



24<sup>th</sup> February 2023

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Dear Parents and Carers

### **Industrial action by the NEU - Notification of school closure**

*The National Education Union (NEU) is in a formal trade dispute with the Secretary of State for Education because she has failed to give the undertaking sought by the NEU to make available additional and sufficient funds to allow employers to pay a fully funded increase in teachers' pay at a rate greater than inflation (as measured by September 2022 RPI).*

As you are aware from my letter that I sent on Wednesday the NEU has announced strike action over pay for its teaching members. The proposed dates for strikes by NEU teachers are as follows:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023 (South West)
- 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023 (national strike)
- 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023 (national strike)

Our approach has been governed by the following principles: To ensure the safety of students and staff, to respect the legitimate right for colleagues to take industrial action, whilst meeting our responsibility to provide as much continuity of education as possible.

### **Risk assessment**

Following the announcement of strike action, we have carried out a risk assessment to determine whether it is safe to operate the school site on the second day of Strike action, Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023. A wide range of factors have been considered, but specifically:

- **Proportion of NEU members:** *The majority of Gordano teaching staff are members of the NEU. Whilst the NEU has informed us of the number of its members at the school, we do not know any further details with any accuracy*
- **Position of other unions:** *I cannot ask other teachers to cover for staff who are striking as this would be to undermine the strike and teachers' contracts protect them from such actions. This includes taking lessons, duties or setting work for striking colleagues*

The factors above mean that we do not know with certainty which colleagues will be striking - only that the majority of them are eligible to do so.

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As a result, we have concluded that **it is not safe to open the school to students on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023. Therefore, if the strike action does go ahead, the school will be closed to students on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023.** We have not taken this decision lightly. We remain committed to providing a safe and secure environment for our pupils and feel that we would be unable to provide this with the staff we have available.

### **Supervision of a very small number of students**

- We will operate a small on-site supervised IT provision for students identified by the school. Families will be contacted later today to advise of this provision, and we ask that you confirm your space following the link in the email you will receive.
- We will also operate a small provision for a limited number of Year 11 and Year 13 students **who do not have access to a study space at home**. I ask parents to support us by only booking a space for your child if there is no other alternative option. This will be a supervised computer base. The link to book this provision is [here](#). If numbers are too high, we will need to review this provision.

### **Provision of education on 2<sup>nd</sup> March**

- Where colleagues are not striking and it is their working day, staff will set tasks for their classes on ClassCharts, work will be provided before your child's lesson is due to start
- There will be lessons where work **cannot** be set due to the teachers involved being on strike and other colleagues not being able to set work for striking colleagues. In these cases, students will be given a year group guidance sheet on ClassCharts which will signpost them to available lessons on a variety of online platforms such as:
  - [Oak National Academy](#)
  - [BBC Bitesize](#)
  - Other online services
  - Independent revision or study
  - Wider reading
  - If your child is unable to access learning online, please email their Director of Key Stage by **Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2023** and we will provide paper resources on **Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023** for collection on the way home
  - If students in Year 12 and 13 have not got work on ClassCharts because their teacher is on strike, they should use the day for independent study revising the topics they have already covered this academic year – the Sixth Form team will send further, more detailed guidance

### **Free School Meals**

Aspens will provide a packed lunch for students on Free School Meals. Eligible students can collect a lunch pack for Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023 from the canteen on their way home on **Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023**.

If this industrial dispute is not resolved before the further planned dates (15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> March) then the school will review its risk assessment and plans following 2<sup>nd</sup> March and I will contact parents to confirm the arrangements for those days.

We appreciate that there is likely to be significant inconvenience for parents and carers as a result of the planned action. I therefore want to thank you in advance for your understanding as

we try to do our best at this challenging time.

### **Chris Hemmings Visit**

On Monday 6<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> March, Chris Hemmings, a psychotherapist, coach and public speaker will be speaking to all students in Year 8 – 13 and doing some small workshops in Year 7. Chris specialises in working with men and boys, with a focus on helping them to develop their emotional well-being. His talk will outline how certain aspects of masculine expectation can not only damage individual men and boys, but women and girls, too

On Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> March, we have asked him to run a seminar for parents to support with this. We have chosen to run this online as it means we can host more attendees and we anticipate it will be a popular event. The details of the seminar are as below:

#### ***Healthy masculinity- how to speak to boys and men and why it's important:***

*During this online seminar Chris Hemmings will guide attendees through some of the realities facing men and boys in modern society and why it's important they are addressed. Men and boys are more likely to experience addiction, violence and suicide, to name but a few. Recently there have been some high-profile men trying to address these issues, but their message is often tinged with misogyny or telling boys their only way to be successful as a man is to become rich and emotionless. Chris will offer some suggestions on how we can try and have those difficult conversations so we can remind boys every day that there isn't one way to be a man.*

Please [complete this form](#) if you wish to attend the seminar – we are limited to a certain number by our hosting platform, Teams, so would ask that you only complete one form per household. The seminar will run from 7pm and will run to approximately an hour. We hope to record the session for anyone unable to attend.

### **Safeguarding**

The February 2023 Scomis online safety newsletter for parents and carers is available at the link below and contains information about Online Gaming, Screen Time and Social Media Guides:

[Online Safety Newsletter for parents](#)

### **Uniform Reminders**

A number of students are coming to school in plain blue navy jogging bottoms on PE days. Whilst plain navy leggings are permitted due to the branded ones being slightly see-through, could parents please be reminded that PE jogging bottoms and shorts MUST be the Gordano branded items.

Since the half term break, some students are still coming to school in hoodies with their normal school uniform. As per the communication prior to half term, all students are expected to be wearing their blazers with their school uniform.

Ties can be purchased from the Student Centre for £6. We would recommend that, where possible, students had a spare tie to help ensure they are in the correct uniform each day.

### **Changes to Detentions for A2s**

The following changes will start from **Monday 6<sup>th</sup> March**. Any Student who receives an A2 will be expected to complete a 15-minute detention at break or lunch time, for example:

- If a student receives an A2 in lesson 1 or 2 they will have a break time detention
- If a student receives an A2 in lesson 3 or 4 they will have a lunch time detention
- If a student receives an A2 in lesson 5 or 6 they will have a break time detention the following day
- If students do not attend this detention, they will be referred to the SLT 1 hour detention on a Friday after school
- Students who receive 3 or more A2s in a week will be referred to the SLT 1 hour detention on a Friday after school
- If a student fails to attend the SLT detention, they will need to complete a minimum half day in Focus (Internal Exclusion) the following week

### **Student Support update**

From Monday 27<sup>th</sup> January, the Assistant Head of House area will be renamed **Return To Learning Support** and will only be accessible to students who require a **reset, urgent support** or to attend the **Focus Room**.

If a student needs to speak with their **AHOH** they can see them at the following times unless they have an organised support session:

- **Before school/during tutor time**
- **Break time/Lunch time**
- **After school**

### **World Book Day – 5<sup>th</sup> March**

Printed World Book Day tokens are no longer available for secondary schools; instead, the token is available to download [here](#).

You can print the token or download it onto your phone, though some retailers will only accept them if printed. The book token can only be used in participating bookshops, which includes Max Minerva's in Portishead, and some supermarkets. The tokens can be used until Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> March. The digital £1 book token is intended for single use only and cannot be redeemed online.

Information about the tokens, World Book Day books and competitions the library is running for World Book Day is available on Firefly in the [library section](#).

### **Year 10 Mock Interview Day**

Many of our Y10 students had their mock interviews on Thursday and so many interviewers complimented our students on their maturity and their approach to this challenge.

Sadly, we have a number of students who missed their interview due to an unplanned Fire Drill/a planned Health & Social Care exam. We know how disappointed these students were and would like to thank them for the patience and politeness they showed as we reorganised the day. To ensure these students also have this interview opportunity, we have planned a further mock interview session on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023.

We will be in touch with the individual students and, if your child did miss their interview, please remind them to use this extension to ensure that their CV is the best it can be - we will be asking these students to bring their CVs to this interview session

**Post 18 Apprenticeship Evening**

We are really looking forward to hosting this event, and to ensure everyone has the opportunity to attend we have made the decision to change the date to Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March in light of the proposed strike action on 15<sup>th</sup> March. This event is open to all students and parents in Year 11/12/13. You can find full details and register for the evening [here](#).

Wishing you all a relaxing and restful weekend.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L Blundell', with a small flourish at the end.

**Ms L Blundell**  
**Headteacher**