



LONGBENTON HIGH SCHOOL

10th March 2023

Dear Parents & Carers

School closure due to industrial action: Wednesday 15th & Thursday 16th March

As you are aware, there is ongoing national disruption to schools planned by the NEU (National Education Union) as part of industrial strike action. Our school so far has been unable to deliver teaching to Y7-11 on the previous dates of strike action and unfortunately **we are in the same position on the forthcoming dates of Wednesday 15th and Thursday 16th March** next week.

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. We are not the only secondary school in North Tyneside in this position and have looked at every date independently lesson by lesson and year group by year group; it has not been an easy decision each time to close. 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 Wednesday and Thursday next week, 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. Please email SEND@longbenton.org.uk if you would like to request your child's attendance on these dates.
- School will be **open for Year 11 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. Students will have computer access and will be able to work on NEA (coursework) or exam revision for mock exams.
- **School will be open for Year 12 and 13 lessons** - there will, however, be significant disruption and some lessons will be cancelled. Students will need to liaise with Ms Potts, Head of Sixth Form, and check Google Classroom for updates (lessons at GSHS should be mainly unaffected and will go ahead as usual).

Thank you for your continued 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 Wednesday and Thursday 15-16th March?

- 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. Please email SEND@longbenton.org.uk to request your child attends on these dates.
- School will be open for Year 11 come in and work in an independent study capacity, should they so wish. They can have quiet study space for revision or work on coursework catch up.
- Year 12 and Year 13 will be able to attend lessons as normal but there will be significant disruption, with lessons cancelled. They should check with the Head of Sixth Form and Google Classroom regarding lessons that are still running closer to the 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; we would need over 20 lessons of cover on average, per lesson, across all year groups. This isn't possible to arrange in the current education climate (we can't find or afford that number of supply staff) and would lead to a poor learning experience for students even if we could, with the majority of staff absent.

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?

We have no information regarding a planned picket line on the 15th or 16th.

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 Tuesday 14th February. Students can come down to collect a lunch on Thursday. Parents can collect on behalf of their child. Please encourage them to do this; we do not want children to be disadvantaged due to closure.

If my child is working in school 15th-16th March, do they need to wear uniform?

Yes.