



St Mary's Catholic School

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where everyone can succeed



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27th January, 2023

Dear Parents and Carers

RE: Further information about NEU National Industrial Action

As mentioned in my previous letter earlier this week, the National Education Union (NEU) has voted for national strike action for teaching staff on dates in February/March 2023. The first scheduled day of strike action is **Wednesday 1st February 2023**.

Teaching staff in our school have a legal right to take part in the planned strike action, however, it is important to emphasise that the dispute and strike action is not specific to our school. The industrial action is in relation to the NEU's dispute with the government over the nationally agreed pay rises when taking into account the pressures faced by staff, with the increased cost of living, which we are all experiencing. It is a national issue, affecting all schools in England.

We have now evaluated the level of impact from the planned industrial action in our school, using the information available to us, to decide if it is possible to keep the school open or whether full or partial closure is necessary. **As I know you will understand, in making any decisions about school closure, we must ensure that we can comply with our legal duty of care to all students and staff, including ensuring the health and safety of our student and staff team.**

The level of impact on schools, due to this industrial action, will differ from school to school, according to a number of factors. This includes the number of NEU members in the school, the curriculum/timetable for the planned strike day and the impact on lessons due to those taking strike action. **Given all considerations, we will not be able to keep the school open for all year groups on Wednesday. Therefore, on Wednesday 1st February 2023:**

- **A group of vulnerable students across Years 7-13 will be able attend school** (*Miss Lague, Director of Student Support, will be in touch with the parents/carers of these children to confirm this*).
- **Year 7 students will be able to attend school.** They will complete a variety of subject lessons and enrichment activities.
- **Year 8 students will be able to attend school.** They will complete a variety of subject lessons and enrichment activities.
- **Year 9-13 students will work at home.** Students will be provided with 5 hours of high-quality subject work, including meaningful revision work for students in examination year groups. Teachers not participating in industrial action will upload lessons onto Teams for their timetabled classes. High-quality work will also be uploaded onto the Year Group Teams Tile, if subject teachers are not in school (*Miss Rossi, Director of Learning, will be in touch with all Year 9-13 Parents/Carers and students next week to outline more detail about these study resources*).
- **We will also be in touch with the families of all students who receive Free School Meals (FSM) in Years 9-13.** We want to ensure that every child is still able to have a hot meal on this day. Therefore, we will provide students with a voucher to be able to purchase this meal. Any students who receive free school meals in Year 7 and 8, or in the group of vulnerable students attending school, will receive their lunch in school as normal.

Thank you so much for your understanding and support. We have given these plans much consideration, including giving much thought to which year groups are able to come into school. For this particular strike day, the lessons of the younger year groups were able to be taught most effectively. We also feel that our older students are more able to work independently at home, completing meaningful work without supervision, whereas younger students may find this more challenging. There may also be more childcare implications for families, if younger students missed school. On balance, we also felt that 5 hours of high-quality, independent work and revision time at home for our older students was likely more purposeful than the possibility of older students coming into school and facing disruption to lessons, with many of their subject specialist teachers absent. Bringing younger students into school, rather than older year groups, is also very much in line with other Newcastle Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust Secondary Schools.



The above plans are for Wednesday 1st February 2023 only. We will continue to review and evaluate the impact of any further strike days and, if at all possible, we will vary the year groups coming into school, depending on the particular circumstances of each day, given that each strike day is on a different day in our two-week timetable. This may not be possible but we will certainly try our best to do this. We will be in touch regarding the other planned strike days in due course. As mentioned in my previous letter, the next strike day is on Tuesday 28th February, 2023.

The school is open as normal on all other days next week for all students in Years 7 to 13 (Monday 30th January, Tuesday 31st January, Thursday 2nd February and Friday 3rd February 2023 are all normal school days, with the already scheduled 2.00pm/2.10pm early finish on Monday 30th January for the Year 10 Parents' Evening).

Thank you very much for your continued support and understanding.

Very best wishes,



Miss Patterson
Headteacher

