

Isle of Man dispute - FAQs

What is the dispute in the Isle of Man about?

On the Isle of Man, all state funded teachers are employed by the Department for Education, Sport and Culture (DESC). ASCL, along with the NAHT and NASUWT, are in dispute with DESC over pay, conditions and pensions, including the implementation of the 2018/19 pay award and the erosion of teachers' pay. The DESC followed the advice of the Secretary of State for Education for England, who has no jurisdiction on the Isle of Man, and applied a differentiated pay award.

This meant that teachers and school leaders on the upper pay range and leadership pay range saw yet another real-terms cut in their pay with increases of 2% and 1.5% respectively, rather than the recommendation of the independent School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) for a 3.5% increase for all pay ranges.

Why is ASCL considering taking industrial action in the Isle of Man?

This is not something we consider lightly. We have been in dispute with the Department for Education, Sport and Culture (DESC) on behalf of our members on the island since early 2019. Despite significant efforts on our behalf to resolve the dispute, it is still ongoing with no realistic prospect of a resolution.

Our members, and ASCL, feel strongly that industrial action is the only way forward as all other options have been exhausted.

Has ASCL ever taken industrial action before?

This is an unprecedented action for ASCL. Whilst we have previously been prepared to ballot members on industrial action in every other dispute, we have managed to reach agreement with the employer before having to take this final step.

We only ever consider this course of action when all other avenues have been investigated and exhausted.

What about using a conciliation service such as Acas?

We repeatedly requested a meeting with the Manx Industrial Relations Services (MIRS), the island's equivalent of Acas, from an early stage in the dispute. A meeting was finally arranged on the island on 5 August. The suggestions made by ASCL in the meeting to attempt to resolve the dispute were never followed through by DESC. We were then offered binding arbitration or a Court of Inquiry, neither of which was an appropriate option and members did not wish to pursue either of these.

We have subsequently fully participated in four days of talks between the employer and all the unions but to no avail.

School leaders in England and Wales also got 1.5% in 2018/19, why is ASCL in dispute on the Isle of Man and nowhere else?

The STRB's remit covered England and Wales in 2018/19 and it was for the Westminster Secretary of State for Education to decide whether to accept, reject or amend their recommendations. In 2018/19, the STRB recommended that school leaders got 3.5% but the Secretary of State amended that award to 1.5%. His decision was then put out for consultation before being adopted into the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD).

The STPCD is statutory for community schools in England and Wales, and in England academies can choose whether or not to comply with its provisions. However, the Isle of Man is not subject to any UK law and is not bound by the decisions of the Westminster Secretary of State for Education. Rather, pay awards are made in line with the Isle of Man's own pay policy.

This policy is ambiguous about whether the pay award for teachers on the Isle of Man should be the STRB's recommendation or the uplift published in the STPCD. Our argument is that, as an independent body, the STRB's recommendation should have primacy and that the Isle of Man government should not be ceding sovereignty on this matter to the Westminster Secretary of State.