

Industrial Action – Strike Day Wednesday 1 February 2023

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Why is the strike happening?

Various teaching unions balloted members about taking part in industrial action in relation to their pay and conditions. The outcome of the ballot from The National Education Union (NEU), which is the largest teaching union in England, was that the majority of their members voted to take action.

A programme of strike days has been scheduled which is aimed at highlighting to the government the feelings from members about problems which have been discussed between union officials and politicians over recent months.

Why will some schools close and others open?

There are several teaching unions and, within any school, there will be a different proportion of teachers within those unions. The other teaching unions do not have a mandate to strike and, therefore, any teacher who is not in the NEU is unable to undertake industrial action. However, other unions do not allow their members to cover for colleagues who are on strike.

There is also a situation where, for various reasons, teachers who are part of the NEU may choose not to take part in the strike action and, instead, they will report for work.

Why might there be some classes closed and some open within the same school?

As only teachers in the NEU are permitted to strike at this point, this may mean that only specific classes will be affected. A school may have a situation where it is feasible to open to a number of classes because they have appropriate personnel in school to open safely to classes whose teachers are not striking. Depending on the timetables of individual year groups, the school may have to close to certain year groups because there are not enough teachers to open safely.

Why is remote work not being set for individual students and classes?

Teachers who are on strike will not set remote work for their classes. Other teachers are not permitted to cover for striking colleagues, nor to set work for their classes. In these exceptional circumstances, remote work is being made available via widely-accessible approved educational websites.

How is a decision made?

The decision to open or close the school lies with the Head Teacher or Principal. When considering how to manage the situation, the Principal must consider a number of factors such as the number of teachers, senior leaders, other staff, and first aiders that are available. Any decision will be based on an assessment of how safe it is for users of the building. This decision will also take into account possible problems if a major issue arose and how this would be safely managed without certain staff being available.

If my child's class is closed, what will that mean for their attendance?

If a school has to restrict attendance by telling some pupils not to attend school on a strike day, the Y code will be used for pupils who are told not to attend. The Y code does not count towards the pupil's or school's absence record.

If my child's class is open but other classes are not, is attendance optional?

Where the school is open to children, even partially, the attendance at school for these children is expected as normal.

This may mean that within one family, some children are able to attend school while others are not. This could be the situation across schools or within the same school.

My child is entitled to free school meals because of our household benefits. Will they still be provided with a meal on a strike day?

For any child who is entitled to free school meals due to a parent's or carer's benefit assessments, they will be entitled to a meal on the day of a strike. For children not attending school, who are entitled to a free school meal, a voucher will be issued by the school to parents.

You will know if you are entitled to free school meals because this will have been agreed by the council and you will have been receiving meal vouchers over holiday periods as part of the government/council support scheme since the start of the COVID pandemic.