



19th January 2023

Dear Parents

This letter is from Sefton Association of Primary Headteachers, to inform you of the pending and potential industrial action by schoolteachers, support staff and headteachers and to explain the reasons for such significant action.

As reported in the press, the National Education Union (NEU) has said it will hold strikes on the dates detailed below, with other unions in discussion with members regarding strike action:

- Wednesday, February 1 (England and Wales),
- Tuesday, 14 February (just Wales)
- Tuesday, 28 February (Northern, North West, and Humber regions),
- Wednesday, 1 March (East Midlands, Western, Eastern regions)
- Thursday, 2 March (London, South East, South West regions)
- Wednesday, 15 March (England and Wales)
- Thursday, 16 March (England and Wales)

Each school will notify parents of the implications of the strike actions for their children. The government have provided guidance for headteachers and there is no requirement to cover classes of striking teachers. This means that, as teachers are members of different unions, schools will be affected in different ways. In some cases, following a risk assessment, this will mean that it is necessary for either individual classes or the whole school to close temporarily.

The government have provided information about the planned strike action on the Education Hub of the Gov.UK website: <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/>

The website reports that the decision to strike 'puts children's education and wellbeing at risk at a time when teachers are working hard to support them in recovering from the pandemic', however in the explanation below you will see that the risks have been building up over a number of years and before the pandemic.

Whilst the strike action is reported as relating only to the pay and conditions of schoolteachers, for many years, funding for schools and staff has, in real terms, reduced year on year. The recent government announcements about 'additional funding' for schools have done little to address this 'real terms' reduction with schools being required, for example, to fund recent pay increases for teachers and support staff through existing school budgets.

The 'real terms' pay reduction has in turn led to a recruitment and retention crisis in the teaching profession and reducing resources, funding, services, and staff is of great concern to headteachers and their staff as there is a very real risk that the education and support that can be given to children could suffer as a consequence.

This combined with the cost-of-living crisis has created a perfect storm with many schools now being in the position of having to set a deficit budget.

School staff, including headteachers, care passionately about the children and families with whom they work and remain committed to delivering the very best for children and families. They have demonstrated this by continuing to deliver high quality education with the resources they have, despite the many years of underfunding, eroded salaries, and the recent pandemic. Many are reaching breaking point and regrettably feel they have no alternative but to strike in order for the Government to appreciate the unprecedented position in which schools find themselves, due to chronic underfunding.

Yours Faithfully

Sefton's Primary Headteachers