



# Meadow High School

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Headteacher: Mrs Jenny Rigby

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19th January 2023

Dear Parents/Carers

## Re: Planned strike action by the National Education Union (NEU)

You may be aware from media coverage that the National Education Union (NEU) has declared strike action, which is currently planned to take place in our region, on:

- Wednesday 1st February 2023
- Thursday 2nd March 2023
- Wednesday 15th March 2023
- Thursday 16th March 2023

The strikes are happening because of a national dispute between the NEU and the Government over teachers' pay and the impact of funding on schools over a number of years, and not because of any issues at our school. The Government is engaging in talks with the NEU so we will be waiting for any update on the current position concerning the planned strike action depending on the outcome of those talks.

I am contacting you at this point to give you as much notice as possible about our arrangements and so that you can take the necessary action for your child(ren) if or when it may be required. Members of the NEU are not required to let us know in advance whether they intend to be away from school and, therefore, unpaid on the planned strike action days, although some may indicate their intentions to us and we can ask them to, as an employer, to help in our planning and to ensure the safety of students who might be on site. This means that, until the days of the strikes, we will not know whether we will be able to run the school as we normally would.

**I am therefore giving you advanced notice that, should I need to make the decision to close the school at short notice, either just before or actually on the day of the strikes and whether that will be either partially or in full due to teaching staff shortages, please can you identify a place of safety where your child can go to for the day.**

We are conscious that continued attendance is important for all students. However, if the number of teaching staff striking means that we cannot safely keep the school open for everyone<sup>1</sup> and should we need to fully or partially close, we will apply the principles set out in the DfE's emergency planning and response guidance by giving priority to vulnerable children and young people and children of critical workers<sup>2</sup> and then, if possible, those sitting public examinations this summer.

We will ensure that there is a lunchtime meal available for those students in school. We will communicate separately and directly with those parents/carers who have responsibility for children deemed vulnerable or those employed as critical workers who will be prioritised as remaining in school during any strike days irrespective of which year groups may not be in the building.

To be clear, our priority order for pupils to remain in school would be:

1. Children on a Child Protection Plan
2. Children on a 'stepping up' or 'stepping down' Child in Need Plan
3. Children of critical workers<sup>3</sup> where there is no other adult to supervise the child

4. Adopted children or children on a special guardianship order
5. Those at risk of becoming NEET ('not in employment, education or training')
6. Those living in temporary accommodation
7. Those who are young carers
8. Those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)
9. Care leavers
10. Children and young people in a family circumstance presenting challenges for them, such as drug and alcohol misuse, parental offending, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
11. Others at the provider and local authority's discretion including pupils and students who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health

Following the repeal of Regulation 7 in July 2022, it is now possible for employers to engage with agency staff to replace the work of those taking official strike action. However, I need to stress that the availability of agency teaching supply staff is scarce generally and the cost exceptionally high against already challenging budgetary demands upon schools. With the majority of state funded schools having teaching staff who are members of the NEU, the pressures on the small pool of supply staff will be unprecedented during the strike days.

Our experience of delivering blended and online learning, developed during the pandemic, means that we have a well-established online learning facility, although we may not have staff able to facilitate this fully for all subject areas on any strike day. I am therefore not able to guarantee work will be consistently available for all students if we have to partially, or fully close on any of the strike days.

I am sorry that you may have to make alternative arrangements for your child at short notice, and that they may experience further disruption to their education, but hope that in communicating the uncertainty of the situation at this stage will enable you time to make arrangements.

I understand that this situation may be frustrating and Meadow High School remains committed to providing a safe and secure environment for our students and delivering high-quality teaching and learning. I will inform you as soon as possible if or when I know further details and hope that a resolution can be reached between the NEU and the Government as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely,

**Mrs J Rigby**  
**Headteacher**

- 1 - Department for Education's advice on 'Handling Strike Action in Schools'
- 2 - Annex A and B at Emergency planning and response for education, childcare, and children's social care settings October 2022 publishing.service.gov.uk
- 3 – Critical workers
  - Health and social care
  - Education and childcare
  - Key public services
  - Local and national government
  - Food and other necessary goods
  - Public safety and national security
  - Ministry of Defence civilians
  - National Crime Agency
  - Transport
  - Utilities