

Castleman Academy Trust

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Dear All,

24 February 2023

I am writing to update you on behalf of the Castleman Academy Trust (CAT) regarding proposed strike action by the National Education Union (NEU) for next Thursday, 2nd March 2023.

CAT respects the decision taken by NEU members and shares the concerns surrounding teachers' pay and the impact on recruitment and retention. We also understand that parents will be concerned about arrangements they need to make, should school be closed to their children.

Based on feedback from parents, we are aiming to inform you of closures, on the 1st March, the day before the proposed strike action. This decision will be based on the best information we have at that time. As staff are not obliged to inform us of their intent to strike, it could mean that further closures may have to be announced on the morning of the strike (2nd March 2023).

For those families who may find this difficult to accommodate, we would urge you to have alternative arrangements in place, should your school need to make further closures.

You may have seen some media coverage of talks being scheduled between the Government and NEU union officials, aimed at reaching an agreement around pay and conditions. There has been no further information about this and therefore, we still anticipate strike action going ahead next week. For legal reasons, until the day of the strike action to be taken, Union members are under no obligation to inform Headteachers of their intent to strike. They have also been instructed by Union leads not to do so. Therefore, this may mean we will not be able to inform you of any further closures or partial closures until the day of the strike.

The impact of the strike action will be different in each school. Members are not required to inform school leaders of union membership and therefore Headteachers cannot know who on staff may strike. Those schools with more NEU members may experience a greater impact than those with fewer members.

Covering classes of those striking is problematic. Supply teaching agencies are unlikely to be able to support the anticipated number of absences on that particular day. The government has suggested using volunteers, but without safeguarding checks in place, this is not possible. Volunteers have also indicated that they would feel uncomfortable supervising large numbers of children. Asking staff members to supervise large numbers of children contravenes pupil/teacher ratios and is difficult for a number of health and safety reasons.

We will continue to monitor the situation and update you accordingly, as information becomes available. Regardless of strike action, our schools will be open to vulnerable children and the children of parents who work in the emergency services. You will be informed by the school should your child be eligible to attend. Work will be provided for all other children, online to be accessed at home.

Further strike action has been proposed for 15th and 16th March. We would hope that all involved in the dispute will work together towards a resolution to avoid further strike action.

We will continue to do all we can to keep you informed in a timely fashion, but please understand if this is not possible.

Yours sincerely,

Rhonda Moore
Chief Executive Officer



Ferndown
Middle School

