



Connaught
School for Girls

Dyers Hall Road
Leytonstone
London E11 4AE

Headteacher — Alexander Silk, MA

seize the day

Wednesday 19th February 2025

Dear parents and carers,

I am writing to inform you that the school's governors have this week received notification from the National Education Union (NEU) that they intend to hold a ballot for strike action at Connaught School for Girls. Since this has the potential to cause significant disruption to the school, I wanted to inform you straight away.

The union have informed us that the ballot will open on Monday 24th February and close on Friday 14th March. There are 40 members of staff who are eligible to vote in the ballot – 24 teachers and 16 members of support staff. In order for the ballot to be successful, at least 50% of eligible members must respond to the ballot and at least 40% of eligible members must vote in favour of the strike action.

The union have informed us that, if the ballot is successful, the strike action will start on w/c 24th March, with further periods of discontinuous strike action to follow over the next six months. Unfortunately, I am afraid that this may therefore affect students' preparations for their GCSE examinations and the exam period in the summer term, including potential disruption to learning up to mid-September on this ballot.

The reasons given by the union for holding the strike ballot are:

- Unfair and unacceptable management practices
- Victimisation of NEU members
- Discrimination of disabled NEU members
- Inadequate school policies and procedures
- Excessive workload

At present, I do not have any further information about the reasons for the proposed strikes. I have not been given any background or details, other than the list above. The union representatives have not asked for any specific changes to policies or procedures outside of what the school has already agreed to, and is in the process of consulting with union representatives. It is unclear whether their concerns relate to particular individuals or a larger number of staff. It is therefore very difficult for me to respond to their concerns. I am actively seeking more information from the union about this. As soon as they provide more information about the changes they would like us to make, I will be able to enter into negotiations with them.

I want to assure you that, as headteacher, I am fully committed to supporting staff well-being and ensuring there is a positive working environment at Connaught School for Girls. I do not believe that any of the actions taken by the school's leadership team recently could be characterised as victimisation or discrimination. We have worked hard, in recent years, to ensure that the school has a comprehensive set of policies and procedures in place that are robust, appropriate and fit for purpose. Our commitment has always been and will

continue to be, to provide a safe and supportive environment for our students where we strive for the very best outcomes. We will continue to review and improve our practices as needed to support this end.

Over the next few weeks, along with the governing body, I will do my best to engage with the union in a constructive way, in order to try to avert the proposed strike action. We will do everything in our power to avoid any disruption to students' learning, particularly Year 11 students who are preparing for their GCSE exams. Together, we will do everything possible to maintain stability for all of our students, ensuring they are well-supported and provided with the best possible education.

I know that you may have concerns about these matters. It is a difficult and worrying time for the whole school community. As you may be aware, there has been strike action in a number of other schools in the local area recently. In some cases, this has been resolved, and the action called off following negotiations with ACAS and senior union officials. I am hopeful that this may be the case for us, but at present I do not have enough information about the union's demands to know whether or not we are likely to be able to meet them.

I will write to you again next week, and will keep you informed about our negotiations with the union. In the meantime, I will be contacting the Waltham Forest Director of Children Services, Nicky Crouch, as well as our local political representative, Calvin Bailey MP. I will also be writing a letter to Paul Phillips, the school's NEU representative, and Glen Kelly, the regional NEU representative. I will also be writing to Daniel Kebede, General Secretary of the NEU. The local strike action is reliant on support from the union nationally, since they are responsible for paying the salaries of the staff who are on strike.

If you have questions about these matters, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Silk', written over a horizontal line.

Mr. Silk
Headteacher