



Ebrington Primary & Nursery School

Phone: 02871343864

e-mail: bguthrie493@c2kni.net

www.ebringtonps.co.uk

Principal: Mr B F Guthrie, BA Hons ED PQH

23rd November 2023

Dear Parent

Half day of strike action by teachers and school leaders on 29th November 2023

It is with considerable regret that I am writing to you about forthcoming strike action by the five teaching unions in Northern Ireland. You may have seen coverage of this in the news, and I wanted to inform you about the impact this is likely to have at our school.

Why?

- Education in Northern Ireland has been systematically defunded in recent years, resulting in decimating reductions in support, resource and capacity.
- The teaching profession has filled in the growing gaps, holding the fragmenting system together and protecting children from the impact of the cuts.
- Pay paralysis, when set alongside the working conditions of the teaching profession in Northern Ireland, is having a devastating impact on the profession, with clear evidence that we will not be able to recruit or retain teachers and school leaders in the future if these issues are not resolved. Education is in crisis.
- Other public sector workers in Northern Ireland have also received pay increases during this time.
- Teachers across the UK and Ireland have received their normal pay increases, several times over the last three years. Teachers in Northern Ireland have received nothing.
- All five teaching unions have been in dispute for over a year, during which time no offer has been made.
- During this year of dispute, action has been gradually escalated, in the hope that an offer of resolution would be forthcoming.
- Taking strike action is the last resort. This could have been avoided and, indeed, can still be avoided.
- The responsibility to resolve this dispute lies squarely with the employing authorities and the Department of Education.

When a strike takes place, those taking strike action stop work and withdraw their labour. Everyone involved in the action will, therefore, not teach class(es) or undertake any other duties before 12.00 noon on the strike day.

How will strike action affect Ebrington PS & NU?

A detailed risk assessment has been conducted which considers the impact that the action will have on the health and safety of pupils, staff and visitors, and whether the school can run a full or amended curriculum, to determine whether it is possible to operate the school safely during the strike.

As the Principal, I have determined that the school will be closed on the morning of Wednesday 29th November and will open for all pupils at 12.15pm. I am unable to guarantee adequate teacher numbers to provide a safe teacher/ pupil ratio until the strike ends. Due to health and safety concerns, no pupil should be on the school site before 12:05pm. Pupils should go directly to their pod doors between 12:05pm and 12:15pm. School dinners will be served after registration. Please ensure these are booked on the cashless system the day before.

Clearly this is a difficult situation, which will cause some disruption. I would ask you, however, to be understanding. This is a very unusual circumstance and is the direct result of the failure to take into account the very real concerns expressed by teachers and school leaders. Taking strike action is not something that anyone would undertake lightly. Those on strike will have thought long and hard about their decision and will also lose pay for the period that they are on strike.

We have reached a stage where both many teaching and non-teaching staff believe it is the only option as education seems to be continually neglected when it comes to appropriate funding. Sadly, it is highly likely that action short of strike action and strike action is likely to continue by both the teaching and non-teaching unions for the foreseeable future.

The responsibility to resolve this dispute lies squarely with the Department of Education and our local government. To make your feelings known about that damage that is being done to the our schools, the teaching profession and, of course, our children, you can write directly the following people, in addition to your own local political representatives:

Sara Long, CEO: Education Authority, 40 Academy Street, Belfast, BT1
sara.long@eani.org.uk

Eve Bremner, CEO: CCMS, Linen Hill House, 23 Linenhall Street, Lisburn, BT28 1FJ
eve.bremner@ccmsschools.com

Maria Thomasson, Acting CEO, CnaG, Áras na bhFál, 200-202 Falls Road, Belfast, BT12 6AH
mariathomasson@comhairle.org

Roisin Marshall, CEO: NICIE, 25 College Gardens, Belfast, BT9 6BS
rmarshall@nicie.org.uk

Nuala O'Neill, Director: Governing Bodies Association, Fountain Centre, Belfast, BT1 6ET
nuala@gbani.org

Mark Bailie, Director of Workforce: DENI, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor, Co Down, BT19
mark.bailey@education-ni.gov.uk

Mark Browne, Permanent Secretary: DENI, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor, Co Down, BT19
mark.browne@education-ni.gov.uk

Yours, etc.

Kind regards,



B Guthrie
Principal