

Teaching union accuses ministers of using misleading figures on strikes' impact

A union has accused the [Government](#) of using “unreliable” figures to claim the latest round of teachers’ strikes in [England](#) had less impact than earlier industrial action.

[Department for Education](#) (DfE) figures suggest regional strikes by National Education Union (NEU) members between February 28 and March 2 led to fewer school closures than a nationwide walkout by the same union on February 1.

The DfE said more schools were open in each region than in the same region on the day of the nationwide walkout.

The union claims the figures are misleading because schools where just 0.1% of pupils attended can be classified as “partially open”.

If the Government want to claim the NEU strikes are having a minimal and diminishing impact then they need to provide a full data release to back up that assertion

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At least 90% of pupils need to be in class for a school to be classified as fully open.

The NEU insisted pupil attendance rates should be included in the statistics but on Thursday the DfE refused to answer a freedom of information request asking for the figures by claiming they are “confidential”.

The union also said the figures are misleading because they give equal weight to schools of different sizes and that more recent pupil attendance figures show the February 1 strike was more effective than earlier data suggested.

An NEU spokesperson said: “If the Government want to claim the NEU strikes are having a minimal and diminishing impact then they need to provide a full data release to back up that assertion.

“Until they do, these reports should be taken with more than a pinch of salt.”

Education Secretary [Gillian Keegan](#) said: “We made a serious offer to the leaders of the National Education Union to pause the planned strikes so we can talk about pay, conditions and reforms.

“Unfortunately, the NEU refused to call off strike action this week, once again causing disruption to families and thousands of children who missed out on their education.

“The impacts of school closures were significantly less this time around, and I want to thank our brilliant head teachers and those teachers who chose not to go on strike as they have ensured more schools stayed open during strikes this week.

“My invitation to have serious and intensive talks on all

areas of this dispute still stands and I urge the NEU to take up the offer.”

NEU members took industrial action in the North East, North West and Yorkshire on February 28, the Midlands and East Anglia on March 1 and London, the [South East](#) and the South West on March 2.

The union plans further walkouts on March 15 and 16 across England and Wales.