

# Viva La Educación appeal for Cuba



PHOTO by Jess Hurd



**Louise Atkinson is the president of the NEU.**

AS I start my year as NEU president, I want to thank all those NEU members and

districts that have already donated to the Viva La Educación appeal. Since its launch in February, the appeal has raised almost £40,000 to send essential classroom materials to Cuban schools and teachers.

Impressive though this figure is, the scale of the challenge for Cuba's education system is such that we need to raise much more if we are to provide the concrete solidarity that Cuban educators need, and the country's children deserve. We are determined to fill the shipping containers – which we will be sending off to Cuba from next year's annual national conference in Harrogate – with stationery, special educational resources, arts, music and sports equipment and all the other vital educational supplies that schools need.

I urge every NEU district to support this project. The appeal will also provide much-needed resources to our sister union in Cuba to help it fulfil its vital role of supporting teachers.

In April, delegates at this year's national conference in Bournemouth heard from Niurka González, the general secretary of the Cuban teachers' union (SNTECD). Niurka received a heartfelt standing ovation from delegates and expressed her deep gratitude for the NEU's support and solidarity over recent years, including donations of more than 40 Braille machines and 8,000 musical instruments sent to Cuba.

Niurka also made clear the cause of the damage to Cuban children's education,



Cuban school children using Braille machines

## Making a donation

- Send a cheque, payable to CSC (Viva Educacion), to: **CSC, 33-37 Moreland Street, London EC1V 8BB**
- To donate by credit/debit card or bank transfer, call **020 7490 5715** or email **office@vivaeducacion.org.uk**
- For more information, visit **vivaeducacion.org.uk**

despite the best efforts of their teachers, when she stated: "It cannot be right that the education of Cuban children is so affected by decisions and actions being taken by the United States Government. We need your support to fight the criminal blockade which has the aim of starving us – something which it will never achieve."

The ongoing illegal blockade, along with the additional sanctions brought in by US

President Trump and maintained by President Biden, have hit Cuba's education sector hard. The Covid pandemic and ensuing collapse of tourism has further complicated the economic situation. However, no school has been closed and no teacher has lost their job, and the SNTECD is working across the country to support its members at this difficult time.

## Support the appeal

More than 20 NEU districts have already made donations to Viva La Educación, together with individuals and other trade unions. Please ask your NEU district to consider making a donation using the model motion at [vivaeducacion.org.uk/resources](http://vivaeducacion.org.uk/resources)

A full list of educational needs and costings is also provided on the website. For example, a £100 donation will provide basic stationery sets for all the students in a one-form entry primary school; £350 will buy a refurbished Braille machine for a school for visually impaired students.

A fundraising pack full of ideas and resources is also available on the website. The NEU international department and the Cuba Solidarity Campaign are happy to advise and assist with any activities and to present details of the project to NEU members at meetings.

It is also worth contacting the appeal if you have access to large quantities of educational materials, or relationships with suppliers who may be able to help.

Viva la Educación is a joint initiative of the NEU, Cuba Solidarity Campaign, Music Fund for Cuba charity and Cuba's education union SNTECD.

■ See our interview with Louise on **page 17**

**"The Cuban education system does really well compared with others in the region, but because of the blockade Cuban students often have to make do without many of the basic necessities that we take for granted. Our Viva La Educación appeal will help by providing educational supplies which are in short supply due to that 60-year-old US blockade."**

Kevin Courtney, NEU joint general secretary

**"It cannot be right that the education of Cuban children is so affected by decisions and actions being taken by the United States government. We need your support to fight the criminal blockade which has the aim of starving us, something which they will never achieve."**

Niurka González, general secretary, Cuban teachers' union