



Cottingham High School
and Sixth Form College
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29th January 2025

Dear Parents/Carers,

As promised, we would like to provide you with a further update on the current situation and reiterate our reassurance that the school is doing everything possible to minimise the impact the current strikes are having on your child's education. On Friday, further negotiations took place between the NEU and the School, facilitated by ACAS, as part of our mutual commitment to resolving the current dispute. We are pleased that some tangible progress was made at that meeting, albeit in principle, with regard to our existing Teaching and Learning Policy. This has satisfied the Union's demands for clarity and assurances.

Unfortunately, a red line for the school in these talks has been the NEU's insistence on a commitment not to make any compulsory redundancies for a fixed period. For the avoidance of doubt, such a commitment would break UK law. We have, however, reiterated our guarantee to the NEU that there will be no more than two compulsory redundancies in relation to the closure of the sixth form at Cottingham High School.

Redundancy situations can arise unexpectedly, and it would be illegal, as well as entirely unrealistic, to pledge not to make redundancies for a fixed period. The school will do whatever it can to avoid redundancies, but where this is not possible, we will always routinely consider redeployment opportunities Trust-wide for anyone directly affected as part of the redundancy consultation process.

A number of people have raised questions with us based on false information that has been circulating since the start of this dispute and we want to address these openly, not least because it risks harming the reputation of the school and the Trust.

For example, there has been repeated reference to the Trust 'top slice' approach, and suggestions there will be a risk of far more redundancies than the two already identified above. This is simply inaccurate, and we have actively challenged this separately. Our priority is ending the dispute at Cottingham at the earliest opportunity and ensuring your child's education is no longer disrupted.

We would like to thank ACAS for overseeing the latest round of negotiations and the work towards a mutually acceptable resolution continues. We will also continue to keep you informed of any further developments.

As stated above, the school is doing everything possible to minimise disruption. We have chosen to avoid cancelling lessons or the school day.

We can confirm:

- In all subject areas, our experienced subject leaders and senior leaders continue to ensure the curriculum is delivered in its entirety, in line with our published curriculum plans.
- Lessons continue to follow the normal Scheme of Learning and delivered in accordance with the school's curriculum plan cycle, published on the school's website
- Senior leaders have planned lessons alongside subject specialists to ensure lessons are of a high quality
- Lessons continue to be taught by qualified teachers
- Where non-specialists have been deployed to cover lessons outside of their specialism high quality online lessons including those from the Oak National Academy have been used to ensure learners continue to receive a specialist input. Oak National Academy online lessons are widely acclaimed for their high quality and are endorsed by the UK Department for Education
- When required, some classes have been taught together. This has ensured that they have received appropriate, qualified input from a subject specialist, rather than being taught by a non-specialist.
- Our specialist Trust Directors, who are all subject experts, have been deployed to cover as many lessons as possible, to maintain an appropriate professional input.

We have received mixed feedback from parents and carers and wish to thank all those who have shared their support and positive feedback for the school at this challenging time. Equally, we thank those who have shared concerns and will continue to work to alleviate these.

As an employer, we owe obligations of confidentiality to everyone here, be they staff, learners or parents, and for that reason we have occasionally been very limited on the amount of information we have been able to share. There are sound, common-sense reasons for this, but we fully appreciate it can be frustrating for some.

We are genuinely encouraged by the progress already made during negotiations, but we must emphasise that the disruption caused by this situation is not one we ever wanted or would wish to see again.

It is not an experience we want for our learners or our staff, and we want to see the dispute resolved as swiftly as possible.

Yours faithfully

Mr V Tennison



Chair of Local Governing Body

Mr M Brown



Executive Director of Education