

# Building a National Union of School Students

## Introduction

The Mission:

**An organisation that can be meaningfully led by school students, and is rooted in the same place students are; their schools.**

**“If students are cooperating  
today surely there is hope  
for tomorrow”**

**Iverson Macadam  
Founder of NUS, 1922**



# School students want to drive political change, but feel unable to.

Many school students are:

- Deeply concerned about issues like education, mental health provision, climate change and social injustice
- Following political issues online
- Wanting to see changes to their schools

But:

- Feel ignored by mainstream politics, organisations and their own schools
- Lack avenues to get involved

**Only 20% believe that  
"politics takes the voices  
of young people  
seriously."**

**School students and young people  
can be a powerful force when we  
come together**



# School students can meaningfully engage in campaigns and organising - with the right support.

## Supported by SOS UK:

### **Teach the Future (2019 - present)**

- Effectively led by school students
- Campaigned on climate education
- Led to changes in education policy

### **Shadow Curriculum and Assessment Review (2025)**

- Panel of school students
- Published guidance on curriculum reform
- Led to changes in curriculum reform

## School student unions in the UK:

### **National Union of School Students (1972)**

- Briefly existing school students union
- Successfully campaigned against corporal punishment
- Participated in School Kids against Nazis, which opposed the National Front

### **School Students Union Northern Ireland (2021 - present)**

- Represents 60,000+ students in NI
- Founded in 2021
- Campaigns on key issues like curriculum reform
- Limited resources

## European school students' unions

### **OBESSU**

- Many European countries have school students unions that are members of OBESSU
- Includes: France, Denmark, Norway, Italy, Spain, Finland, Austria, Germany and Belgium

### **Irish Secondary-level Students Union**

- Represents 70% of Irish secondary schools
- Similar safeguarding limitations as in UK



# SOS UK

## **Teach the Future (2019 - present)**

- Effectively led by school students
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# NUS

## **£10 million in hardship funding for students**

Announced by the  
Government in 2024 in  
response to cost-of-living  
crisis

## **Reintroduction of maintenance grants**

Introduced for the most  
disadvantaged students in  
England after years of  
student campaigning

## **Rise in minimum wage for apprentices**

Government raised  
minimum wage for  
apprentices by 20% in 2023



# School students' unions

## National Union of School Students (1972)

Successfully campaigned against corporal punishment

Participated in School Kids against Nazis, which opposed the National Front

## Irish Secondary-level Students Union

Represents 70% of Irish secondary schools.

Campaigns on key issues like lowering the voting age to 16.

## School Students Union Northern Ireland (2021 - present)

Represents 60,000+ students in NI

Campaigns on key issues like curriculum reform

## Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)

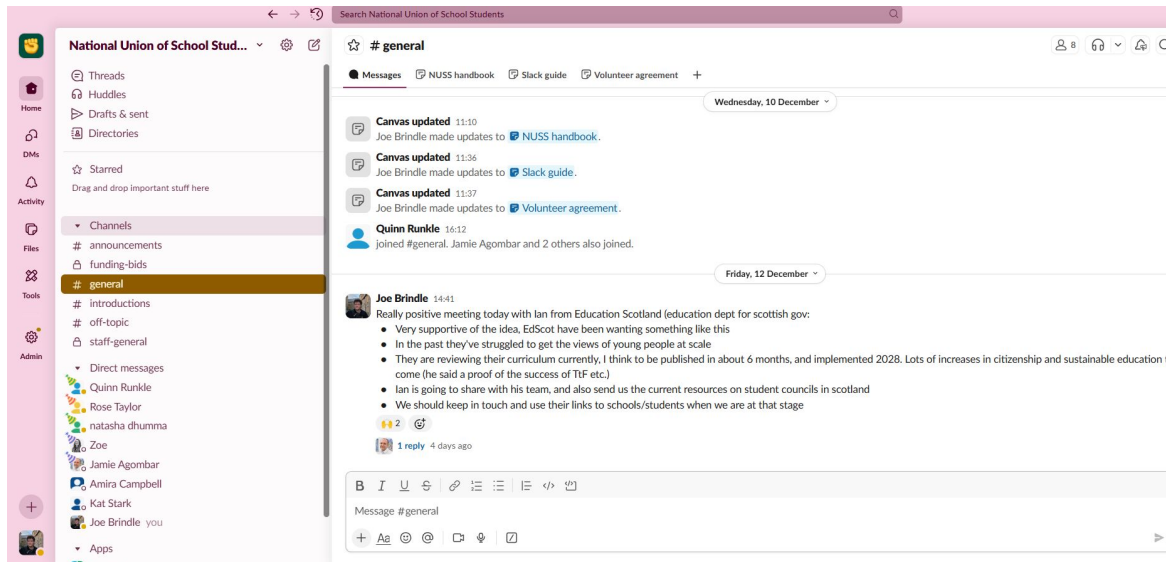
Many European countries have school students unions that are members of OBESSU

## **Let's discuss...**

- What excites you about the idea of NUSS?
- What concerns do you have? Are there any barriers you can see to school students getting involved?
- What issues do you think NUSS could campaign on?
- What would make you want to get involved?

# Join the team!

Be part of shaping something massive and historic! From design and branding to structure, signing up our first schools, **recruiting new volunteers**, speaking in media or at events - there is plenty to be done.



If we have time:

- Any preference for how we organise discussions, online work etc.?
- Are people familiar with/up for learning Slack?
- Any ideas for growing our initial team?
- What else should we be thinking about for early success?

# What matters?

- What issues do you care about? What do you think a school students union should/could campaign on?
- What would make a national union of school students exciting for other young people? What might encourage you to get involved?

(and any other related discussion)

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**NUSS**  
National Union of  
School Students

# How should it work?

- Do you have a student council in your school? How does it work & what could be done better?
- If there are national student boards/executives, how should that be formed and led?
- What does it mean for a national union of school students to be democratic, and school-student led?

# National Union of School Students

1. Student councils / schools **affiliate** to the union
2. They send **representatives** to **conferences**, where political priorities are discussed and an **executive** is **elected**
3. The **executive** oversees the **operations** of the organisation, and makes **political decisions**
4. All **school students** can put themselves forward for election to committees and/or **enroll as a volunteer** on working & campaign groups