# teachers strike at Westbourne Academy over rising violence and lack of behaviour management



When Sophie Walker graduated a decade ago, she was filled with enthusiasm to inspire young minds as a science teacher. Yet, this week, she found herself striking alongside 50 colleagues at Westbourne Academy in Ipswich, not over pay or conditions, but due to escalating incidents of disruptive and, at times, violent behaviour among students. Teachers like Walker are facing an alarming rise in aggression, with reports of scissors and chairs being thrown in classrooms and corridors filled with unruly students refusing to engage in lessons. Such disruptions have pushed several teachers to the brink, contemplating leaving their vocation altogether.

Walker, who represents the National Education Union (NEU), expressed her dismay over students roaming the school, undermining the educational environment. "They go and collect other students from classes and roam around in large groups. They come in with no intention of attending any lessons," she explained. Her concerns are echoed by Marc Emmanuel, an English teacher with over two decades of experience at Westbourne. Emmanuel noted that a lack of consistent behaviour management from the senior leadership team has exacerbated the issues, leading to the departure of four seasoned teachers in the last year alone. The challenges are severe enough that Emmanuel articulates a desperate need for stronger behavioural systems, stating, "It's not being adequately dealt with. We want robust systems put in place that are followed through."

This crisis in classroom behaviour is not isolated to Westbourne Academy. Similar disturbances have been reported across the UK, with Conservative MPs suggesting that ongoing teacher strikes could fuel student protests and disorder in schools. Reports surfaced from various regions including Cornwall and Lincolnshire, where students organised protests via social media platforms like TikTok. These incidents highlight the complex interplay between teacher discontent and student behaviour, suggesting that unresolved tensions can lead to further disruptions.

Social media is perceived as a significant contributing factor to the behavioural decline at Westbourne. Walker points out that students often draw inspiration from influencers whose lifestyles seem attainable without hard work, fostering an attitude of entitlement. "The content they are exposed to doesn't encourage good behaviour," she remarked, making it more challenging for educators to instil the values of diligence and respect.

The response from parents to the strike is divided. Some express frustration at the school's handling of discipline. One mother reported her son facing severe threats outside of school while smaller infractions, such as uniform violations, were strictly punished. Another parent, whose daughter is autistic, withdrew her from Westbourne due to bullying and perceived administrative neglect. Conversely, other parents have rallied in support of the teachers, including Rebecca, who remarked, "I don't blame the teachers for going on strike. They shouldn't be getting abused."

The recent Ofsted report on Westbourne Academy acknowledged the problematic behaviour but awarded the school a "good" rating, stating that the challenges stemmed from a minority of pupils. As criticisms mount, Vic Goddard, an educational leader and commentator, argues that the pandemic's impact on student behaviour has reached a crisis point, stressing the importance of retaining experienced teachers amid funding cuts that compromise the overall educational environment. "The only way you can improve your school is by keeping people in it," he stated, reinforcing the idea that teacher welfare directly correlates to student outcomes.

In light of the situation, Westbourne's trust has claimed to take staff wellbeing seriously and is attempting to improve the existing support mechanisms. They acknowledged the necessity of making progress, especially regarding a minority of students whose behaviour does not meet expectations. The Department for Education echoed this sentiment, announcing plans for new regional improvement teams aimed at enhancing school standards.

As Walker and her colleagues continue their strike, which spans four days in total, they hope it serves as a catalyst for improvement in their working conditions and the learning environment of their students. Their actions reflect a broader struggle within the educational sector, highlighting the urgent need to address behavioural issues that threaten the very fabric of learning in schools across the UK.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
2. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
3. Paragraphs 5, 6
4. Paragraphs 8
5. Paragraphs 8
6. Paragraphs 5
7. Paragraphs 4, 8

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cvgq98edegxo> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cvgq98edegxo> - Teachers at Westbourne Academy in Ipswich, UK, have gone on strike due to escalating pupil behavior issues, including incidents of chairs and scissors being thrown at staff. Educators report significant disruptions, with students refusing to attend lessons and causing disturbances during exams. The school's trust acknowledges the challenges posed by a minority of students whose behavior does not meet expectations and is actively addressing the situation.
3. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/02/26/striking-teachers-may-fuelling-school-protests/> - Conservative MPs have raised concerns that ongoing teacher strikes in the UK might be contributing to student protests in schools. Incidents of classroom chaos and violence have been reported in Cornwall, Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, and Essex, with students organizing protests via TikTok. Some MPs suggest that the strikes are creating animosity within schools and undermining confidence in the education system.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cjjp7zj5z8do> - Staff at Oasis Academy Isle of Sheppey in Kent, UK, are set to strike over pupil behavior and safety concerns. The National Education Union (NEU) called the action after negotiations over the safe management of poor pupil behavior and staff and pupil safety failed to meet member demands. The Academy stated it will offer online study materials to all students during the industrial action to minimize disruption.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/dec/04/teachers-at-kent-school-halt-strike-after-deal-to-tackle-pupil-violence> - Teachers at Oasis Academy Isle of Sheppey in Kent, UK, have halted their strike after reaching an agreement to address pupil violence. The deal includes £500,000 for additional behavior specialist staff, a minimum of five days’ exclusion for assaults and threats against staff, and the establishment of a behavior and safety working group between the union and academy trust.
6. <https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2023-07-13/hundreds-to-strike-over-teachers-dismissal-over-breaking-up-pupil-fight> - Hundreds of secondary school teachers in Swansea, Wales, are set to strike over the dismissal of a colleague who intervened in a pupil fight. The NASUWT Teachers’ Union stated that more than half of the city’s secondary schools will close for the day due to the walkout, highlighting concerns over adverse employer practices and threats to job security.
7. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/11/29/kent-academy-head-cries-over-pupil-violence-school/> - Steve Chalke, the founder of Oasis Academies, expressed deep concern over pupil violence at Oasis Academy Isle of Sheppey in Kent, UK, where teachers are on strike for their safety. Chalke acknowledged the worsening behavior across the country since the pandemic but noted that the situation at this school is particularly severe, citing a lack of funding as a contributing factor.