

Our ref: ljm/KDV/Correspondence

17 January 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

### **Re: National Education Union (NEU) Strikes**

You will no doubt be aware that the National Education Union (NEU) yesterday announced they would follow several other unions and exercise their right to strike. I wanted to write to you as soon as possible to update you on how this is likely to affect us here at school and what that will mean for you and our students. Here at The City of Leicester College, we have a very large number of teaching staff who are members of the NEU. This is likely to mean we are not able to open during strike days or provide online lessons as we did during the last national lockdown.

While I absolutely do not want our students to suffer further impact to their education, my first responsibility is for their health and safety. No firm decisions have been made as the announcement was only made yesterday, but it is very unlikely I can guarantee the safety of our students were we to remain open with a depleted workforce. If the decision is taken to close during the strikes, we will prioritise our most vulnerable students and see what in school provision we can put on as we did during the lockdowns. We will also identify resources that students can access independently and minimise any impact on learning.

I have had a couple of questions asked of me a few times today that I thought I would share my answers with all of you:

#### **What dates will the NEU hold their strikes?**

The NEU have announced they will hold seven days of strikes across February and March, but each school will only be affected by four of them. The dates that will affect The City of Leicester College are:

- Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2023 (England and Wales Strike)
- Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023 (Regional Midlands Strike)
- Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023 (England and Wales Strike)
- Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023 (England and Wales Strike)

#### **Will school be open during the strike days?**

As I mentioned earlier in my letter, we can only open if I can guarantee the safety of the students in school and I am not able to make this decision yet. We will do what we can to ensure that we are open to our most vulnerable students, but it is unlikely that we will be open for the majority of students.

#### **Why are the NEU striking?**

The NEU are striking over teacher pay and school funding. I am not a member of the NEU and I do not believe it is appropriate for me to give any personal opinions on the dispute. Factually though, the NEU is correct that there has been a significant decrease in the value of teacher pay in the last decade and the government have not recruited enough trainee teachers. This has led to schools finding it increasingly challenging to appoint and then retain high quality staff to teach their students. The recent pay award for teachers and support staff has been taken from existing school budgets without extra funding. The high level of inflation has meant more money is also

being spent on consumables such as energy, IT equipment, paper, stationary, etc. Without teachers and consumables, schools cannot run so these are costs that schools cannot avoid. This means there is now significantly less money for any additional services and resources that schools have previously used to support students. The NEU are looking for a pay deal that they feel will attract and retain more high quality staff as well as an increase in school funding so students do not suffer.

**Will there be more strikes?**

It is difficult for me to say. The NEU have not committed to any strikes beyond the 16<sup>th</sup> March and two other teacher unions are exploring if they should re-ballot their members for strikes. Depending on how these ballots and the NEU strikes go, we may see an increased number of strikes just like we have with strikes in other sectors.

I will be in touch with you when I have more information but wanted you to all know the situation and what it is likely to mean over the coming weeks so you can begin to make plans. In the meantime, as ever, my thanks for your continued support as we work together in the best interests of our students even in these difficult times.

Kind regards,

**Mr. K Vernon**  
**Head Teacher**