

## Strike Action FAQs v 7

THIS IS A LIVE DOCUMENT AND WILL BE UPDATED IF THE SITUATION OR GUIDANCE CHANGES

### Guidance

- [Handling strike action in schools](#)

### Overview

#### **Why is the National Education Union (NEU) planning strike action?**

The NEU negotiate pay on behalf of all teachers in sixth form colleges. In this year's pay negotiations the management side offered a 5% pay award across all pay points rising to 8.9% on the lowest pay point. This offer is at the very limit of affordability for colleges due to funding per learner only being increased by 2% this year. The NEU rejected this offer as they wanted a rate greater than inflation which at that point in May 2022 was 11.7% RPI. They have therefore entered into a trade dispute with the Secretary of State for Education and successfully balloted their sixth form college members for strike action in November 2022.

#### **Are any other unions involved?**

UNISON accepted the pay award this year for support staff of at least a 5% increase in pay across the board. NASUWT have balloted for action but did not reach the threshold and are re-balloting. NEU have balloted their support staff members, but the ballot did not meet threshold. School teachers who are NEU members were also balloted and have voted to strike. This result was announced on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023. The NEU have since confirmed some strike days will involve both school and sixth form college teachers.

#### **What is the college's plan for this year's pay award?**

The college will always seek to honour the outcome of pay negotiations as long as it is affordable. This year's offer for teachers at an average of 5.25% will be very difficult to afford – in effect adding 3.25% extra on top of our pay costs which will need to be funded through efficiencies and cost saving measures totalling around £200K – but we have agreed that we will honour the offer. We have been working hard to achieve the cost efficiencies needed.

#### **Does the strike signal an issue with staff / management relations?**

Not at all. Management are concerned about the cost of living crisis for all our staff and the college operates its finances to ensure the financial stability to honour pay awards each year and protect job security. The Principal meets regularly with union representatives and there are friendly and transparent communications on matters such as pay and conditions. The dispute is with central government about the lack of funding for pay awards.

## Strike days

### When will the strikes take place?

Five strike days have already taken place this year as follows:

- Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November
- Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February
- Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> March
- Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> March
- Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> March.

Additional strike days are now planned for two separate days on **Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April** and **Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May**. The NEU have balloted their members for more strike days later in the summer term and into the autumn term. The outcome of this ballot will be known very soon.

### What happens on a strike day?

Union members who choose to go out on strike will not come to work. They may picket in small numbers at the pedestrian entrance to the college. For the upcoming strike days on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April and Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May, some striking staff may choose to use dispensation from the NEU to deliver classes to examined students (e.g. 2A, Transition and GCSE retake). All other members of staff will work as usual.

### How much impact will the strike have on college operation?

The college will be fully open and we expect that a large majority of lessons will run. Many students will see no impact whilst some might have one or more teachers not at work. Please remember that there will be a large number of staff onsite, including all support staff, and that our age group is 16-19, so continuation of college operation will be safe at all points. No exams will be affected by the planned strike dates and no whole college events will be impacted. All timetabled lessons, including Pro-Study and Enrichment, will run unless a specific member of staff is absent.

### What are the practical arrangements for students if their teacher is on strike?

All of our subjects have very well developed SharePoint areas and clear schemes of work so all students will be able to use their time constructively to finish homework, progress coursework, do practice assessments or read ahead for the subject. In regular classrooms students can remain in the class. In labs and technical areas they should move to the library.

### How will the timetable and registers work?

This is a crucial time for all our students and we want them to achieve their very best in the summer exams. To manage the disruption to studies, most lessons will run as timetabled and be fully registered. Almost all students will still attend college as usual, but some may have a shorter day than usual. If a student has only one lesson running then they must still attend that lesson.

### What are the practical arrangements for staff on the strike days?

We will ask teachers in advance whether they intend to strike, although teachers are not required to respond. All teaching staff must sign in at Reception when they start work – in order for us to know who is on strike.