

Dear All,

23rd January 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).

CAT respects the decision taken by NEU members and shares the concerns surrounding education funding and the major difficulties schools are experiencing in recruiting and retaining teachers and support staff. We also understand that parents will be concerned about arrangements they need to make, should school be closed to their children.

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 closures until the morning of the 1 February 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 close or partially close.

The impact of the strike action will be different in each school. There are a number of education unions, including the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) and NASUWT who recently balloted their members regarding striking, but failed to meet the legal turnout threshold for strike action. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) also balloted. 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. Another complication is that our staff have children in schools who may also be on strike. They may need to sort out their own families before getting to school.

We will continue to monitor the situation and update you accordingly, as information becomes available. Further strike action has been proposed for 2nd, 15th and 16th March. Recent ballots held by the National Association Headteacher (NAHT) and NASUWT failed to meet the legal turnout threshold for strike action. They are proposing re-balloting members. We would hope that all involved in the dispute will work together towards a resolution to avoid further strike action.

Headteachers are meeting regularly and are doing all within their power to be open on 1st February. We will continue to do all we can to keep you informed in a timely fashion, but we would be grateful for your understanding if this is not possible.

Yours sincerely,



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