/neu-gaza](https://justgiving.com/campaign/neu-gaza)).

We want our Government to reverse its shameful decision to play politics with UNWRA funding. As Save the Children and other charities point out, millions of people's lives have been put in danger by the action of some donor states. As educators, concerned for the welfare of families and children, we will continue to call them out.

Over the next months, as we go about our national campaigns on funding, pay, child poverty and school inspection, we will face up to all the problems of our own failing system. But our consciences will not for a minute let us forget Gaza.

## Pension at 58 for long Covid teacher

AN educator diagnosed with long Covid is believed to have become the first NEU member to retire through ill health on their teacher's pension, after winning an appeal against the Department for Education (DfE).

Gabby Curley (pictured), has experienced overwhelming tiredness and frequent illness, including strep A, meningitis and sepsis since contracting Covid in July 2020, forcing her to take long periods of sick leave.

In April last year, with support from the NEU, she applied for ill health retirement from her job as a teacher at a pupil referral unit in Denbighshire in north Wales.

Initially, the DfE, which is responsible for the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS), told Gabby she was not eligible for ill health retirement.

But she appealed and, just before Christmas, the DfE informed her she would get an enhanced pension. This amounts to the full entitlement up until she stopped working and half of what she would have got had she worked up until the normal retirement age of 67.

"Now I've got my pension, I feel secure and fortunate," Gabby told Educate. "But I still have to manage the long Covid all the time and, when I have a bad day, I go to bed early and tell myself it will pass."

"My GP Jon Potter has been absolutely amazing throughout this, writing a really thorough report for my

TPS application, and the support I have had from the long Covid clinic I referred myself to has also been so important."



## Teachers tell of six months of cramming for year 6 SATs

**SHOCKING figures from campaign group More Than a Score have shown the impact SATs are having on primary schools.**

Its research has found that practice for SATs – which don't take place until May – had already begun before Christmas in over two-thirds of year 6 classrooms.

The survey, of more than 1,300 teachers and heads, found that 71 per cent of year 6 teachers have already done practice papers under exam conditions and almost half of teachers are already feeling under pressure to deliver results. And some pupils are already

worried about failing, according to 43 per cent of respondents.

More Than a Score spokesperson Alison Ali said: "We know that the vast majority of schools do everything they can to make year 6 a stimulating learning experience for ten- and 11-year-olds."

"But heads, teachers and pupils are at the mercy of a system which places too much emphasis on one set of tests taken under exam conditions."

"Cramming, practice papers and pressure to pass are not the way to encourage a love of learning. It's time to change the system."

■ Visit [morethanascore.org.uk](https://morethanascore.org.uk)

## Benson strike wins 'everything we asked for'

TEACHER and support staff members at Benson Community School in Birmingham have taken ten days of strike action against unacceptable practices, including bullying and a top-down management style.

After seven days of action and three dispute meetings at ACAS, the school and employer agreed to all demands from members on 21 December – including a reduction in book scrutiny, the re-opening of a staff room, an external investigation into alleged bullying, and health and safety improvements. However, members took three more days of action in January as the school and employer failed to fully implement the resolution agreement.

The strike was led by NEU joint school

reps Susan Virgo, Linda Yates, Mandy Adamson and Bev Sutherland. New members joined on the picket line, while parents and the community have been very supportive.

The Benson joint reps said: "After months of the school and council doing nothing to resolve the situation, members decided that the best way forward was to take collective action. The Benson Bees – as our NEU members call themselves – have remained united and strong throughout."

"We decided to make a stand against unacceptable management practices that had created such a toxic working environment. We won everything we asked for and will strike again if things are not fully implemented."



Benson Bees on the picket line



# ‘We do everything to make society function’

**NEU members from across the country joined thousands of fellow trade unionists on 27 January in Cheltenham to protect our right to strike. NEU members came from as far away as London, Chester and Penzance to the South West spa town.**

The whole trade union movement marched together against the Government’s attack on millions of workers’ fundamental right to strike.

Members also marched in solidarity with the GCHQ workers who, 40 years ago, were told by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government to resign their union membership or be sacked. Marchers commemorated the anniversary of their struggle and ultimate success following a long campaign.

The NEU Bristol samba band led the education bloc of the march, with many beautiful banners leading district groups.

NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede marched with members and spoke at the rally. He said: “We don’t want or need minimum service levels, and we will defend our democratic freedoms from this failed Government. Trade unionists build houses,



Trade unionists marched through Cheltenham to protest against minimum service levels

drive buses and trains, grow food, tend to the sick, care for the infirm, educate the young, put out fires – we do everything that makes society function.

“The sort of minimums our legal system should be concentrating on are minimum jail terms for the people responsible for the Horizon scandal and dodgy PPE deals.”



Castle Wood Special School rep Tara Todd (right) on a demo during last year’s PayUp! dispute

NEU members in Coventry are “ecstatic” after defeating an attempted academisation of their school. Castle Wood Special School management announced in September its intention to join the Thrive Education Partnership. Members raised concerns but were ignored, and so with the support of their branch they moved to an indicative ballot, with more than 90 per cent voting Yes.

When NEU Coventry announced its intention to formally ballot for strike action, management backed down completely.

Tara Todd, NEU rep at Castle Wood, told Educate: “We’re ecstatic about this win. Our members keep talking about the power of people together, and our membership continues to grow. “I genuinely swell with pride when I think about what union members at Castle Wood have achieved.”



## News in brief

### Union recognition at Roedean

MEMBERS at Roedean School, Brighton, are celebrating after winning a ballot for union recognition and collective bargaining rights.

Members voted by 95 per cent in favour of recognition in a Central Arbitration Committee-run ballot at the school. An agreement with the school means members will negotiate their pay, hours, holidays and pensions.

### Welsh child poverty strategy

THE Welsh Government's updated child poverty strategy, including several education commitments, has received a mixed response from the NEU.

Wales senior policy officer, Mary van den Heuvel, said: "While NEU Cymru welcomes the strategy, which we agree should be a priority, we would have liked clearer targets and milestones."

The NEU is part of a coalition, led by the Bevan Foundation, calling for a more coherent benefits system in Wales.

### Pay rises for 24 colleges

PAY rises of up to ten per cent have been negotiated by the NEU and the University and College Union for members at further education colleges across the country.

In all, 24 colleges have agreed pay deals for 2023/24, with just seven yet to make acceptable offers to staff.

NEU members at three colleges – Derby, Halesowen and Southport – had balloted successfully for strike action last year if their employers failed to make a decent offer.

At Cambridge Regional College members will receive a seven per cent increase; at Exeter College 6.5 per cent; Middlesbrough College 6.5 per cent;

Preston and Wiltshire colleges seven per cent.

### Government being sued over Ella's air pollution death

ROSAMUND Adoo-Kissi-Debrah, whose daughter died from asthma caused by air pollution, is suing the Government.

Ella, who died of a fatal asthma attack in 2013 aged nine, is the first person in the UK to have air pollution recognised as a factor in their death. Her mother is suing three government departments – environment, health and transport – in pursuit of the 'right to clean air'.

Ravi Mehta, the barrister instructed by Hodge Jones and Allen, the law firm representing the family, said in written arguments presented to the court: "While this does include a claim for damages, it is not about money. Rather, the focus of the claim is about seeking vindication for the death of Ella, a child."

### Disabled members' conference

THE NEU disabled members' conference, Fighting for Disability Rights: Together under the Social Model, takes place from 31 May to 2 June at the Radisson Blu Manchester Airport Hotel. There will be workshops, panel discussions and plenary sessions focusing on disabled activism and self-organisation.

The event is a great way for disabled members to meet others in their district or region and to network with colleagues employed in similar workplaces. The closing date for applications is 16 March.

■ Visit [neu.org.uk/events/disabled-members-conference](https://neu.org.uk/events/disabled-members-conference)

### Reasonable adjustments

THE NEU's disability equality toolkit is designed to upskill and educate members, leaders and work colleagues on disability equality rights and building more inclusive schools and colleges.

A new resource has been added: Reasonable adjustments and case studies. It provides examples of adjustments that can be made in your workplace to support a range of disabilities, alongside case studies that show how reasonable adjustments made a real difference to their workplace environment.

■ Visit [neu.org.uk/disability-toolkit](https://neu.org.uk/disability-toolkit)



IN September, the chair of governors at Cheadle Hulme School announced they were consulting on withdrawal from the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS). There was no workplace rep, so I offered to step up.

A consultation committee was set up, but the day before half term, we were handed Section 188 notification letters, which allow the employer to 'fire and rehire' staff on new terms and conditions.

This galvanised members and, by December, we moved to a formal strike ballot, which we won. With the strength of feeling now clear and a mandate for strike action in place, the governors withdrew from consultation in January.

By Stuart Taylor (pictured with Bruno, posting his ballot paper), NEU rep, Cheadle Hulme School





**THE NEU took united strike action for fair pay alongside 16 other public sector trade unions in Northern Ireland on 18 January. It was estimated to be one of the biggest days of industrial action in 50 years.**

Pauline Buchanan, regional secretary of NEU Northern Ireland, said: "Teachers are the backbone of our education system, and it's disheartening that we find ourselves in a position where a strike is necessary to emphasise the urgency of a fair pay deal."

"We remain open to negotiations, and we urge the Government to act swiftly to avoid disruption to our students' education."

Teachers participated in rallies across Northern Ireland. Edel Molnerney, a teacher and president of NEU Northern

Ireland, added: "As educators, our commitment to students is unwavering. However, we also deserve fair compensation for the invaluable work we do."

"This strike is a collective effort to ensure that the voices of teachers are heard, and we are hopeful that a just resolution can be reached."

"The strike underscores the vital importance of sending a clear and resounding message to the Government about the urgency of addressing teachers' pay concerns."

PHOTO by **Brian Morrison**



## News in brief



THE NEU's LGBT+ educators' conference took place from 2-4 February in Birmingham, and was attended by more than 360 members. The conference theme – Celebrate, Educate, Protect: Together – was demonstrated across the weekend with breakout sessions, discussions on rights and an awards ceremony hosted by non-binary activist and artist Travis Alabanza.

PHOTO by Jess Hurd

### 6.5% pay rise for support staff

SUPPORT staff members at Sandbach School in East Cheshire have won a big pay rise.

Richard Vaughan, NEU rep and groundsperson at the school, explained that previous pay increments for support staff had not kept pace with inflation, nor aligned with the National Joint Council (NJC) pay awards given at other Cheshire East schools.

Most support staff were earning minimum wage, so they demanded a 6.5 per cent increase, matching the teachers' pay award following the NEU's 2023 national strikes.

Just before an indicative ballot was launched, in November 2023, the governors agreed to grant all support staff a £2,000 or 6.5 per cent pay increase, whichever was greater.

"I was over the moon," said Richard. "It took us collectivising and saying: we can stand up and fight for what we want and take local action if necessary."

### 'Staff feeling confident again'

NEU members in east London are celebrating successful negotiations with their employer following one day of strike action in January.

Since September, a breakdown in relations between staff and students at South Chingford Foundation School

had led to health and safety concerns.

Following strike action and talks at ACAS, new policies have been put in place regarding behaviour, staff cover and collective bargaining.

NEU joint district secretary for Waltham Forest, Pablo Phillips, told Educate: "Staff are feeling good, they're feeling confident again. They're glad that matters have been resolved and are looking forward to working with the trust to make children's education better."

### New head agrees to tackle behaviour issues at Barry school

A JOINT union strike over behaviour has been postponed after successful negotiations.

NEU and NASUWT members at Pencoedre High School in Barry, Wales, held two days of strike action in January and February. Staff had raised concerns over teacher safety as a result of poor pupil behaviour, including violence and abuse, and a lack of support from senior leaders.

Following a successful ballot for strike action, the executive head resigned and a new one was appointed.

"This dispute is not just about the safety of teachers and support staff, it's also about the wellbeing of pupils," said Debbie Scott, NEU senior Wales officer.

After successful talks with the new head, NEU members agreed to postpone their third day of action to give management time to implement changes, including more support from the senior leadership team and prioritisation of staff wellbeing.

### Pay, workload and pupil safety

MANAGEMENT at a free school multi-academy trust in east London has agreed to make changes following strike action by NEU members.

Staff and parents joined forces on a 150-strong picket line on 7 December, calling for changes to unacceptable pay and working conditions.

Canary Wharf College runs two primary schools and one secondary. Concerns have been raised about issues including student safety, pay discrimination, excessive workload and an unreasonable management style, which had led to staff leaving. More than 300 parents signed a letter voicing concerns about student safeguarding and staff wellbeing.

The strike action led to talks with ACAS and a number of positive changes, including an agreement to implement the Burgundy Book and school teachers' pay and conditions document (STPCD), and reduce workload.



Kate Tremain works as a supply teacher and an NEU officer in Devon. She is leading a campaign to persuade multi-academy trusts in the county to employ supply teachers directly.

## ‘Paying directly and to scale benefits everyone’

### What do you love about your job?

AS a supply teacher, every day is different. I love the fact that I can have no idea what I’m doing when I wake up, and within five minutes of turning up at school I have to turn my brain on fast and furious. It works well with my ADHD, as routine has a dulling effect on me.

I love teaching a variety of subjects. I am an English specialist, but rarely teach my subject. I trained as a teacher in my 40s after an eclectic career as a journalist, personal development workshop leader and author, so I have a lot of experience outside of education. My broad subject knowledge helps hugely when teaching many different subjects.

Supply really is a career choice for me. I think there’s a misconception that all teachers in supply are looking for a permanent job. I am only 51 and have no intention of applying for permanent roles or retiring.

### What do you love about being in the union?

The support, the camaraderie and being a part of making a broken system better for educators and children.

### What have you been up to lately?

I took on the role of supply officer last March. The disparity between supply teachers and our permanent colleagues needs to change.

I started out as an agency worker on a shockingly low daily rate. It made me realise how unfair the system is. Supply work comes with its own skillset and stresses, yet is woefully underpaid with no security, no access to the Teachers’ Pension Scheme (TPS) and no sick pay. As qualified, and often highly experienced, professionals, we should have access to all that our permanent colleagues have.

After two terms of agency work, I approached my school about being employed directly, and also about the benefits of paying to scale, which would bring loyalty from teachers – and therefore benefit the school and students. They agreed to both things and



Kate Tremain

in September the multi-academy trust (MAT) I work for raised its daily rate to incorporate experience by paying to scale from M1 to M6.

Directly contracted supply teachers get access to the TPS and are able to work at other schools across the MAT. I am massively proud of my employer as this is not a common practice.

### What’s important to you right now?

I’m organising a campaign to approach MATs in Devon to prioritise directly contracted supply teachers – to cut out agencies, keep education budgets within school systems and stop ludicrously huge sums of money going to the private sector.

### What do you do on your day off?

I still write in my spare time, so I make sure I only work four days a week at most – an added benefit of supply. I’m writing my third novel.

### Tell us something we don’t know.

I’m a tutor for The Oracy Workshops and go into schools to teach speaking and listening skills to year 8 and 9 students. It’s often a massive confidence boost to the kids and reminds me why I became an educator: to educate and inspire holistically, not just to focus on exam results but to inspire students to become the best ‘them’ they can be.

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# STEMETTES



# Requires improvement

Words by Michael Rosen  
Illustration by Dan Berry

To make education better,  
it's often said,  
is why we're so lucky  
to have Ofsted.

On no account say  
that it's quite barmy  
to have had a system  
based on the army.

'Look out chaps!  
Sergeant-major's here!  
Obedience forged  
by the rule of fear.

Is it really  
beyond imagination  
to run education  
through co-operation?

Experienced teachers,  
knowledgeable and wise,  
coming to schools  
to discuss and advise.

But is there a rumour?  
Perhaps an 'initiative'  
that education doesn't  
have to be punitive.



Feature



British trade unionists picketing South Africa House in London on 15 February 1973, calling for the recognition of African trade unions



# London's secret war against apartheid

In the 1970s, young, white men and women in the UK were recruited to carry out covert missions against the apartheid regime in South Africa. Sarah Thompson spoke to two of them.

**IN 1948, following the election of the National Party, the existing discrimination against Black people in South Africa was entrenched in law when apartheid was introduced.**

The African National Congress (ANC) led the fight against the brutal regime, but by the late 1960s the group was in crisis. Most activists and leaders had been killed, imprisoned or forced into exile. The South African government believed it had stamped out resistance to apartheid for good. Its message to the country's majority Black population was that the ANC had been defeated and racial segregation was permanent.

Oliver Tambo – president general of the ANC – was one of those in exile. Determined to keep the resistance movement alive, he had the idea to mobilise young, white people and use them to carry out covert missions against the regime.

He asked Ronnie Kasrils, a white South African based in London, to lead the

operation. He reached out to people through trade unions and the London School of Economics, where he enrolled as a student, to recruit around 60 people to the cause.

## Steve's story

Steve Marsling was one of Ronnie's London Recruits. He, and fellow activist Sean Hosey, had been introduced to Kasrils through the Young Communist League, an organisation he had joined a couple of years earlier.

At 20 years old, Steve boarded a flight to Cape Town carrying a false-bottomed suitcase full of concealed leaflets and explosives.

"I'd never been on a plane before," he recalls. "The furthest I'd been was a few Millwall away games – you know, Ipswich and Brighton. Suddenly they're flying me halfway across the world."

Appalled by apartheid they agreed to become involved in the campaign, remaining undeterred when Kasrils warned about the consequences if caught – torture, solitary

confinement and a minimum prison sentence of five years for political prisoners.

## ANC leaflet 'bombs' in Black areas

Posing as tourists, Steve and Sean's mission was to plant and detonate homemade leaflet bombs which, when they exploded, would shower pro-ANC literature into the air sending a message that the campaign against apartheid was alive. The bombs were placed in train and bus stations and areas that Black South Africans would pass through on their way back to the townships.

Bombs were made using an explosive device linked to a basic egg or kitchen timer. It was not without risk. Steve recalls one nerve-wracking occasion when a bomb almost exploded prematurely.

"I set the timer for a 20-minute delay, and it started to wind straight back. It was ticking so I got my fingernail in between the detonator and slowly wound it back. Sean was white as a sheet. I could have lost an arm."

The leaflets were a huge success, says Steve. "At first people were terrified, because it's a massive sound. But when they saw what they were, they were cheering and whooping, dodging police who were trying to confiscate the leaflets."

While they were nervous about being caught, Steve and Sean understood that they were protected by the colour of their skin.

The genius of Tambo's plan was that it used the regime's ideas against itself: "The regime's weakest point was the fact it believed all white people supported it. White people didn't need passes, were free to go wherever they wanted and could do whatever they liked without suspicion." **continued on page 23**

## London Recruits, then and now...



Steve



Mary



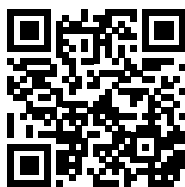
PHOTO by Jan Křikava

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REGULATOR



# Save the Children



continued from page 21

And while the reality of the racist regime in South Africa was difficult to witness, it also strengthened their resolve.

"We were frightened, but we were motivated, because we saw how 80 per cent of the South African population was being treated. It was vile. There were signs saying 'blanc/non blanc' in parks, cinemas, toilets. I shed a few tears of rage."

The following year, Steve was asked to undertake a second mission. But he had recently begun teacher training and was about to start his first placement, so Sean offered to go alone. But the ANC activist he was meeting had turned informant and Sean was arrested by armed police.

Sean was severely tortured and, after eight months of solitary confinement, brought to trial. They offered to let him go if he denounced the ANC, but he refused. "He did the full five years in Pretoria station prison. A very brave lad, and a great friend of mine to this day," says Steve.

The London Recruits were one part of a larger movement against apartheid, he adds.

"As the movement grew and South Africans began getting unionised, they didn't need outside internationalist help. What we did was a small part in the battle for liberation, but at the time, we have been told, it was very important."

## Mary's story

Mary Chamberlain was recruited with her then partner Carey Harrison, in 1972. They sailed to Cape Town, posing as a migrating couple, with 22 packing cases with false bottoms containing copies of pro-ANC material, including 5,000 comic books designed as a recruitment tool.

"South Africa was desperate to recruit young white Europeans to set up shop in the country. So, we were answering that call," says Mary.

On arrival, they rented an apartment and posted materials out to people ranging from ANC members, to journalists and opinion formers, often well aware that their post would be intercepted "so the secret services would see that the ANC was back in business," Mary explains.

Mary had no fears about being caught initially. "I think it was that arrogance of youth," she admits. But on arrival, they collected their packing cases from the bonded warehouse and realised that the false bottom of the cases was clearly visible.

continued on page 25

## Teaching resources

A London Recruits pack has been created to support educators in teaching about apartheid, the wider historical and political context, and the men and women who campaigned against the regime.

The interactive learning activities can be adapted to suit primary and secondary students and will encourage exploration of ideas around inequality, racism and the role of collective action.

Inspirational personal accounts give an insight into the experiences of those who were part of the fight against apartheid. The pack includes photos and examples of campaign materials which bring the resource to life for students.

■ Visit [manifestopress.coop](http://manifestopress.coop)



This young anti-apartheid supporter was asking cricket fans to support an arms embargo against South Africa outside the St Helen's cricket ground in Swansea in 1965. Inside the ground the all-white South African cricket team was playing against Glamorgan.



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**continued from page 23**

"It was terrifying. I think we both felt the same thing – we're rumbled."

Fortunately, the man operating the warehouse hadn't spotted it, but Mary says this was the first of several "hairy moments" when they felt close to being discovered. The task took several weeks as, to avoid any suspicion, envelopes and stamps had to be bought in small batches from different shops, and the leaflets posted a few at a time from around Cape Town.

Like Steve, Mary found the treatment of Black South Africans difficult to witness, particularly as she had to pretend it was something she agreed with.

"Wherever you went, there were separate queues – Black workers queuing for buses, Blacks-only lavatories. They were invariably poor, undernourished, under clothed. It was

appalling to see, and just reinforced our convictions that apartheid had to be defeated by whatever means possible."

## **Utter secrecy from friends & colleagues**

London Recruits operated in five major cities during 1967 and 1971, but were completely unaware of each other's existence. Secrecy was critical, and decades later Mary remained silent about any part she had played.

In 2012, she attended the launch of a book edited by Ken Keable – *London Recruits: The Secret War Against Apartheid* – and discovered a former work colleague, Joy Leman, in attendance. Mary had worked as a lecturer at the London College of Printing between 1977 and 1987 and she and Joy were close.

"We team taught and shared an office, I would go to parties at Joy's house, she would

come to parties at mine," Mary says. "For ten years we had worked closely together and never uttered a word. And there we both were."

When she looks back on the time she spent in South Africa, Mary says it feels almost unreal. "Neither Carey nor I can remember how long we actually spent there. It must have been about six weeks. I think we were just living on adrenaline."

Although the London Recruits played an important part, Mary says they were "a small cog" in a much broader struggle against the apartheid regime.

"One of the things that we do stress is that we were not there in any kind of white saviour role. We were quite deliberately using the colour of our skin in order to subvert the regime. That was our role. We were just very honoured, and I think very fortunate to be there at the right moment."

## London Recruits film: 'Reminds us a better world is possible'

A feature-length drama about the experiences of London Recruits between 1967 and 1971 is out on general release in the summer. Educate talked to director Gordon Main.

### **What is it about the story of the London Recruits that interested you?**

The key draw was threefold. First, there's the genius of Oliver Tambo's plan and the spirit of the wider South African resistance to the dehumanising processes of apartheid. Tambo wasn't seduced by the brutality of the situation into hating white people. He kept his humanity and calmly used his enemy's prejudice against itself.

Second, the London Recruits themselves. The open-hearted answer: "Yes, I'll go" from so many young people. International solidarity at its best. They are great, thoughtful, fun people to be around, and it was the privilege of a lifetime to tell their story.

Third, to meet and work with Ronnie Kasrils – a lion of the resistance, and every bit as charismatic and active today as he was at 26 and acting as Tambo's recruiting sergeant in London.

### **Why is it still an important story?**

We can still see today what happens when whole peoples are dehumanised



Director Gordon Main (left) and Ronnie Kasrils

and 'othered'. The South African resistance and its international allies remind us that a dramatic change in direction and a stop to the oppression are achievable. And that a better world is possible.

### **How would you describe the style of the London Recruits film?**

That's really a judgement for audiences to make, but it was my ambition to make a documentary thriller.

I wanted the story to be urgent and immersive – just as it was for these

brave young women and men at the time. I wanted us to go with them as they risked all to stand shoulder to shoulder, in active resistance with the oppressed.

### **Were there any challenges in the making of the film?**

One of the biggest was having to make decisions about whose story made the final cut. That was heartbreaking at times. There are so many great stories. I urge everyone to buy books on the subject and read around.

### **How important was the work of the London Recruits to the wider anti-apartheid movement?**

The recruits are the first to downplay their role, but at a critical time – 1967 to 1972 – they were one of only a handful of conduits between the people of South Africa and the exiled leadership. There were no tweets or Instagram posts. The recruits had to physically, and at great risk, get word to the people.

**Visit** [londonrecruits.com](http://londonrecruits.com)

## Feature

**WHEN Robin Tear joined an NEU delegation to Calais to support refugees in May 2016, he had no idea of the impact it would have on him. Volunteering with the refugee charity Care4Calais, Robin and a group of fellow educators spent the weekend in the Calais refugee camp – known as the Jungle – handing out food and clothing, and teaching in the school.**

Five months later, the Jungle would be demolished by the French authorities, forcing thousands of already displaced people out of the camp without any alternative accommodation. The Jungle may have gone, but the refugees remain. A report from Human Rights Watch in 2021 estimated that there were still at least 2,000 people, including 300 unaccompanied children, staying in and around encampments in Calais, living in freezing, unsanitary and dangerous conditions.

### **A life-changing trip to Calais**

“That trip left an indelible impression on me,” says Robin. “I thought: more people have to see this and be outraged about it. Let’s make sure educators know that this is happening on our doorstep.

“I had to move beyond feelings of outrage to actually doing things and making a difference. I wanted to bring others along so they would understand the situation in Calais and that refugees are treated with such inhumanity.”

Robin, a politics, citizenship and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) teacher in London, began organising regular trips to Calais, alongside other educators in his NEU region.

He estimates that he has now been to Calais at least 20 times.

### **Refugee tents raided at 5.30am**

He believes passionately in raising awareness of the harsh conditions and mistreatment refugees experience – including at the hands of the French authorities who, Robin explains, will regularly tear open tents, confiscate sleeping bags and force displacement even in winter at 5.30am.

“The authorities’ attempts to dehumanise and scare refugees are as strong as ever,” he says.

Forced to flee their homes and families due to war and persecution, and often having travelled hundreds of miles on foot, the situation is desperate. Which is why some

# ‘Meeting refugees in an indelible impress



## Care4Calais supports refugees in the UK, France and the difference their work makes to the lives of some

refugees will then risk the dangerous journey across the Channel to seek asylum in the UK.

However, despite the media portrayal of hordes of people arriving, only a tiny percentage of refugees reach the UK. Most seek asylum in other countries. According to United

Nations High Commissioner For Refugees statistics, as of November 2022 there were only 231,597 refugees, 127,421 pending asylum cases and 5,483 stateless persons in the UK, including recent Ukrainian refugees – that’s less than half a per cent of the UK population.



# Calais left on me'



(Left) A refugee campsite in northern France PHOTO by David Levene

(Right) Robin Tear

(Above) Volunteers distributing food, mending bikes and helping refugees with reading and writing



**CARE 4 CALAIS**

Belgium. Emily Jenkins talks to volunteers about of the most vulnerable people in society.

For those refugees who do make it to the UK, while they are seeking asylum – which can take months or even years – they are not allowed to work and are expected to survive on £37.75 a week to cover food, transport, clothing and toiletries.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak continues to push forward a bill which will send many UK asylum seekers directly to Rwanda. A plan that, in November, the UK Supreme Court ruled was unlawful.

**continued on page 29**

## What is a refugee?

ACCORDING to the UN Refugee Convention, the definition of a refugee is someone who 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country'. (Article 1, 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees)

# Could you spare time to help the NEU Trust Fund?

The NEU Trust Fund is looking for new trustees to oversee the work of the charity. Volunteering as a trustee is a good way of developing new skills while supporting a cause that matters to you.

## What is the NEU Trust Fund?

The NEU Trust Fund is a charity which provides confidential support and financial assistance to members in need. The fund is there to assist current and former members, as well as their dependants, in times of illness or hardship.

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No previous experience of being a trustee is necessary. The Trust Fund needs trustees with sound judgement, enthusiasm and commitment. Trustees need to be able to commit to attending five board meetings per year, either in London or online.

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NEU3252/0124

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Please note: changes to subscriptions including payment holidays during maternity, shared parental and adoption leave can only be processed in the current subscription year (1 September 2023–31 August 2024). We are unable to backdate requests for previous subscription years.



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**continued from page 27**

Robin, who was joint winner of the Blair Peach award at the 2022 NEU annual conference for his work supporting refugees, believes the British Government's treatment of refugees and asylum seekers is "racist and hostile". He feels angry at the different treatment refugees from Ukraine received after Russia's invasion, in comparison to refugees from non-white countries fleeing persecution or war.

## **'People with hopes and dreams'**

"The Government has shown that it can be compassionate towards a group of refugees, but if you're from other countries, such as many African and Asian countries, they want to deport you to Rwanda. It's inhumane. It's evil. It divides society. And that's why we want to show that these refugees aren't just numbers. They are people with hopes and dreams and names."

Organising within his London region, trips to Calais are designed to allow educators to fit volunteering around their work schedules. "We tend to leave on a Friday night or Saturday morning, and get back late Sunday," explains Robin. "It can be tough because you're back at school the next day, but it's so rewarding." In convoys of four people per car, volunteers also often bring donations of food, coats and warm clothing collected by their school communities.

Robin believes educators are in an ideal place to raise awareness of the plight of refugees and the "inhumane conditions" they are forced to live in.

"Educators are consistently working to create an inclusive school environment, and an inclusive society is something a lot of educators are striving for. That's why working to support refugees of all nationalities is really important. Because it's essentially what we fight for every day," he says.

**■ Contact your local district or branch to find out more about NEU delegations to Calais.**

**■ To donate and fundraise visit [Care4Calais.org](https://care4calais.org)**

**■ The NEU has developed a set of resources to help schools support refugees. Visit [neu.org.uk/refugee](https://neu.org.uk/refugee)**

# **'An honour to spend time with him'**

**Claire Oliver (right) is an English teacher in Whitstable, Kent. In November she made her second visit to Calais with NEU members from Kent and London.**



ON a Saturday morning we left at the crack of dawn to make the trip to Calais. Arriving at the Care4Calais warehouse, the morning was spent sorting and packing food and donations, and cleaning, preparing, and loading the van with supplies.

At the midday briefing we were told there had also been a hit-and-run the night before and two refugees had been killed with more in intensive care. We silently absorbed this devastating news.

Saturday's distribution was food packs. I assisted with monitoring the line. In the name of fairness, it was critical to ensure no one lined up twice or pushed in and that order was maintained. Dealing with desperate people can potentially mean an element of disorder so, for safety, we needed to be alert and beacons of fairness.

We visited what is known as the old hospital site, but it reminded me of a wilderness that time had forgotten. The thick mud squelched. A mist of wetness, like a soggy blanket, engulfed the sliver of shrub land.

I have an enduring image of pair upon pair of feet, worn and beaten from traversing thousands of miles to end up in Calais in distressingly inadequate footwear. Many had sandals and no socks. The rain penetrated their flimsy clothing and the mud clung to their legs, with nowhere to dry off and nowhere to rest.

My second task for the afternoon was to teach English. We had a container of donated books, pads of paper and a few pens. Abdul, a young

Sudanese man, cautiously came towards me and asked if he could read. He was warm and polite, and his English was very good. He told me his brother had said it was important that he learned English well and so, whenever there were volunteers visiting the site, he would make the most of their presence.

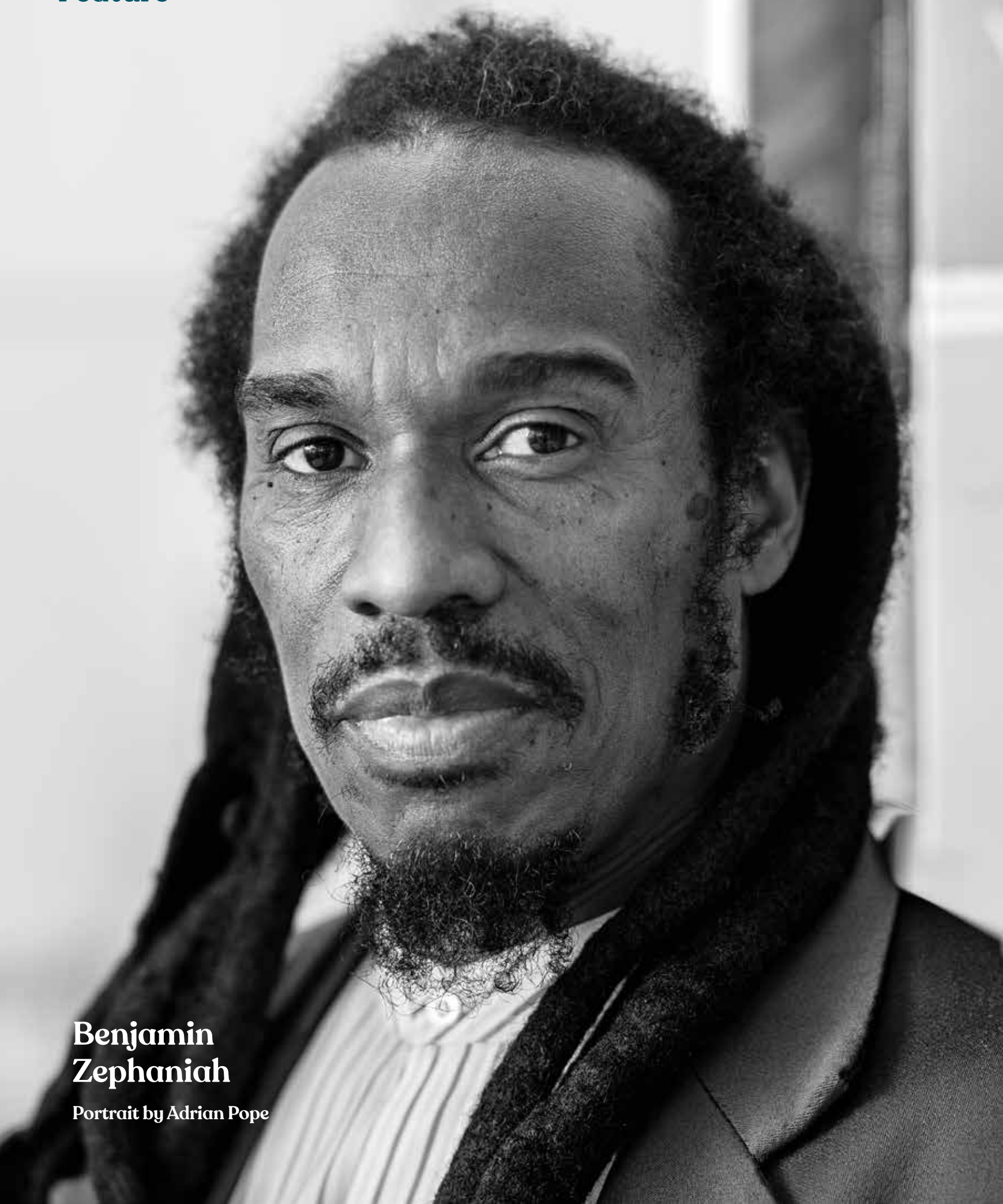
Abdul is a university student; he was studying microbiology and showed me all the modules he had learnt before fleeing his home. He had not spoken to his mother for a very long time and did not know if she was alive. He said he was determined to speak English fluently as he hoped to continue with his studies.

We read, we laughed, we cried. He was an extraordinary young man, and it was an honour to spend my time with him. I stand in awe of him and all the men I met that Saturday afternoon. I met an engineer, a software developer, a journalist, more university students and schoolboys. They were all alone, none of them were with family members, all displaced because of the brutal violence and humanitarian crises in their countries.

I am a mother, I have two children of similar ages to Abdul and his friends. I cannot comprehend the atrocities that they have experienced. Abdul will be etched upon my mind for a long time to come.

Departing that afternoon filled me with sorrow. We would be back on Sunday morning to repeat much of what we had done on Saturday, but at a site in Dunkirk. We were told to prepare ourselves, as we would be seeing mothers and young children.

Feature



**Benjamin  
Zephaniah**

Portrait by Adrian Pope



# ‘An inspiration to all... from the small to the tall’

Benjamin Zephaniah was an inspiration to generations of educators and students alike. **Sally Gillen** records some of their memories.

**ON the day she heard that poet and author Benjamin Zephaniah had died, Ivya Scott took a collection of his poetry down from her bookshelf.**

Inside the copy of *We are Britain*, he had signed his name and added a simple yet profound message, “stay true”.

“That captures him,” says Ivya, joint secretary of NEU Ipswich and south Suffolk and a member of the Black educators’ organising forum. “Stay true to who you are. He spoke about being a Jamaican, a Rastafarian, a vegan, a supporter of refugees and a supporter of children all over the world.”

Her lasting memory of Benjamin, who died on 7 December, is of him giving six signed copies of *Made in Britain* to her and colleagues who were working during the 1990s to support the education of children from ethnic minorities in Newham, east London.

Incredibly supportive of the team’s work, he gave permission for his poem *The British* to be included in the culturally inclusive curriculum book they were putting together.

“His poems are magic,” says Ivya. “They say to children you can be whatever you want to be. In Newham, we had a unique opportunity to work with Benjamin, who was a local and so down to earth. Children could say, ‘I want to be a poet, like Benjamin Zephaniah.’”

His books can be found in school libraries and classrooms across the country. There are countless Zephaniah classes named after him.

## ‘Igniting the spark of inspiration’

An inspiration to generations of children, Benjamin was famously generous with his time. His agent, Jodie Hodges, says she received between five and ten requests from schools and individual children every week. If unable to visit, he would send back a kind letter.

“Benjamin really enjoyed spending time with young people,” she adds. “He liked seeing the spark of inspiration be ignited and I think could relate to the children who were struggling, as he had done in school himself.”

Ivya remembers children at one of the schools she was working

with writing to Benjamin, who then visited. “The children were ecstatic,” she says. “He honoured their letter.”

At the Tower Hamlets primary where Jo Pruden, now retired, worked in the 1990s, Benjamin visited a handful of times.

“The first time, he performed for the whole school and was a great hit,” says Jo. “I was teaching year 6 at the time and they asked if he would come back again as they were leaving soon. He did, and in my classroom we set up a poetry party, where the children read their poems to him, and he pointed out bits he liked.”

“We were putting together a book of the children’s poems, and he wrote a poem about our school, which was published at the front of the book. Wonderful and generous. He was a brilliant role model. He made the children feel special and that they could do wonderful things.”

Teacher and oracy leader Cardella Bryce says Benjamin’s novel, *The Windrush Child*, hugely relatable to many children who come from migrant families, has been a big hit.

A huge fan of Benjamin’s work herself, Cardella penned her own tribute, a poem written in his style. Summing up his wide appeal, it begins: “Benjamin was an inspiration to all. A voice to his people – from the small to the tall.”

“He was unapologetically himself,” she says, citing as an example his refusal of an OBE in 2003.

Teacher and regular *Educate* contributor Jon Biddle says it was after seeing Benjamin perform that he understood, for the first time, the potential impact that poetry could have in the classroom, the passion it could invoke, the changes it could bring.

His pupils are equally effusive. Year 6 pupil Phoebe says: “He was a really good performer and I’ve now read some of his books.”

And for Ava, in year 5, his poetry collection *Talking Turkeys* is always a good choice for poem of the day. “All the poems have a really good rhythm,” she says. “My favourite is *Little Sister* as it always makes me laugh.” The book is so popular, Jon replaces it every couple of years.

“Thank you, Benjamin, for opening my eyes to the joy of poetry,” he says. “You will be missed.”

“His poems are magic. They say to children you can be whatever you want to be.”

**Ivya Scott**



“Thank you, Benjamin, for opening my eyes to the joy of poetry.”

**Jon Biddle**

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## ‘Authoritarian’ MAT steamrolls community concerns



**Warwick Mansell**  
is a freelance  
education journalist  
and founder/writer of  
[educationuncovered.  
co.uk](http://educationuncovered.co.uk)

A PARENT complains that the education of her daughter, who has autism, has “gone backwards” under an academy trust, because the support for her needs has not been put in place.

Another warns that her daughter, who is also autistic, had been self-harming having been “punished and chastised for behaviours that she couldn’t help” at the same school, as she had struggled with “inconsistent and unfamiliar agency teachers and other changes”.

Readers might expect that an organisation running schools, when faced with this criticism, as this trust was on a regional BBC news programme, might respond by saying that it was concerned by these accounts, and that it would seek to look into and, if necessary, address them.

That, though, was not the reaction of the chain in question: South Bank Multi-Academy Trust, which runs Millthorpe School in York. Instead, it chose to attack the parents.

BBC Look North said the case was one of “several” that had been shared with it by parents of children with special needs at the school, with “many” saying provision had gone downhill after the trust changed support staff contracts in 2022, prompting teaching assistants to leave.

But, in reaction, “South Bank said feedback from parents has been overwhelmingly positive, and that complaints have come from a small number of unrepresentative voices. These claims simply do not reflect our warm and inclusive community,” the programme reported.

I have been covering this case for a while. Last year, more than 200 people signed a letter of concern about the loss of teaching assistants and the school’s behaviour policies. I feel it underlines the lack of meaningful accountability to local people that the multi-academy trust structure can encourage.

This particular trust has recently seemed

to believe that parents do not even have the right to debate its work in public. Last term, it sought to prevent a public meeting, which had been organised by local councillors to discuss problems at the six schools it runs in York, from taking place.

That gathering nevertheless went ahead, with the local Labour MP, Rachael Maskell, telling me afterwards that children at Millthorpe were “breaking down” because of the trust’s “authoritarian” discipline system. Michael Kearney, the NEU’s York district secretary, told the meeting that teachers were “so grateful” that these issues had been raised.

The trust then criticised Ms Maskell for raising these concerns in Parliament.

In arguing against the public meeting taking place, South Bank had stated that it was already accountable to the Government, Ofsted and its own board. The implication was that it did not need to be answerable to its community, in public. Speakers at the meeting strongly disagreed.

The academies set-up, with power resting entirely with central government and trusts, encourages such controversies. Will a new government look at this? It really should.

## Ask the union

### What do reps do and how much time does it take up?

I'M interested in becoming an NEU rep.  
How much work does it involve?

NEU reps are members who volunteer to take on a more active role – they are the heart of the union. You can choose how much time you dedicate to the role, and you may decide to share it with other people.

Whether you are in a school, college or another education service, being a rep is really rewarding and many of the skills you develop will be transferable to your professional life. The NEU provides training and support, giving you the opportunity to learn from and meet other NEU activists from different workplaces.

Your key tasks will be organising your workplace – holding meetings, keeping members up to date with NEU campaigns, and encouraging them to work collectively and campaign together on issues they care about.

■ Find more and sign up at [neu.org.uk/get-involved/reps](https://neu.org.uk/get-involved/reps)

### Can I have time off for my partner's IVF treatment?

I AM in a same-sex relationship and my partner is undergoing fertility treatment. We're not married, and the clinic would like me to be at the insemination so I can reconfirm my consent and feel involved in the process. Am I entitled to time off?

Unfortunately, there is no legal entitlement to time off for fertility treatment (IVF), whether you are undergoing treatment yourself or



A cohort of NEU members who had just completed their foundation reps training in the North West in January  
PHOTO by @NEUNW\_Region

attending an appointment to support your partner. However, the union acknowledges that IVF can be a time-consuming and stressful process, therefore we would expect employers to be reasonable and sympathetic in these circumstances.

The union's view is that employers should treat IVF treatment the same as any other medical appointments, meaning flexible working and/or unpaid/paid time off should be considered. Notably, NEU officers and reps have negotiated employer policies that offer up to 12 days' paid leave for an employee undergoing fertility treatment, and up to three days' paid leave for an employee who is the spouse or partner of a person receiving fertility treatment to attend appointments.

Ultimately, you should refer to your

contract of employment and/or any relevant policies for confirmation of your entitlement.

You should also discuss this with your workplace/local NEU rep, as they may be familiar with existing arrangements and can provide support if you encounter any difficulties with your employer.

## Contact us...

■ Please email your questions to [educate@neu.org.uk](mailto:educate@neu.org.uk)

■ If your question is urgent, please call the **AdviceLine** on **0345 811 811**

## Free CPD webinars for all NEU members

NEU members have exclusive access to our continuing professional development (CPD) webinars. Here are some of the courses coming up.

### Leadership – strategic thinking

Identifying opportunities, challenges and tools to develop strategic thinking skills in educational leadership.

**19 March** 4-5pm

### Primary – assessing reading

This session will consider the reading process in relation to theory; exploring problems in assessing reading and how

to overcome them; as well as current statutory assessments.

**20 March** 3.45-4.45pm

### Managing behaviour through effective classroom teams

Improve behaviour by cultivating good relationships through communication, voice control and body language.

**27 March** 4-5.15pm

### Leadership – courageous conversations

Designed for middle to senior leaders, this webinar will explore the consciousness, confidence and competence needed to

have courageous conversations that are often avoided.

**8 May** 4-5pm

### Leadership – building a culture of inclusion, effective deployment of support staff

Building acceptance, celebrating difference, exploring the importance of relationships and feeling safe.

**15 May** 3.45-5pm

■ Webinars are available for 14 days.

■ Email [cpd@neu.org.uk](mailto:cpd@neu.org.uk) or visit [neu.org.uk/national-cpd](https://neu.org.uk/national-cpd)



# English with three Es: enthuse, excite, enrich

**Anmika Salter (pictured) is acting head of English at Fortismere, a large comprehensive secondary school in north London. She is also in the second year of a part-time secondment with the English and Media Centre, working in its research and projects team. Sarah Thompson finds out what makes her a class act.**

WHEN I ask Anmika how she sparks a love of English in her students, she doesn't hesitate: "Enthusiasm is the answer. I think my enthusiasm just rubs off on them. I'm quite insistent," she laughs.

And as she talks about her teaching style, it is clear she has pots of it.

"English is a great subject. Lessons where students are moving around the room, where they're performing, those are my favourite. And going outside and using the space. Or debating – they love debating. They get so excited about it. And story competitions, and working together to race around the classroom collecting things, where they're out of their chairs and they're engaging in it.

"I really love it and can't imagine doing anything else."

## 'Truly exciting and enriching'

Anmika has taught for nine years and became acting head of English at Fortismere in September. For her, reading, the pleasure that comes from it and the opportunity to expose children to a variety of voices, is at the heart of the subject.

"You get a class of young people reading something that is truly exciting and enriching – rather than 'now let's look at this extract' – and it draws them in. That sense of escape is really important and getting them excited about coming to your lesson to finish something – the pride they have from reading an entire novel across the term."

She is passionate about including a diverse range of books and writers. It is something she has been looking at during her secondment at the English and Media Centre (EMC), a charity which supports educators in promoting literacy.

Last year, she carried out a survey about diversity and anti-racism in English, which was completed by 91 secondary school teachers across the country. She was pleased to discover many teachers have already

made changes to their curriculum to make it more diverse, and 90 per cent of respondents reported that this led to a positive response from students – with increased enthusiasm and engagement in lessons.

However, she thinks that exam boards and the Government should be doing more to help educators make sustained change.

"It takes individual teachers who are passionate about it, and I don't think that's fair. Teachers don't have time to make all the changes. We need more guidance and encouragement."

## What does good assessment look like?

Another area of English that Anmika believes needs overhauling is the way it is assessed. Along with two colleagues at the EMC, she has been carrying out a qualitative research project to consider what good assessment practices look like in English at key stage 3.

"In English, good assessment is responding to your students' work all the time, getting them to read it out, doing lots of self-assessment and peer assessment, and asking good questions," she says.

The team found that a focus on peer and self-assessment opened up possibilities for more creativity in the classroom. Students wrote more and were more enthusiastic about class work, and teachers felt they were able to more accurately assess their students' capabilities.

Anmika will be returning to full-time teaching at the end of the year, but she has relished the opportunity her secondment has given her to engage with other educators, visit schools and look more deeply into the subject.

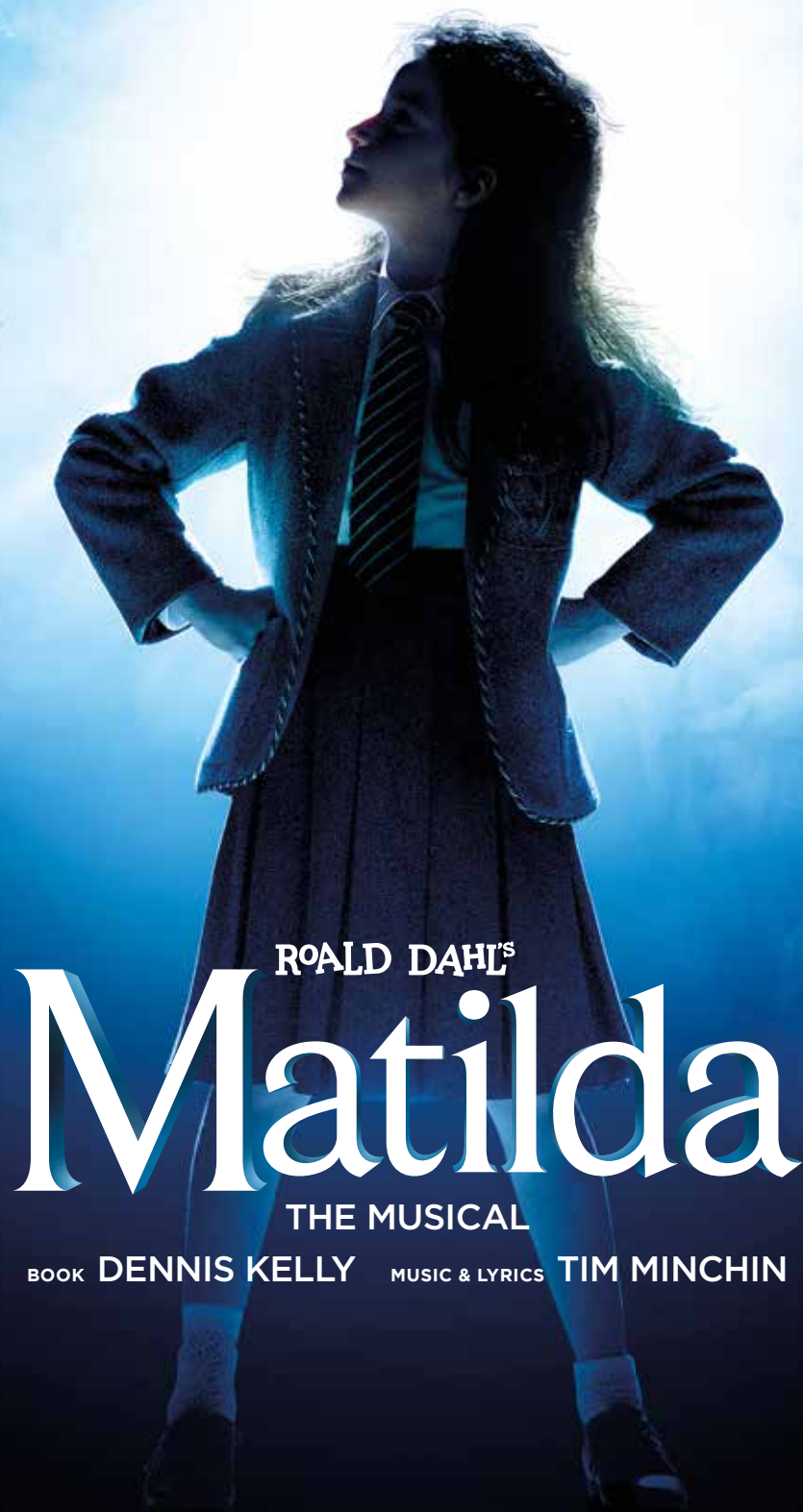
"It's about generating that love of the subject, which comes from sharing and reading, and talking and debating. It's about giving power back to the teachers."



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A Positive Period training course: Marie Antoinette Corr (centre), general secretary of Gambia Teachers' Union, with Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU) colleagues in Uganda  
Photo by Etabu Emmanuel

## Quality education key to achieving UN global goals



**Ann Beatty is chief executive of the Steve Sinnott Foundation.**

THE Steve Sinnott Foundation was set up to honour the work of Steve Sinnott,

who was general secretary of the National Union of Teachers (NUT). Sadly, Steve died suddenly at the age of 56, while in office.

The foundation is celebrating its 15th year of supporting access to education for children worldwide. Our work is achieved through international solidarity and the support of NEU members and others. We work towards the achievement of UN sustainable development goal 4 (SDG4), which highlights the interconnectivity of global challenges.

Achieving this goal requires collaborative efforts to address issues such as poverty, hunger, health and environmental sustainability. We believe the key to achievability is through the provision of quality education.

We work with grassroots organisations on the ground to develop projects that directly enable access to education for the most marginalised. Our achievements in 2023 include:

- Learning resource centres and digital classrooms, which are delivering excellent learning and development for educators, students and their wider communities in Haiti, The Gambia and Sierra Leone.
- Prevention of gender-based violence programmes working with 450 educators in Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Senegal.
- Youth ambassador programme, which has supported 200 young people in Cuba, The Gambia and Sierra Leone.
- SEND awareness workshops for 250 educators in The Gambia and Sierra Leone.
- Kreyol literacy programme for 180 learners in Haiti.
- Our Positive Periods programme, developed with educators on the ground in Cuba, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Malawi, Sierra Leone and Uganda, reached more than 150,000 girls in 2023. Sanitary pads are

made using locally sourced materials and are affordable, washable, long-lasting and eco-friendly. The programme can be adapted to local needs and available resources. Feedback has been that it is counterproductive to provide disposable pads if there is not the sanitation available for disposing of them and for the majority, they are unaffordable.

### How can you support our work?

NEU members can ask their district to support the Steve Sinnott Foundation by bringing the following resolution to their next AGM:

"Recalling the international work of the late general secretary of the NUT, Steve Sinnott, in support of the UN sustainable development goals for education, and noting the Steve Sinnott Foundation's work to secure the achievement of these goals, this district of the NEU agrees to support the work of the foundation with a donation of £X per month or £X as an annual donation, and agrees also to give consideration to further donations each year at the district AGM."

- Make a personal donation at [stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk](https://stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk)



# The ABC of reading for pleasure

Jon Biddle, English lead and NEU rep at Moorlands Primary in Norfolk, is passionate about fostering a love of reading for pleasure. Here he shares ideas and tips for schools to try.

**STARTING in a new school as an early career teacher (ECT), or even as an experienced teacher, is often a daunting experience. There's so much to take on board and assimilate, which obviously includes the school's approach to reading for pleasure.**

Over the past few years, I've been fortunate to work alongside some fantastic ECTs who have really bought into our school ethos, as well as introducing new ideas of their own.

Although every school is different, here are some underlying principles that ECTs should consider when developing a classroom reading culture.

### ■ Make time for independent reading and story time

Perhaps the most difficult to achieve but undoubtedly the most important. The primary timetable seems to get more squeezed every year but finding time for reading is essential. If reading isn't prioritised at home, then it needs to be given an even bigger focus in school. Consider timetabling story time for straight after lunch to ensure it goes ahead.

### ■ Introduce new initiatives gradually

Don't introduce 20 new reading initiatives all at once. I would suggest introducing one new idea every few weeks and ensuring that it is almost self-sustaining before bringing in something else.

Creating a pupil recommendations shelf, following it a few weeks later with poem of the day and then adding in a reading scrapbook at the start of the next half-term will help make sure they all become firmly embedded.

### ■ Be a reading role model and talk about what reading means to you

Do the children ever see you read in class? Every so often, spend time reading alongside them. There is always going to be something else pressing, but the benefits for children of seeing an adult enjoying a book are enormous.



Moorlands ECT Charlotte Squirrell who has implemented some great ideas in her classroom

Read more ideas from Jon next issue

It might be one of the only times they experience an adult reading for pleasure.

### ■ Keep the reading corner simple

The most important thing is the reading material on offer. Rows of flashing fairy lights and fluffy cushions will not inspire reading if the books and magazines available are not of interest. Try and ensure there are a range of chapter books, quick reads, poetry, graphic novels, non-fiction, magazines and comics by diverse writers and featuring diverse characters.

Although it is tempting to spend a significant chunk of your salary on books, please avoid doing this; speak to the leadership team. There almost certainly won't be enough money for books, but there should be some.

### Putting great ideas into practice


One of my colleagues, Charlotte Squirrell, who has just completed her two years as an ECT, pointed out that knowing what to do in theory can be very different from knowing how to successfully put it into practice on a daily basis.

"When I first started at Moorlands, I didn't know where to start," she says. "I had so many ideas but didn't know how to make them work in the classroom."

"I love reading children's books but there is no way anyone can read everything. I soon realised that you can keep reasonably up to date without spending every moment reading. Using social media and book awards for recommendations and reading reviews are a few ways to quickly get those current and high-quality books into your classroom."

"Each teacher will structure their class story time, independent reading and book talk slightly differently, so try to observe a range of classrooms to pick up lots of helpful tips."

"Finally, I always dedicate a display board where I can stick the front cover of each book as we read it together. This is a lovely way to see the progress and range of the different books we have read and a useful starting point for any book talk, especially towards the end of the year when you are reflecting back on the class reading journey."

 @jonnybid



## Do you want to share that with the class?



PACKED with excellent advice, James Pearce – teacher, author and early career mentor – provides a survival blueprint for those at the start of their teaching career.

Each of the 40 chapters begins with a personal anecdote from James' own experience, before linking to school events such as Inset days, school trips and parents' evenings. A top tricks and tips section gives helpful hints for each theme explored. Useful examples are provided to explain how tasks (such as class assemblies) can show evidence of meeting the required teaching standards. Hilarious and informative; an essential guide for new teachers.

Cindy Shanks

Do you want to share that with the class? Honest advice and hilarious anecdotes for primary ECTS, by James Pearce. Bloomsbury Education. £12.99.

## Maths Like a Ninja

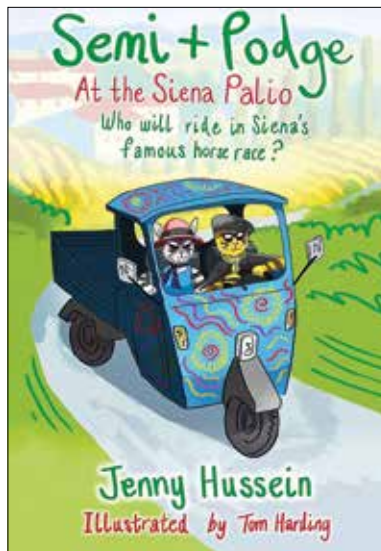
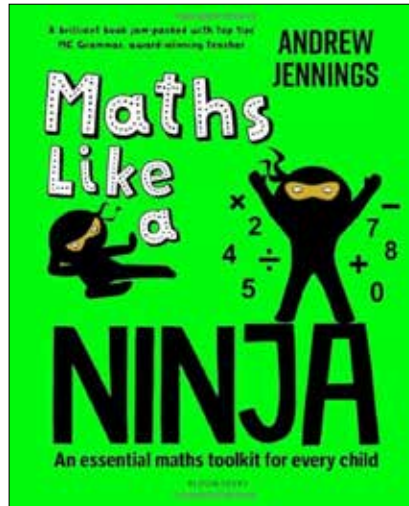
WHAT a great little book. You only need to glance through to see how well it has been researched to support key stage 2 children in maths.

The book is referred to as an 'essential maths toolkit', and that it is. Mathematical concepts are explained in a straightforward way which is usable for all children – such as easier ways to remember times tables. This is a great resource and, having used it in my placement class, the children asked the head teacher to buy more for each class.

This is also a brilliant resource for teachers – it certainly was for me, building subject knowledge as a trainee.

Holly Stokes

Maths Like a Ninja – An essential maths toolkit for every child, by Andrew Jennings. Bloomsbury. £4.49.



## Semi & Podge At the Siena Palio

SEMI and Podge, two furry felines, travel to the Italian city of Siena, making new friends, Isabelle and Marco, who introduce them to a beautiful racehorse called Petra. She will be running in The Siena Palo in just two days' time. How will Semi and Podge get involved?

Based on the author's old cats, and filled with colourful illustrations, this story explores the themes of change, learning something new and friendship.

Aliss Langridge

Semi & Podge at the Siena Palio – Who will ride in Siena's famous horse race? by Jenny Hussein. Troubador. £10.99.

## They don't behave for me

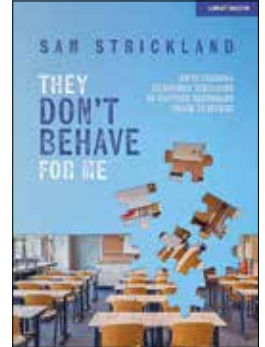
THIS book addresses 50 common problems that every teacher will face at some point in their career. It won't solve all your problems, however it will ask the right questions and help you to scaffold a sustainable solution.

This practical wisdom is invaluable when critically reflecting on your own practices. Written by a teacher, for teachers, the book is effective, written with empathy and to the point – everything you need to help overcome problems in the classroom.

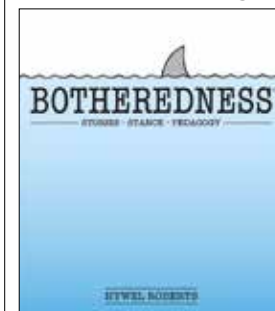
A concise and useful diagnostic tool for teachers at every level.

James Ball

They don't behave for me: 50 classroom behaviour scenarios to support secondary phase teachers, by Sam Strickland. John Catt Educational. £16.



## Botheredness: Stories – Stance – Pedagogy



BEGINNING with an explanation of the book's title, educationalist Hywel Roberts explores the value in understanding each child's

learning and thinking journey. The book looks at the importance of teacher-to-teacher, as well as teacher-to-pupil, dynamics, and helps educators approach their job with warmth and curiosity – in other words, 'botheredness'.

This is a practical guide as well as a theoretical one, with structured project examples for teaching history and geography topics. With an emphasis on engaging with pupils and helping them thrive, this is a helpful addition to any teacher's bookshelf.

Katy Illiffe

Botheredness: Stories – Stance – Pedagogy, by Hywel Roberts. Crown House. £18.99.

Feature

## Time for a revolution in creative education



**Neil Gaiman** is the author of the book *The Graveyard Book* and the creator of the TV series *American Gods*.



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**Neil Gaiman** is the author of the book *The Graveyard Book* and the creator of the TV series *American Gods*.

### In defence of the arts

I AM writing in response to Ken Jones' article about arts education (Educate, January/February, page 22). As an art and design teacher of almost 12 years, it is scary to think what it is like in standard mainstream schools.

At the University Technical College MediaCity, our school is built on creative pathways. We don't teach humanities or language courses, we purely deliver creative courses: film and TV, games design and, in my department,

creative design. Within each pathway there are two or three courses to choose from.

Students at our school choose to study three courses of their choice from year 10 as well as English, maths and science. This curriculum has incredible benefits for students' mental health, general engagement with learning and their future.

Many thanks for raising awareness of the struggles within mainstream schools.

**Jonathan Irwin, Salford**

### Gender imbalance of 'Sir' and 'Miss'

I WAS inspired to read about the work by Gender Action (Educate, January/February, page 50).

The understanding that greater representation of women and girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects should be mirrored by greater representation of men and boys in "traditionally 'feminine' subjects" is one that we need to spend a lot more time developing in schools. It has been disappointing over the last decade to see lower take-up of my subject, English, by male students who are better at it than they are at STEM subjects, because of the pressures on boys to follow a limited range of careers.

I am a female teacher, working in a single-sex school. The boys have traditionally addressed the staff in polite terms and behaved with respect. Our school has recently attempted the tricky task of eliminating the 'Sir' and 'Miss' imbalance in the way teachers are spoken to by pupils (and some colleagues, believe it or not), by making it



**Final word**



**Empowering educators to tackle gender inequality**



**Final word**

## Teacher's pet Mia

Mia is the lovable cat of Thom Medcalf, a teacher from Worcestershire.

Thom says: "Mia can be a particularly unhelpful teacher's pet. From rolling on exercise books to sitting on my laptop, she finds many ways to distract me from my work."

"She does, however, make me smile each evening by waiting in the window for me to get home. My pupils love to see photos of her."

If you have a treasured pet you'd like to show off, email a high-resolution photo with 50 words about what makes them so special to [educate@neu.org.uk](mailto:educate@neu.org.uk)



What is going to prove knottier, is the responsibility on many male teachers to change their expectation of being automatically knighted as soon as they arrive at the school gates. The honorifics of 'Sir' must be hard to actively reject in favour of the more humbling 'Mr'.

The need to mirror the promotion of women and girls' fair representation in our language, just like their progress in STEM subjects, can only be facilitated by a change in how men and boys are represented in language and subject choices too.  
**Name & address withheld**

### Chocolate rewards? Treats are for dogs...

IT WAS shocking to read a disabled teacher's experience at school (Educate, January/February, page 42), particularly the fact that chocolate bars were given by senior leadership to teachers who 'had gone above and beyond'.

I'm a retired teacher aged 77. In my co-ed secondary school in the 1970s and 80s, before academies were introduced, gifts of chocolates would have been seen as very dodgy. Dogs get treats. Teachers are not pets.

It reminded me of a 1970s factory in Brighton where all the workers were women with a male boss. My friend was one of the women. They were pressured to work extra hours one week, which most of them

**"My above  
and beyond  
is the regular  
daily tasks of  
a teacher."**

### Star letter

#### Escalation of strike action in Jersey

MEMBERS in Jersey remain in dispute over pay for 2023. Since balloting for strike action in June, our membership has grown by more than 50 per cent.

In November, members also overwhelmingly voted to reject the Government of Jersey's pay offer for 2024-2026, which, yet again, was below inflation and made no attempt to make up for the many years of pay cuts. Turnout for the ballot was an amazing 76 per cent, with 75 per cent of members rejecting the offer.

In December, members carried out three days of strike action, a serious escalation. Our thanks to the amazing officers from the South East region who came over to the island to help.

On day one, we held a series of rep meetings and workshops, which gave members valuable time to connect and make banners for day two.

On day two, in the pouring rain, members marched past Government buildings waving homemade banners and chanting "we wish that you would pay us" to the tune of We wish you a merry Christmas.

did, but instead of extra money, they were given chocolates. My friend was furious and started a union group.

NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede's awareness of the damage that increasing workload does to teachers (Educate, November/December, page 11) should be at the forefront of our union to protect us in every school.

**Jenny Moir,  
Chelmsford**



On day three of strike action in Jersey, NEU members joined forces with Trees for Life to replant hedgerows after Storm Ciarán

Day three was a community tree-planting event where members volunteered alongside charity Trees for Life to replant hedgerows following the devastation caused

by Storm Ciarán. A massive thank you to our fantastic members.

**Sam Wharmby,  
joint branch and district  
secretary, NEU Jersey**

## CLASSROOM confidential

I recently taught a year 1 personal, social, and health education unit that involved us discussing different jobs and what it means to be employed.

A few days later a child turned to me completely out of the blue and said: "Miss, what do you do for a job?"

I'm not often speechless, but...

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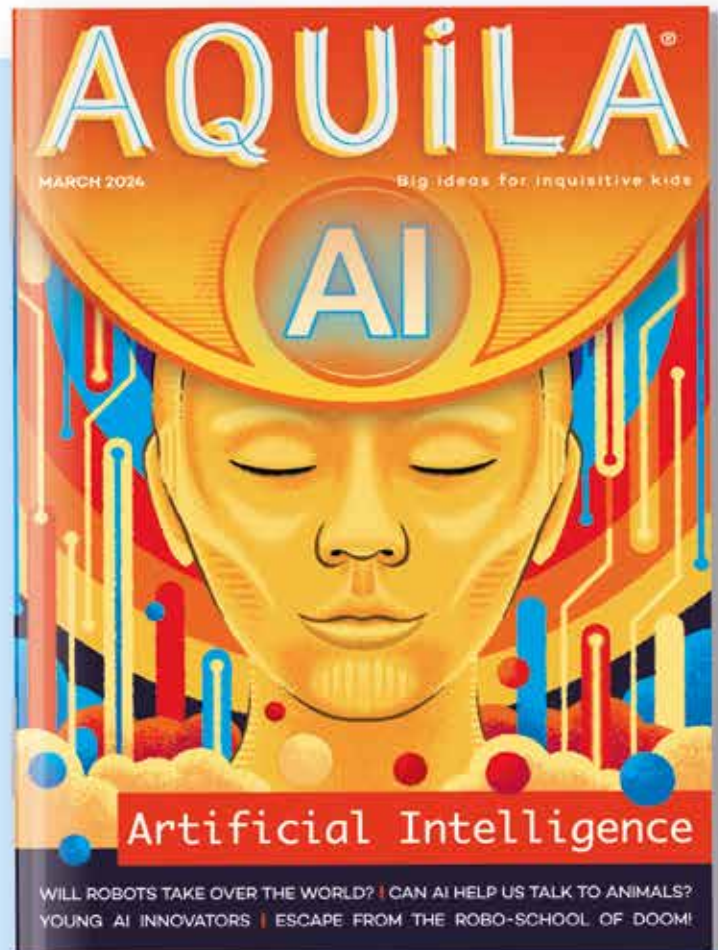
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## Refugee crisis resources from ActionAid



Iraqi children in Kara Tepe camp, Lesvos, Greece

PHOTO by George Makkas/Panos Pictures/ActionAid

**LIVEN up your literacy lessons with gripping stories and colourful activities that show what life is like for many child refugees.**

Created by international charity ActionAid, these free resources for key stages 1 and 2 are intended to build literacy and empathy. They aim to help pupils answer questions such as 'How is life different for child refugees?' and 'If you were a refugee, what would you take?'

The pack includes the story of ten-year-old Haman, who undertook a long and dangerous journey from Iraq with his mother. He shares his experiences of the journey, and the story can be used as a basis for suggested literacy lessons.

Also included are starter, discussion, writing and online activities, including a presentation and photos from a refugee camp in Lesvos, Greece (above).

■ Download at [tinyurl.com/23kzjrte](https://tinyurl.com/23kzjrte)

## 15 years of the Big Walk and Wheel challenge

SUSTRANS Big Walk and Wheel is celebrating 15 years as the UK's biggest inter-school active travel challenge. On each day of the challenge, from 11-22 March, schools compete to record the greatest proportion of their pupils walking, wheeling, scooting and cycling to school.

Just under 2.7 million active journeys at 1,862 participating schools took place during the 2023 challenge, saving an estimated 1,890 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions if the journeys logged had otherwise been made by car.

Xavier Brice, chief executive at Sustrans, said: "Parents save money by not having to drive and children get to be out and about exploring their world, giving them healthy habits they can take into adulthood."

■ Visit [sustrans.org.uk](https://sustrans.org.uk)



PHOTO by J Bewley/  
Sustrans 2021

## Shakespeare at The Globe



STARTING this February, Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank returns with *Romeo and Juliet* at London's Globe Theatre. This gripping 90-minute production has been created especially for young people and designed to support the curriculum.

Free and subsidised tickets are available to UK schools – email [playingshakespeare@shakespearesglobe.com](mailto:playingshakespeare@shakespearesglobe.com) (they are no longer available online). Free in-school workshops and teacher CPD are available to state schools attending a performance.

■ Tickets are available for public performances at [shakespearesglobe.com](https://shakespearesglobe.com)

## Discussing gender equality



THE theme of this year's International Women's Day (IWD) is #InspireInclusion. Taking place annually on 8 March, IWD provides an opportunity for teachers, parents and caregivers to educate and inspire children and students about gender equality – from celebrating women's social, economic, cultural and political achievements, to challenging gender stereotypes and bias. To help educators discuss these topics in class, IWD has created a series of practical resources aimed at different key stages.

■ Visit [internationalwomensday.com/School-Resources](https://internationalwomensday.com/School-Resources)



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# Quick crossword

Answers at bottom  
of page 49

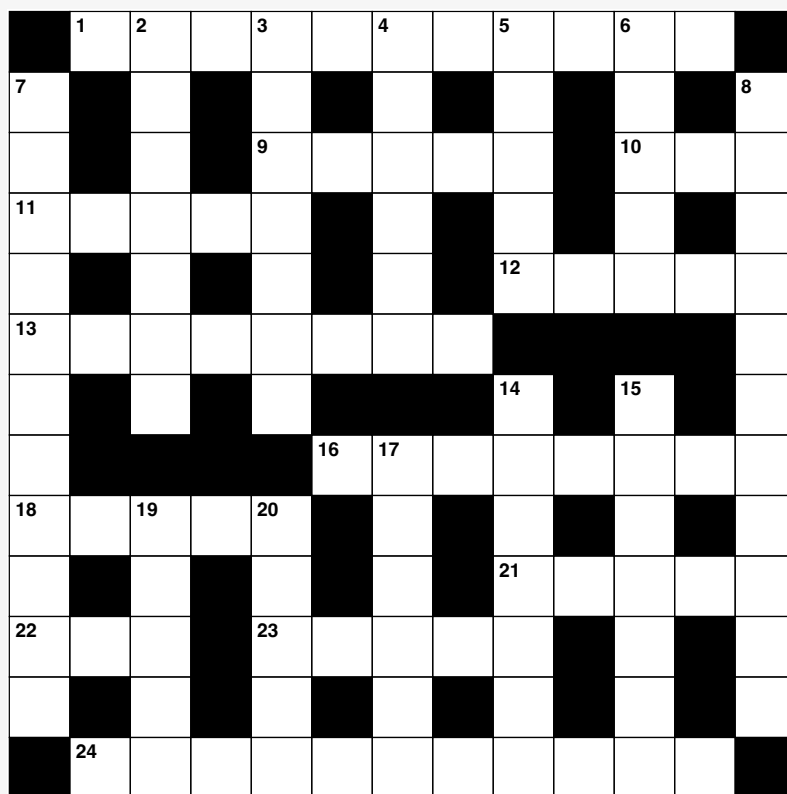
## Across

- 1** Boxing great (8,3)  
**9** Leonhard \_\_\_\_ : Swiss mathematician (5)  
**10** Small, abundant social insect (3)  
**11** Edward \_\_\_\_ : English composer of Enigma Variations (5)  
**12** A musical note double the length of a crotchet (5)  
**13** Margaret \_\_\_\_ : former Prime Minister (8)  
**16** Type of brandy (8)  
**18** Relating to the eye (5)  
**21** US R&B musician (5)  
**22** \_\_\_\_ de Armas: Cuban-Spanish actress (3)  
**23** Pale brownish yellow colour (5)  
**24** Actor who played Ken in the film Barbie (4,7)

## Down

- 2** Country whose capital

- is Montevideo (7)  
**3** \_\_\_\_ Ferrera: Ugly Betty star (7)  
**4** Buggy \_\_\_\_ : 1976 musical film (6)  
**5** Type of wheat used to make pasta (5)  
**6** \_\_\_\_ Rimes: US country singer (5)  
**7** Film starring Richard Gere and Julia Roberts (6,5)  
**8** Extremely accurate timekeeping device (6,5)  
**14** Nigel \_\_\_\_ : British former Formula One racing driver (7)  
**15** Jennifer \_\_\_\_ : actress in The Morning Show (7)  
**17** Mark \_\_\_\_ : US painter (6)  
**19** \_\_\_\_ Beaker: Jacqueline Wilson character (5)  
**20** Krusty the \_\_\_\_ : character in The Simpsons (5)



# Sudoku

Sudoku solutions will feature  
on this page next issue.

2			4	8		5		
7		3		1		2		6
	8				2	4	3	
		2						
9	6	7				3	2	8
						9		
	9	8	2				5	
3		1		5		8		2
		5		9	8			3

Easy

9				8				
1		6		4				3
	4							9
	9		6					
	7		4		1		2	
					8		7	
2							9	
4				2		6		5
				7				4

Medium

	9						3	
8			4					
				5	8	7		
2						3	8	
3		6				1		5
	4	9						6
		2	6	1				
					3			7
7							6	

Difficult

Last issue's (Jan/Feb 2024)  
sudoku solution

(from left: Easy, Medium  
and Difficult)

5	7	6	9	1	4	2	3	8
1	3	8	5	7	2	6	9	4
4	9	2	3	6	8	1	5	7
8	1	9	6	3	5	7	4	2
7	2	4	8	9	1	3	6	5
3	6	5	2	4	7	8	1	9
9	8	7	1	5	3	4	2	6
6	4	3	7	2	9	5	8	1
2	5	1	4	8	6	9	7	3

8	1	5	4	3	2	7	9	6
2	3	9	7	5	6	4	1	8
7	6	4	9	1	8	2	3	5
5	2	3	6	4	1	8	7	9
9	4	6	3	8	7	1	5	2
1	7	8	2	9	5	3	6	4
4	5	7	8	6	3	9	2	1
6	9	2	1	7	4	5	8	3
3	8	1	5	2	9	6	4	7

9	2	6	3	1	4	5	8	7
4	8	1	5	9	7	2	3	6
3	5	7	8	6	2	9	1	4
7	9	8	6	2	3	4	5	1
2	6	3	1	4	5	8	7	9
5	1	4	9	7	8	6	2	3
6	7	9	2	8	1	3	4	5
1	3	2	4	5	6	7	9	8
8	4	5	7	3	9	1	6	2



# Prize crossword

**WIN!**

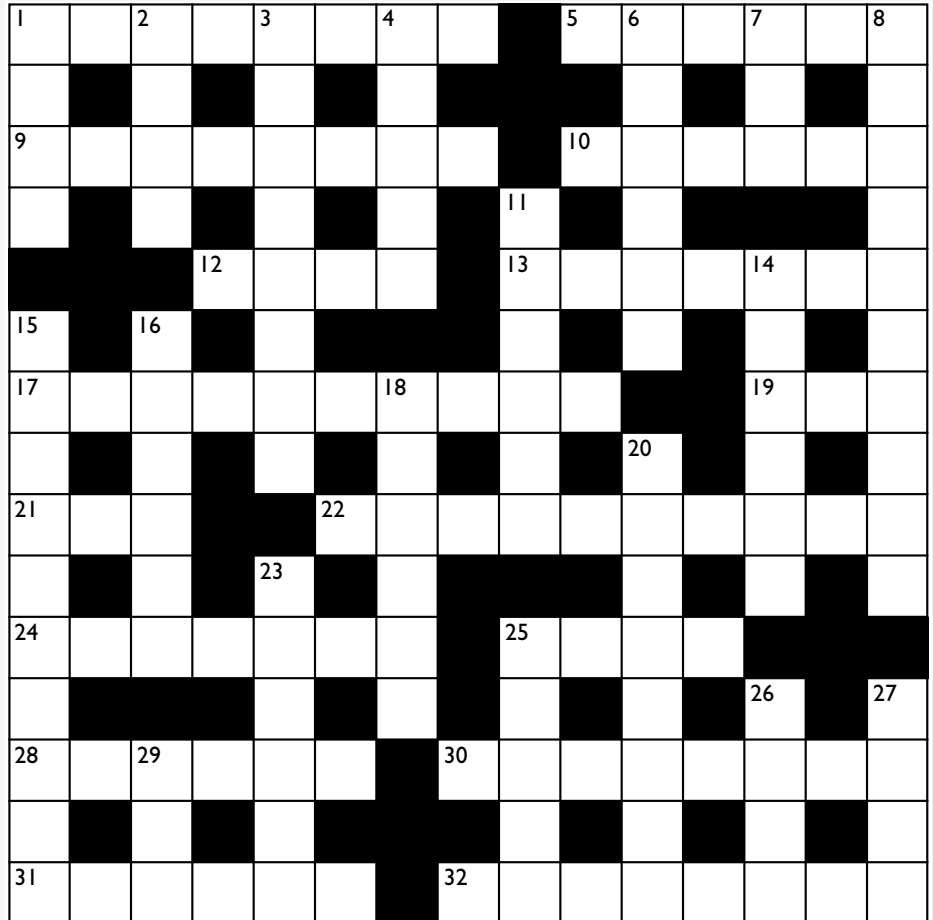
**A £50 Marks  
& Spencer  
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## Across

- 1** 'Congratulations on your achievement!' is not rare (4,4)  
**5** Burned out by heavy responsibility? (6)  
**9** Evolve nice plan to get to the most successful point (8)  
**10** Not complicated to create impulses without us (6)  
**12** Going out with nobility starts with academic dress (4)  
**13** Perhaps learnt about uniform, supporting neither side (7)  
**17** Moving abroad with nine from the Granite City (10)  
**19** Some farm owners cut grass (3)  
**21** Almost every other letter is an auction item (3)  
**22** Foster care arranged for weather presenter? (10)  
**24** My lab's a disaster – really bad! (7)  
**25** Fish – pastry dish consumes kilo (4)  
**28** Clue I'd rewritten: 'Greek mathematician' (6)  
**30** See 2 down  
**31** Dreadful pity – heartless sort is keyboard operative (6)  
**32** Someone to send to conference? Get Adele, possibly! (8)

## Down

- 1** You and I had physical training, and cried (4)  
**2 & 30 across** Violins doing unusual arithmetical calculation (4,8)  
**3** New maid damaged don's suit (8)  
**4** Synthetic polymer only converted after conclusion of operation (5)  
**6** Taking first three from universities, Queen's is unlike any other (6)  
**7** In the end I prepare for a short swim (3)  
**8** Left weekend free, or included embroidery, for example (10)



The winner and solution will feature on this page next issue.

- 11** Number admitted to school are back during the week at night (6)  
**14** Meteor crashed far from population centre (6)  
**15** New MP: I learn at this assembly? (10)  
**16** Soldier on guard dispatched to edges of runway (6)  
**18** Strip of pasta – old one, unfortunately (6)  
**20** Support team, though bottom! (8)  
**23** Such modern communications could produce a smile (6)  
**25** Of first importance is broken promise? Not so (5)  
**26** Miss Turner ain't wrong! (4)  
**27** Included in concert on a single occasion (4)  
**29** Sports trophy made from copper and phosphorus (3)

Send your completed crossword, with your contact details, to: March/April crossword, Educate, NEU, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD, or email a photographed copy to [crossword@neu.org.uk](mailto:crossword@neu.org.uk). Closing date: 31 March.

## Last issue's (January/February 2024) prize crossword solution

**Across** 9 LASSITUDE 10 SHOVE 11 ALICE 12 DIPLOMACY 13 MAGNATE 14 REVISES 17 TABOO 19 GAG 20 GUSTO 21 RELAYED 22 FITNESS 24 SIEGFRIED 26 BASIC 28 THEME 29 SKELETONS **Down** 1 ALMA 2 ASKING 3 MINERALOGY 4 DUNDEE 5 LEAPFROG 6 OSLO 7 MOLASSES 8 DEFY 13 MATER 15 VEGETABLES 16 SHOTS 18 BELIEVER 19 GODLIEST 22 FIDGET 23 EUSTON 23 SETS 25 FREE 27 CASH

Congratulations to last issue's winner – Colin Davis from Leeds

## This issue's quick crossword solution (p48)

**Across** 1 MUHAMMAD ALI 9 EULER 10 ANT 11 ELGAR 12 MINIM 13 THATCHER 16 ARMAGNAC 18 OPTIC 21 SISOO 22 ANA 23 OCHRE 24 RYAN GOSLING **Down** 2 URUGUAY 3 AMERICA 4 MALONE 5 DURUM 6 LEANN 7 PRETTY WOMAN 8 ATOMIC CLOCK 14 MANSSELL 15 ANISTON 17 ROTHKO 19 TRACY 20 CLOWN



## A climate curriculum across Brighton and Hove

(Above) Schools across Brighton and Hove have created a network of meadows in their school grounds to enhance biodiversity and provide rich, cross-curricular learning opportunities

PHOTO by Miles Davis/  
Sussex Wildlife Trust



### Fact file

**Katie Eberstein** is environmental education officer for Brighton and Hove, working with local authority schools to embed sustainability and climate change into all areas of school life.

IN Brighton and Hove (B&H), we have developed and implemented a 'whole school, whole city' approach to sustainability and climate change, recognising the vital role schools should play in preparing young people to live in a changing climate.

This strategy, Our City Our World, has been adopted by the majority of the city's schools and is transforming their culture and operations. It aims to:

- develop an integrated environmental education curriculum and support the development of green skills
- work towards B&H's carbon neutral 2030 target
- enable children and young people to develop a close connection with nature
- empower young people and their families to become change-makers both personally and collectively.

### Integrating into the existing curriculum

There are an increasing number of sustainability resources available to schools. The majority of these are standalone climate-change units or project-based work. In B&H, we recognise that the existing curriculum is full, with very few opportunities for non-statutory work, and believe that climate change and sustainability should be integrated into each school's existing curriculum.

Senior programme leads in each school receive training in climate science, eco-anxiety and curriculum development and assessment. They then cascade this to their colleagues through designated staff meetings and Inset days.

Using the B&H concept progression document, teaching staff audit their curriculum for key conceptual understanding and vocabulary around climate change and find relevant places to include those not already taught. These concepts also provide a tool against which teachers can assess and monitor the impact of the curriculum.

In subsequent staff meetings, teachers systematically 'green' their curriculum – changing the context of the present curriculum to place it in a context of sustainability or climate change. For example, when studying World War II in history, they consider how 'dig for victory', 'make do and mend' and rationing relate to our current attitudes to food or fast fashion.

This approach ensures learning is placed in a meaningful context within the present curriculum. Children and young people learn key skills and knowledge holistically across all subjects and learn to see the world consistently through a green lens.

### Outdoor learning to connect with nature

In addition, staff are encouraged to identify planned opportunities for outdoor learning in all curriculum areas each week, finding purposeful and effective ways of supporting connections to nature in their pupils. Key climate knowledge is reinforced in fortnightly assemblies, each term focusing on the themes of energy, water, transport, food, consumption and waste, and biodiversity. This also provides opportunities for learning to be closely linked to sustainability improvements within the whole school and on pupil action.

This simple approach can be implemented successfully across all phases and types of school. We have a dedicated website acting as a hub for resources, with schools able to upload and share their work. This has created a strong network of sustainability leads across the city, with an optimism, positivity and belief that what they are teaching is relevant, progressive and responsive to students' needs.

■ To find out more about Our City Our World, or to discuss how we can support your school, multi-academy trust or local authority, visit [ourcityyourworld.co.uk](http://ourcityyourworld.co.uk)



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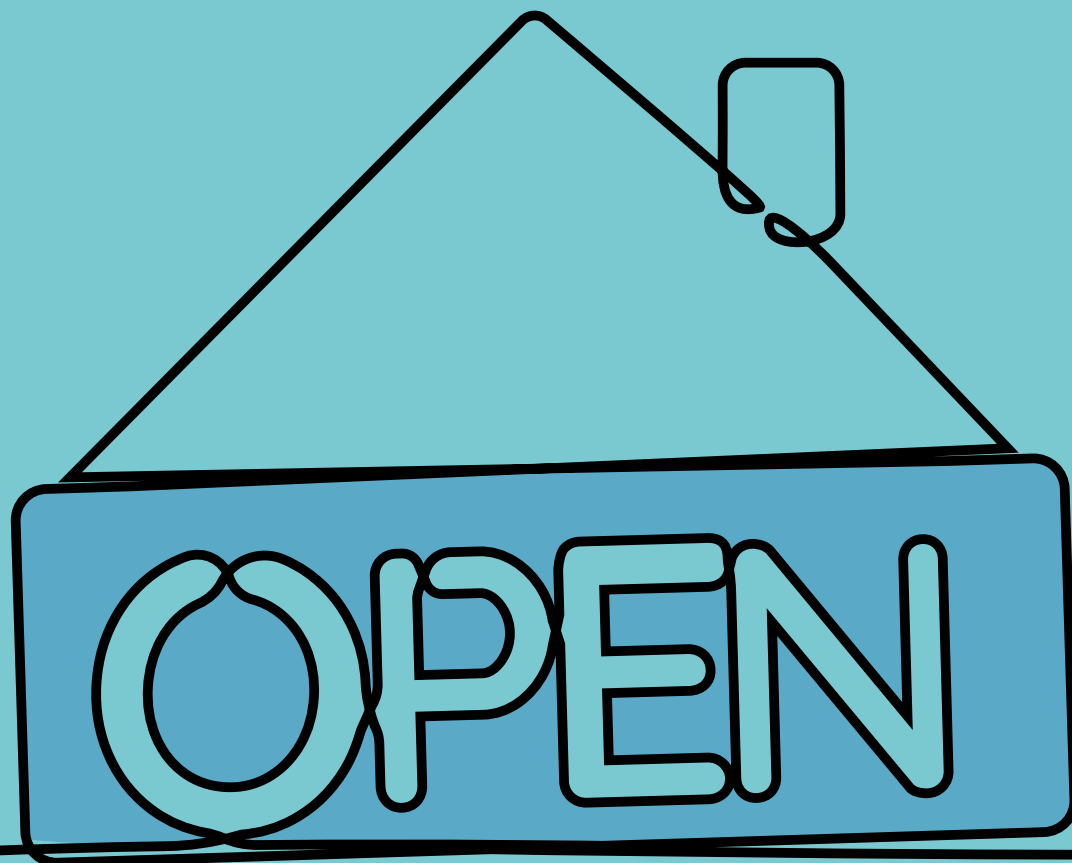
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