# Scottish teachers threaten industrial action over stagnant class contact time pledge



The Scottish Government is facing mounting pressure from teachers and their representatives over a stalled commitment to reduce teachers’ maximum class contact time. The pledge, made prior to the 2021 Scottish Parliament election, promised to cut class contact hours by 1.5 hours per week, lowering the cap to 21 hours. However, now in its fifth year with no tangible progress, representatives from the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) have expressed profound frustration, highlighting the severe workload stresses placed on teachers due to the delay.

According to the EIS, who have long campaigned for this change, the lack of meaningful action has forced them to initiate a consultative ballot among members on the possibility of industrial action. This move underscores the urgency felt across the teaching profession to compel the government to honour its manifesto commitment. The EIS has stated that, unless concrete proposals are presented by 3 February 2025, they will escalate the issue to a formal dispute. This deadline coincides with the Scottish Government’s budget-setting process, which the Teachers’ Panel of the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) has identified as a critical opportunity for resolution.

The persistent failure to implement the contact time reduction is broadly seen as part of a wider problem of unsustainable workload pressures facing teachers across Scotland. Reports from the Scottish Educational Journal (SEJ) further amplify this concern, pointing to the consequences of unmet promises on teacher wellbeing and classroom effectiveness. The workload strains, amidst shrinking available time for lesson preparation and marking, have increasingly driven calls for immediate governmental intervention, with both the SEJ and teacher organisations urging the Scottish Government and COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) to act swiftly.

Despite repeated attempts by negotiating bodies like the SNCT Teachers’ Panel to secure progress, the government’s dithering has frustrated those on the frontline of education. The EIS notes that this delay has not merely stalled reform but risks undermining morale and retention within the teaching workforce. They emphasized that teachers have demonstrated notable patience and professionalism but that this can only last so long in the face of disproportionate work demands.

As the deadline for formal dispute looms in early 2025, the coming months will be pivotal. The Scottish Government’s response will be closely scrutinised not only by teachers but also by parents and education stakeholders concerned about the impact of teacher workload on education quality. The promise to reduce class contact time was a key manifesto pledge, reflecting widespread recognition that workloads must be made manageable for the benefit of both educators and students. With growing indications that industrial action may become unavoidable, the pressure to deliver on this commitment is intensifying.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/scottish-government-teachers-scottish-parliament-b1245103.html), [[4]](https://www.eis.org.uk/teacher-workload/classcontact), [[7]](https://sej.org.uk/oct2023/classcontacttime/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/scottish-government-teachers-scottish-parliament-b1245103.html), [[3]](https://www.eis.org.uk/latest-news/classcontacttime), [[4]](https://www.eis.org.uk/teacher-workload/classcontact), [[5]](https://www.eis.org.uk/campaign-updates/storysofar)
* Paragraph 3 – [[6]](https://sej.org.uk/feb2025/main-feature-2/), [[7]](https://sej.org.uk/oct2023/classcontacttime/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.eis.org.uk/teacher-workload/classcontact), [[5]](https://www.eis.org.uk/campaign-updates/storysofar), [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/scottish-government-teachers-scottish-parliament-b1245103.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.eis.org.uk/latest-news/classcontacttime), [[5]](https://www.eis.org.uk/campaign-updates/storysofar), [[6]](https://sej.org.uk/feb2025/main-feature-2/), [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/scottish-government-teachers-scottish-parliament-b1245103.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/scottish-government-teachers-scottish-parliament-b1245103.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/scottish-government-teachers-scottish-parliament-b1245103.html> - The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) has announced a consultative ballot on industrial action over the Scottish Government's unfulfilled pledge to reduce teachers' maximum class contact time to 21 hours per week. Despite the commitment made prior to the 2021 Scottish Parliament election, there has been no tangible progress, leading to significant workload pressures for teachers. The EIS is seeking members' views on potential industrial action to address this issue.
3. <https://www.eis.org.uk/latest-news/classcontacttime> - The EIS has reiterated the urgency of addressing the lack of progress on reducing teachers' maximum class contact time. A formal dispute will be declared if no concrete proposals are presented by 3 February 2025. The promise to reduce class contact hours by 90 minutes per week to 21 hours was a key manifesto commitment in 2021, but four years on, no tangible progress has been made.
4. <https://www.eis.org.uk/teacher-workload/classcontact> - The Teachers’ Panel of the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) has expressed frustration over the Scottish Government's failure to implement its manifesto commitment to reduce class contact time to 21 hours. Despite repeated attempts, there has been no progress, leading to unsustainable workload pressures for teachers. A formal dispute will be declared if no plan is presented within the Scottish Government’s budget setting process.
5. <https://www.eis.org.uk/campaign-updates/storysofar> - The EIS has outlined the ongoing efforts and challenges in reducing class contact time. Despite over four years since the manifesto commitment, there has been no meaningful progress. The EIS is now proceeding with a consultative ballot for industrial action to address the unsustainable workload and to ensure the reduction in class contact time is implemented effectively.
6. <https://sej.org.uk/feb2025/main-feature-2/> - The SEJ highlights the urgency for the Scottish Government and COSLA to address the unsustainable workload facing teachers. Despite the 2021 manifesto commitment to reduce class contact time to 21 hours, no progress has been made, leading to increased workload pressures. The SEJ calls for immediate action to fulfil this promise and alleviate teacher workload.
7. <https://sej.org.uk/oct2023/classcontacttime/> - The SEJ reports on the SNCT Teachers’ Panel's criticism of the Scottish Government for the lack of progress in delivering the 2021 manifesto commitment to reduce teachers’ class contact time to 21 hours. Two and a half years after the pledge, there has been little progress, contributing to increased workload pressures for teachers.