



Longbenton High School

16th February 2023

Dear Parents & Carers

School closure due to industrial action: Tuesday 28th February

As you are aware, there is ongoing national disruption to schools planned by the NEU (National Education Union). Our school was unable to deliver teaching to Y7-11 on the last date of action (1st February) and unfortunately **we are in the same position on the forthcoming date of Tuesday 28th February**. We have looked again very carefully at the possibility of opening up to Year 11 for even a half day timetable, but we simply have too many lessons affected.

Please remember that this disruption is not aimed specifically at our school, but is a national campaign affecting the whole of England. As our school has higher NEU membership than some neighbouring secondary schools, we are impacted more severely.

As a result, school will be closed to Years 7-11 on Tuesday 28th February, with the following mitigations:

- We have the capacity to **open to limited numbers of key worker children / vulnerable children** who cannot safely stay at home on this date. We can only supervise students working independently in the SSC with non-NEU learning support staff and/or the senior team. They will not be able to attend any taught lessons.
- School will be **open for Year 11 and sixth form students to come in and work in a supervised independent study capacity**, should they so wish. This is optional/not compulsory. Please note that the kitchen will not be open, so students will need to bring a packed lunch. If your Year 11 child would like to come to school to study on that date, please get in touch with Mrs McPherson, Y11 RSL.
- **School will be open for Year 12 and 13 lessons:** Further Maths lessons will still be taught on this date.

We will have instructions ready for students on Monday 27th February regarding working from home. Please read the **FAQs** below for further information on the reasons for this decision to close.

I will be in touch with more details about the next dates (15th-16th March) after the half term holiday.

In the meantime, thank you for your patience and understanding.

Yours faithfully

Kelly Holbrook
Headteacher

Strike Action FAQs - Parents, Carers and Students

Why is there industrial (strike) action affecting schools?

In its campaign for a fully funded, above inflation pay rise, teacher members of the National Education Union (NEU) and NEU support staff in Wales have voted for strike action. The NEU have outlined 7 days of strike action (max. of 4 days for any one school).

In our school the following dates apply (there are other dates which affect other regions only):

- 1st February
- 28th February
- 15th March
- 16th March

This action is not specific to our school; it is a national campaign. Every school is affected differently depending on phase (primary or secondary) and the number of NEU teaching staff members in each school.

Trade union strike action is designed to be disruptive, so it is to be expected that the majority of schools nationally will not be able to operate as they normally would.

What is happening at LHS on Tuesday 28th February?

- School will be closed to Y7-11. We do not have sufficient non-striking staff to teach classes or supervise the site safely.
- The school building will be open to limited numbers of key worker children / vulnerable children who cannot safely stay at home on this date. We can only supervise students working independently in the SSC (Student Support Centre) with non-NEU learning support staff and the senior team. They will not be able to attend any taught lessons. This must be bookable by parents in advance and there is a risk assessed capacity limit.
- School will be open for Year 11 and Year 12 to come in and work in a supervised independent study capacity, should they so wish. This is optional/not compulsory.
- Year 12 and Year 13 will be able to attend Further Maths lessons as normal. There are no further sixth form lessons affected as it is timetabled enrichment on Tuesdays. There will be no timetabled PSHE lessons in form time on this date.

Why can't we keep LHS fully staffed/fully open?

Every school in North Tyneside has differing numbers of NEU teachers. The main two teaching unions are NEU and NASUWT. The numbers striking mean that we cannot keep the school fully open safely for everyone or staff classes when we only have SLT (senior leadership team) and limited numbers of non-NEU staff to use for supervision.

Why can't other teachers cover for colleagues?

It is of course theoretically possible to reallocate some duties during a period of industrial action, but we cannot place unreasonable expectations on members of staff not taking part. The Department of Education have made clear in guidance issued to headteachers that 'rarely cover' principles would apply for non-striking staff (ie we cannot force staff to cover for colleagues). We also are mindful and respectful of the right to strike / non-striking staff being asked to 'undermine' colleagues. The numbers striking are also simply too high to cover.

Why can't you just use supply staff?

Historically, employers were not permitted to use agency workers to replace a striking workforce because it was judged to breach the European Convention on Human Rights which affords individuals the right to form and join

trade unions for the protection of their interests. In July 2022, the law was changed, allowing employers to use agency workers to replace strikers. Even if we chose to try and do so, there is a national shortage of teachers, teaching assistants and agency/supply staff, so we are not able to source or book the agency staff to do this. We also simply have too many classes to cover.

Are we entitled to know the names of those striking?

No, while trade unions are obliged to inform employers as to the number of members being induced to take industrial action, they are not obliged to provide names. Names of striking staff will not be shared.

What happens if the headteacher/senior leadership team go on strike?

There are no members of the senior team who are also NEU members; they will not be striking on these dates.

Will work be set for students by staff who are striking? Will there be remote lessons?

Striking teachers cannot be asked to set work for students to complete on the day of the strike. The Department of Education have made clear in guidance issued to headteachers that there is no requirement for striking teachers to make up the time or teach extra lessons following strike action. This is also why remote lessons cannot be delivered. Year 11 and 13 have mock exams coming up in March which they can use the time to revise and prepare for. We would encourage students in years 7-10 to use the time reading for pleasure.

Will there be a picket line?

NEU have stated that there may be a picket line on the 28th; we are waiting for confirmation.

What about free school meals - can students come and collect lunch?

Yes - this will be organised through catering staff. They will be ready for collection by students at the end of the school day on Monday 27th February.

If my child is working in school on 28.2.23, do they need to wear uniform?

Yes.