



Connaught
School for Girls

Dyers Hall Road
Leytonstone
London E11 4AE

Headteacher — Alexander Silk, MA

seize the day

Friday 6th December 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

Unfortunately, again I am writing to you with a heavy heart that I need to announce the National Education Union members at our school have informed me that they intend to be on strike on the following dates:

- Tuesday 10th December
- Wednesday 11th December
- Thursday 12th December
- Tuesday 17th December
- Wednesday 18th December
- Thursday 19th December
- Friday 20th December

I can confirm that the school's position will be to try to keep the school open for students to the best of our ability. I will give you more details on this as soon as I can. It is likely that some year groups will need to stay at home and work remotely on some days as I will have a diminished staffing team in school and so I cannot have as many students on site. Due to this on the first day of planned strike action on:

Tuesday 10th December:

- **Year 7, Year 10 and Year 11** students will be in school for a shortened school day. Students will arrive as usual through Connaught Road entrance, but starting at **8.50am**. Students will have lessons 1-4 and be **dismissed after collecting a packed lunch at 1.15-1.30pm**.
- **Year 8 and Year 9 will not be able to come into school** and they will receive work on Google Classroom.

We are working hard to formulate plans for the rest of next week and will share these with you as soon as they are finished. As the school was still under the ballot from the previous round of strikes in July (the union has 6 months on each ballot), they were able to list days of strike action with little notice. Since I have been notified of the strike dates the school has been working to try to avoid the industrial action going ahead. Since receiving the notification of their intention to take industrial action, I have met with the NEU representative twice to discuss the issues raised, and agreed actions on all of the issues in order to support the members. However, despite this agreement with the representative, the members have decided to reject the proposal from the school and to proceed with their strike action.

I had been hopeful that this period of industrial action had drawn to a close and the school could look to a new chapter of moving forward together. I remain optimistic that we will reach a resolution predicated on the belief that we are all on the same team, with the same goals and objectives for our students.

Outlined below is the school's position, details of why strike action has been deemed as the resource that

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some staff have opted to follow, and the measures we will put in place to minimise disruption to the students' end of year experience, entitlement and general experience of school.

The NEU members have announced an intention to strike due to:

1. The formatting of development plans that have been in place and agreed since 2019 to be amended to include a section for staff to identify workload issues. This has been put in, but they would like it in a different column.
The school agreed to work on an example with a subject leader to see what was the most effective and efficient way to outline their perceived workload issues.
2. Staff wanted confirmation that there was no expectation to use seating plans in classes as school. The school leadership had promoted the use of seating plans to help better identify students and specific needs in the classroom.
The school confirmed it remained optional but was highly recommended.
3. The school to confirm that teachers are not required to carry out admin tasks.
The school agreed a regular email could be sent to confirm that teaching staff were not required to carry out admin tasks.
4. A stress management audit to be carried out on all staff in the school. The school worked with the NEU to agree which stress management audit to use.
This has been sent for staff to complete.
5. That staff were raising issues over workload, due to setting cover lessons for absent colleagues.
The school agreed to confirm in an email that subject specialist teachers are not obligated to set cover work for absent colleagues, and if they do it is out of their choice.
6. Part-time English leadership responsibility post to be advertised.
The post was advertised in November.
7. NEU members raised an issue that link governors coming into school was creating additional workload. School visits are an essential part of good governance and custom and practice in all schools. The governors agreed to share template reports and the model structure of a visit.
The school confirmed governors were not there to make judgements on teaching or to be involved in operational matters.
8. The NEU wanted to make some minor changes to policies ratified by governors during 2024.
The school is using Waltham Forest model policies, but the school met with the NEU representative and the school agreed to take the simple changes to the governor's meeting on 11th December.
The school also agreed to review other policies in the Spring term.

I have met with the school NEU representative twice in the last week, (29/11/24, 02/12/24) to discuss the ballot and attempt to understand why there is a dispute and to try to find a negotiated resolution to avoid any strike dates going ahead. I had asked for the NEU representative to meet members to tell me if strikes would be called off no later than the 4th December, but the meeting only happened yesterday on 5th December. The school have made every effort to meet, consult and negotiate. We have always been willing to listen. We have made every effort to work collaboratively.

With the help of the school community, I am hoping, we will then be able to fulfil our moral obligation to have the school open for the children, as much as is feasible. What we need is your support in standing with us and appreciate the tremendous effort to ensure we can continue to offer our students the ability to come to school. We will also need your support in understanding that whilst the lessons we would like to offer may not be possible, the school is determined to allow the children, particularly those who need to come to school to have safe spaces, a lunchtime meal and structures and support around them. Please stand with us as we try to put in what we can for all of us, and in particular for our more vulnerable students.

I appreciate that again, there is a lot of detail I have shared with you today in the same way as I did in the summer. I believe that by showing honestly and truthfully what challenges we are facing enables us to work together as a community to overcome these difficulties. I have worked alongside this community for the past 15 years, and I wanted to honour those relationships by being as frank and as transparent as I can be.

There was nothing in the list of issues raised by the NEU representative that the school has said it would not do, providing the industrial action was called off. However the NEU members have elected to keep the strikes in place.

I am informing you of these dates that are planned, but still with the ambition that they will be called off. I will write again Monday when I know if they have decided to remove the strike days, or with a more detailed plan for next week on the days of industrial action.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Silk', written in a cursive style.

Mr. Silk
Headteacher