# Teachers strike over rising violence and disruption in UK schools



The escalating crisis surrounding pupil behaviour in schools across the UK has reached a tipping point, with teachers like Sophie Walker at Westbourne Academy in Ipswich taking drastic action by walking out on strike. This protest, involving more than 50 staff members, stems from a pervasive climate of disorder wherein disruptive behaviour, such as throwing chairs and scissors, has become commonplace. Walker, who has dedicated a decade to teaching, recalls her enthusiasm for the profession as a fresh graduate, only to find herself questioning her future under the current conditions. Teachers report that some students roam the corridors in large groups, actively choosing to skip classes, which deeply impacts not only the classroom environment but also their mental health.

This situation is not isolated to Westbourne Academy. Across the country, many educators face similar challenges with student behaviour deteriorating significantly, especially since the Covid pandemic. According to Vic Goddard, a school leader who gained recognition on the TV show *Educating Essex*, a considerable number of pupils have entered a "spiral of behaviour" exacerbated by missed educational opportunities during lockdowns. Goddard highlights the additional burden placed on schools due to funding cuts, which hinder their ability to retain qualified staff, essential for managing behaviour effectively.

Teachers at Westbourne express frustration over a lack of consistent behaviour management from leadership, with veteran educator Marc Emmanuel noting the departure of four experienced teachers in the past year. He articulates the urgent need for robust systems to address discipline, as the current state of school life sees rampant disruption where lessons are frequently interrupted by students engaging in unruly conduct.

Social media also plays a significant role in shaping behaviours. Walker points out that students observe influencers and personalities who achieve success without traditional academic hard work, leading them to believe that they do not need to exert effort in their studies. This attitude sometimes manifests into tangible disruptions within the classroom and contributes to the growing divide between students and educators.

Parents are similarly disillusioned, with some claiming that while minor infractions such as school uniform violations are penalised, serious issues like bullying or attacks are insufficiently addressed. One parent shared their frustration regarding a lack of accountability from school leadership concerning threats faced by their child. In stark contrast, others express their solidarity with the striking teachers, arguing that action is needed to restore a positive learning environment. Rebecca, a concerned parent, stated her support for the educators, believing that teachers should not have to endure abuse and that parents must collaborate in fostering better behaviour among pupils.

Adding to the discourse are recent reports of strikes across other schools, such as at Oasis Academy in Kent, where teachers halted strike action only after the management committed to improving measures against pupil violence. This case illustrates a broader trend where educational professionals are increasingly compelled to advocate for their own safety and that of their students, often resulting in industrial action.

The overarching impacts of these events reveal the urgent need for systemic changes in schools to address issues of safety and discipline head-on. The Ministry of Education has acknowledged the critical situation and asserts a commitment to tackling poor behaviour, while new regional improvement teams are being set up to assist schools in elevating standards. Unfortunately, as parents and educators alike grapple with the challenges posed by a minority of disruptive pupils, the hope remains that dialogue and effective strategies can restore not only order but also a sense of respect within the educational landscape.

As the situation develops, the next steps will hinge on effective communication between educators, school administration, and parents aimed at creating an environment conducive to learning that supports both students and staff alike.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
2. Paragraphs 2, 4, 5, 7
3. Paragraphs 1, 3, 4, 5, 6
4. Paragraphs 2, 4, 5, 7
5. Paragraphs 2, 3, 4
6. Paragraph 6
7. Paragraphs 1, 2, 7

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.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/02/26/striking-teachers-may-fuelling-school-protests/> - This article discusses concerns that teacher strikes in the UK may be contributing to increased pupil protests and disruptions in schools. Tory MPs have warned that ongoing industrial action could be fueling student unrest, with protests erupting in various schools across the country. The piece highlights the potential link between teacher strikes and student protests, emphasizing the need for dialogue and resolution to prevent further disruptions.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/dec/04/teachers-at-kent-school-halt-strike-after-deal-to-tackle-pupil-violence> - This report covers the resolution of a strike at Oasis Academy on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent, where teachers had been protesting over pupil violence. The strike was halted after an agreement was reached, which included funding for additional behavior specialist staff and a commitment to address unacceptable pupil behavior. The article highlights the challenges schools face in managing pupil behavior and the importance of effective communication between staff and management.
4. <https://www.tortoisemedia.com/2023/11/28/kent-teachers-walk-out-over-bad-pupil-behaviour> - This article details the strike action taken by teachers at Oasis Academy in Kent due to escalating pupil violence and threats. Teachers reported incidents of being chased by large groups of students and experiencing physical assaults. The piece underscores the severity of the situation and the broader implications for school safety and staff well-being, calling for systemic changes to address pupil behavior issues.
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/11/29/kent-academy-head-cries-over-pupil-violence-school/> - This piece features an emotional account from the head of Oasis Academy on the Isle of Sheppey, who expressed deep concern over the pupil violence leading to teacher strikes. The headteacher's candid remarks highlight the emotional toll on school leaders and the urgent need for interventions to improve pupil behavior and ensure a safe learning environment for both staff and students.
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2023_United_Kingdom_pupil_protests> - This Wikipedia entry provides an overview of the 2023 pupil protests in the UK, detailing the causes, methods, and outcomes of various student demonstrations against school policies, particularly focusing on uniform and toilet use rules. The article contextualizes these protests within broader discussions about student behavior and the impact of social media on organizing such movements.
7. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/national-education-union-isle-of-sheppey-kent-ofsted-b1122429.html> - This article reports on the National Education Union's plans to meet with the Oasis Community Learning Trust to address ongoing issues of pupil threats and violence at Oasis Academy on the Isle of Sheppey. It highlights the union's concerns over the safety of staff and the need for a zero-tolerance approach to bad behavior, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between unions and school management to resolve these issues.