# Strikes erupt at Roedean School as pension costs spur unprecedented action



# Strikes Erupt at Roedean School Over Pension Cuts and Redundancies

Staff at Roedean School, members of the National Education Union (NEU), have embarked on strike action in response to significant changes concerning teachers' pensions and proposed redundancies. The first two days of the strike took place recently, with additional strike days scheduled for May 13-15. This unprecedented action marks the first strike in the school’s esteemed history, a move deeply rooted in the ongoing concern over the future financial stability of teachers.

Phil Clarke, the NEU’s regional secretary, expressed regret over the situation, highlighting that the decision to strike was not taken lightly. He stated, “Our members do not take strike action lightly; indeed, this is the first strike in the school’s history.” Clarke noted that numerous proposals aimed at safeguarding jobs and pension benefits were previously presented to the employer, all of which had been rejected. This breakdown in negotiations underscores the precarious position many independent schools find themselves in regarding pension contributions.

The backdrop to this conflict is the rising financial burden associated with the Teachers’ Pension Scheme (TPS). Over the years, employer contributions have escalated dramatically, from 8.35% in 2003 to a projected 28.68% by 2025. For many independent schools, these costs have proved unsustainable, prompting some to withdraw from the scheme entirely. Nevertheless, Roedean School has chosen to maintain TPS membership while introducing a new defined contribution scheme, purportedly aimed at providing teachers with greater flexibility over their remuneration.

Furthermore, in June 2023, the NEU and NASUWT applied for collective bargaining recognition at Roedean School, a significant step supported by an overwhelming 95% of the voting staff. This recognition comes against a backdrop of increasing tension in the independent school sector, where similar disputes have arisen. For instance, last year saw teachers at James Allen's Girls' School successfully resist changes to pay and pensions, compelling the school to preserve TPS eligibility for its staff.

The management of Roedean School has communicated their regrets over the strike action, stating that they were initially open to compromise. A spokesperson commented, “We regret that our offer to compromise with the union has been rejected and that some of our staff will be taking strike action.” They outlined a comprehensive plan aimed at minimising the disruption for students during the strikes, highlighting their commitment to dialogue with union representatives moving forward.

The Roedean situation is part of a broader trend seen across independent schools, where rising pension costs have led many institutions to reconsider their financial commitments. As noted by Daniel Kebede, General Secretary of the NEU, the shift towards potential strikes among independent school teachers is gathering momentum, particularly in light of the recent government confirmation regarding increases in TPS contributions. Such changes have prompted anxiety among educators, who fear that their financial security may be compromised.

As negotiations continue, a pivotal question remains: will Roedean School find a path forward that allays the concerns of its staff while navigating the challenging landscape of pension funding? The outcome of these discussions will not only influence the immediate circumstances for Roedean's educators but could also set a precedent for other independent institutions facing similar dilemmas.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/25145446.teachers-roedean-school-strike-redundancies/?ref=rss), [[6]](https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/teachers-23-private-schools-vote-strike-over-pensions)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/25145446.teachers-roedean-school-strike-redundancies/?ref=rss), [[4]](https://independentschoolmanagement.co.uk/news/independent-schoolteachers-will-strike-over-tps-exit-warns-union-leader/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cac-outcome-neu-nasuwt-roedean-school/recognition-decision), [[5]](https://neu.org.uk/latest/blogs/win-jags-staff-over-pension-and-pay-threat)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cac-outcome-neu-nasuwt-roedean-school/application-progress), [[5]](https://neu.org.uk/latest/blogs/win-jags-staff-over-pension-and-pay-threat)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/25145446.teachers-roedean-school-strike-redundancies/?ref=rss), [[7]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c36072y69zyo)
* Paragraph 6 – [[4]](https://independentschoolmanagement.co.uk/news/independent-schoolteachers-will-strike-over-tps-exit-warns-union-leader/)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/25145446.teachers-roedean-school-strike-redundancies/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cac-outcome-neu-nasuwt-roedean-school/recognition-decision> - In June 2023, the National Education Union (NEU) and NASUWT applied for collective bargaining recognition at Roedean School. The Central Arbitration Committee (CAC) accepted the application, establishing a bargaining unit comprising teachers entitled to join the Teachers’ Pension Scheme employed by Roedean School. This decision followed a ballot where 95% of voting workers supported the proposal, meeting the necessary conditions for recognition under UK labor laws.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cac-outcome-neu-nasuwt-roedean-school/application-progress> - In June 2023, the NEU and NASUWT applied for collective bargaining recognition at Roedean School. The CAC accepted the application, establishing a bargaining unit comprising teachers entitled to join the Teachers’ Pension Scheme employed by Roedean School. This decision followed a ballot where 95% of voting workers supported the proposal, meeting the necessary conditions for recognition under UK labor laws.
4. <https://independentschoolmanagement.co.uk/news/independent-schoolteachers-will-strike-over-tps-exit-warns-union-leader/> - In October 2023, Daniel Kebede, General Secretary of the National Education Union (NEU), warned that independent schoolteachers would strike over plans to exit the Teachers’ Pension Scheme (TPS). The government confirmed a 5% increase in employer contributions to the TPS, which independent schools would have to fund themselves. Kebede emphasized that the NEU would support members in taking necessary action to defend their terms and conditions, including potential industrial action.
5. <https://neu.org.uk/latest/blogs/win-jags-staff-over-pension-and-pay-threat> - In 2023, staff at James Allen's Girls' School (JAGS) took strike action in response to proposed changes to their pensions and pay. The NEU reported that 95% of members voted in favor of strike action. The dispute centered on the school's proposal to cap its contribution to the Teachers’ Pension Scheme, which the union argued would leave teachers significantly worse off. Following the strike, the school agreed to keep the TPS open to all eligible staff and withdrew the proposal for detrimental pay terms.
6. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/teachers-23-private-schools-vote-strike-over-pensions> - In January 2022, members of the NEU teaching union at 23 private schools voted to strike over opposition to their employers’ plans to withdraw from the Teachers’ Pension Scheme (TPS). Nearly all NEU teacher-members at the Girls’ Day School Trust (GDST) voted in favor of strike action, marking the first such action in the trust’s 149-year history. The union argued that leaving the TPS would result in teachers being at least 20% worse off in terms of annual pension payments.
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c36072y69zyo> - In January 2025, teachers at Our Lady's Abingdon School in Oxfordshire, members of the National Education Union (NEU), went on strike for five days over proposed changes to their pension scheme. The strike was in response to the school's governors' proposal to cap the school's financial contribution to the Teachers’ Pension Scheme. The NEU claimed that this would reduce teachers' take-home pay or force them to change pension schemes, and accused the governors of using a 'fire and rehire' procedure to implement the changes.