



## MP Ellie Reeves

Labour Member of Parliament for Lewisham West & Penge

Education is close to my heart. Growing up, my mum taught in primary schools across Lewisham and Southwark and my dad was a headteacher in Bromley.

I am immensely proud of the work they did and the young lives they transformed. But it wasn't always easy. Education in the 80s and 90s was characterised by underinvestment and low pay. I remember clearly, when interest rates spiralled under John Major's Conservative government, how my mum would worry about how to pay the bills.

My Dad was a branch president of Bromley National Union of Teachers and has been a proud Trade Unionist all his life. He instilled in me the principles of fairness and hard work.

It's why I became an employment rights lawyer, representing Trade Union members day in, day out. Very often my clients had been dismissed or treated less favourably because they had taken part in industrial action.

No worker ever wants to have to take strike action and we should not forget that they do not get paid when they do so. It is always a last resort to challenge injustice.

And teachers face similar challenges today than the ones my parents faced in the 1990s - with the cost-of-living crisis, inflation, and 13 years of neglect to education.

Education budgets have been slashed, real terms pay is down 13% and schools now face a recruitment and retention crisis.

But instead of getting around the negotiating table this government have dug their heels in and introduced the Minimum Service Levels Bill in Parliament. This anti strike legislation is indefensible.

Under this Bill, workers in a wide range of sectors could now be sacked for taking strike action that has been agreed by a democratic ballot of trade union members.

This is a gross infringement on workers' rights and from my experience, it is likely to be counterproductive in reducing industrial unrest.

As well as an attack on working people it's also a distraction from the government's failure to prevent these strikes in the first place.

A Labour government would have got around the negotiating table with the trade unions. We would be recruiting more teachers to improve workloads, paid for by ending private schools' tax loopholes. Similarly, we would be undergoing a huge expansion of the NHS workforce, paid for by ending non-dom tax status.

Teachers and school staff worked tirelessly during the pandemic to keep children learning and to minimise disruption to their education. Every day they go above and beyond for those they teach.

It is the Tories who are letting down our children, not hard-working teachers. The Government needs to recognise this.



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