



Assessment Reform Campaign Frequently Asked Questions

What are the aims of the campaign?

In pursuing this campaign, the Union's aims are as follows:

- To end the publication of performance tables which destroy the careers of school leaders;
- To end the evaluation of schools using the flawed data of SATs results;
- For tests to be available to support teacher assessment so that an accurate judgement of progress can be made for every child;
- For schools' accountability not to be narrowed by using SAT test scores as a proxy for school achievement;
- To end time-wasting rehearsal for high-stakes testing.

What action is the NUT planning with regard to testing at KS2?

Members at Conference voted unanimously that the NUT should ballot relevant members on a boycott of the Key Stage 2 tests once all other reasonable avenues had been explored.

We will ballot these members on whether they are prepared to boycott the KS2 National Curriculum Tests in English and Mathematics in 2010. All members registered as being paid on the leadership pay spine according to the Union's database, in maintained schools in England which have year 6 pupils, and therefore fall under the statutory framework for SATs, are eligible to participate in the ballot and will be called upon to:

- Refuse to follow any and all of the test opening, checking and administrative procedures;
- Refuse to carry out the tests;
- Refuse to ensure that all "eligible and able" pupils take the tests.

What have we done to explore all reasonable avenues?

Action has included:

- Lengthy negotiations with senior politicians of all parties and Government ministers;
- Seeking the intervention of ACAS;
- Discussions with civil servants;
- Discussions with other unions;
- Discussions with Parent and Governing Body organisations;
- Evidence to the Select Committee, Expert Group, Primary Review;

Is the NAHT taking action as well?

Yes, the NAHT is balloting its members. Head teachers, deputy heads and assistant heads in maintained schools with pupils in year 6 will be balloted on a boycott of KS2 tests in English and mathematics in 2010.

Why are classroom teachers not included in the ballot?

Classroom teachers cannot be required to routinely participate in administration or invigilation arrangements that do not call for the exercise of professional skills and judgement so will not be expected to undertake such duties relating to SATs.

There is therefore no reason to ballot classroom teachers.

Why do we need to ballot?

A successful ballot must precede any action if the Union and members are to benefit from the protection offered by the law.

Why do I need protection?

There are contractual and statutory obligations on head teachers to administer the tests so any boycott would be a breach of those obligations. Others in the leadership group may also be asked to undertake such tasks so will also need the protection of a ballot.

What if I am threatened with disciplinary action?

It is unlikely that disciplinary action would be threatened against members taking action on SATs. If any such threat were made as a result of taking legitimate industrial action, your Union would respond vigorously. Should any such action be threatened, please contact your regional office immediately.

We have been preparing for SATs since the beginning of September.

Why is the ballot only happening now rather than earlier?

For members to receive the protection afforded by a lawful trade dispute and successful ballot, it is important to ensure that the ballot takes place within the required timeline – see above re protection. This means that the ballot could not take place until late in the Spring term.

Can I lose any salary if I take part in the action?

We would not expect any employer to deduct salary from those who take part. This industrial action would be limited to not administering the SATs and all other duties will take place as normal.

How should I work with my governing body?

The NUT strongly recommends that you work closely with your governing body and gain their support wherever possible. We believe the best approach is one in which you share the campaign aims with your governors, ideally as an agenda item at a meeting. Explain what the campaign is about and why you feel the current SATs based system is no longer fit for purpose. Spending time explaining how your current assessment systems in school work, and even doing a presentation, can help to illustrate your point. If you have wasted valuable time re-marking papers or have sent scripts back for re-marking, share this with your governors. As the campaign develops so it remains important your governors are kept fully informed. If you have the support of your governors, you might want to agree a statement which could be minuted. This could be in general terms in support of assessment reform or more specifically supporting any action you plan to take.

What if my governing body is against the campaign?

Clearly this is delicate and needs careful handling. You are advised to contact either your local association/division or your regional office to inform them of the potential difficulty. There is no point inflaming the situation although you need to be clear that NUT will provide whatever level of support you require should conflict emerge. It is important to remember that this is a trade dispute, affecting the working lives of school leaders. As such, school leaders are entitled to vote in the way that they feel to be appropriate. Locally, division/association secretaries should be keeping the Director of Children's Services in the picture which will keep the campaign high profile across your local authority so governors should recognise this is a wider issue than just your school.

My school has been selected to undertake the KS2 Science test sample.

What should I do about this?

Given that the model being used for the KS2 Science SATs is the model advocated by the NUT for SATs in general and also that it is made absolutely clear that the results of the tests are to be non-attributable, the NUT is advising members who are selected as part of the sample to carry out the tests.

If I don't administer SATs, what data will Ofsted use at my next inspection?

Data that could be provided to Ofsted will include the 2009 data and also the teacher assessment data for 2010. Inspectors will look to see whether teacher assessment data is robust.

What is the Ofsted position on this?

It is likely that Ofsted will issue guidance to inspectors when the result of the ballot is known. Further guidance will then be issued to members.

Schools who administer 2010 SATs will have data published on RAISEonline whereas those who do not administer will not. That potentially puts my school at a disadvantage. What is the NUT's position on this?

Schools will need to prepare the teacher assessment outcomes as they do now for KS1. These should be submitted in the same way. If external moderation of these results is carried out, as is already the case in some schools, this should be recorded as it gives additional validation to the school's results and meets inspectors' need for robust data.

If we are not administering SATs why are we sending in teacher assessments, which will mean that there is still the potential for league tables to be compiled?

The motion passed at Conference dealt specifically with ending the current flawed SATs regime. We believe that teacher assessment is the future of assessment as set out in the Union's policy document Bringing down the Barriers. As such, we see the ending of SATs as the first step towards the goal of moderated teacher assessment and a system of national sampling being accepted as the future of assessment and accountability.

The DCSF could populate RAISEonline with national comparative data but what do I do to get my school level data on it?

Again, it is important to use the information that is available from teacher assessment – see above.

If I don't administer the SATs and my local authority requests my data, what do I send them?

The same sort of information that is submitted for KS1 should be submitted for KS2. This then ensures that the local authority has sufficient information based solely on teacher assessment.

What happens if I choose not to comply with the Union's call to take action?

Any member is free to ignore the call to take action, should they so wish. However, in the event of a successful ballot, the Union expects members, if at all possible, to take direct action and not administer KS2 SATs in 2010. Members are urged to support the ballot. A strong 'Yes' vote and united action will empower all members and hopefully give them confidence and courage to back this campaign wholeheartedly, taking any action called for by the General Secretary.

How can I keep track of what's going on?

We will be sending out communications via circulars, letters and The Teacher magazine. A mailing to school representatives will be/was sent to schools on Monday 8 March. The Assessment Reform: End SATs section of the website www.teachers.org.uk/assessment is also kept up-to-date with the latest news and developments. Members should also contact their association/division secretary or their regional office if they have any additional questions about the ballot.

What happens next?

Following a successful ballot and the calling of action by the NUT's Executive on 21 April 2010, the action that members would be asked to take would be the following:

For English and mathematics SATs:

- To refuse to follow any and all of the test opening, checking and administrative procedures;
- To refuse to carry out the tests;
- To refuse to ensure that all eligible and able pupils take the test.

The NUT is not calling for a boycott of Science SATs and therefore these will remain unaffected.

Ballot timetable – subject to a successful ballot and the calling of industrial action by the NUT Executive.

Week beginning 15 March	Ballot papers will be dispatched to home addresses.
16 April	Ballot closes.
21 April be taken.	Special Executive meeting to decide if action is to be taken.
After 21 April	Members will be given notice of action to cover the lead up to, and the inclusion of SATs week. The nature of the action is set out above.
4 May	Action commences
Monday 10 May – Thursday 13 May	SATs week