

ST FRANCIS' PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Banbridge

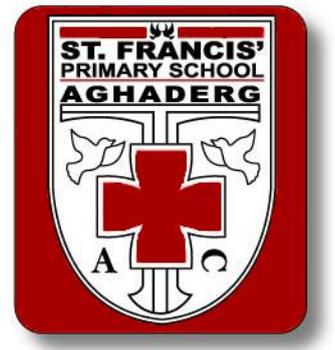
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22/11/23

Dear Parents and Guardians,

You will be aware, given the recent media coverage that the five teaching unions are undertaking further strike action next week, I am writing to inform you of what this means for St. Francis' Primary School.

On **29th November 2023**, teaching and management staff across Northern Ireland, including our school, will be participating in a half day strike action. This decision has not been taken lightly, but it is a necessary step to address key issues affecting our education system.

Why?

- Education in Northern Ireland has been systematically defunded in recent years, resulting in decimating reductions in support, resource and capacity. This has already affected our pupils and will continue to do so in the months and years ahead.
- The teaching profession has filled in the growing gaps, holding the fragmenting system together and protecting children from the worst impacts of these cuts.
- Pay paralysis, when set alongside the working conditions in 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 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 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 any classes or undertake any other duties before 12.00 noon on the strike day.

As a result, St. Francis' Primary School will be **closed to pupils until 11:45 AM** on this day. There will be no morning bus, but there will be a bus home for pupils at 3pm, as normal. Please note that despite the strike action, we have made arrangements to ensure that dinners will be served as normal.

We understand the inconvenience this may cause and we appreciate your understanding and support during this time. We are committed to providing the best possible education for our students and we believe that this action is in the best long-term interests of the education sector in Northern Ireland. The responsibility to resolve this dispute lies squarely with the Department of Education and our local government. To make your feelings known about the damage being done to our schools, the teaching profession and, of course, our children, you can write directly to the following people, in addition to your own local political representatives:

Sarah Long, CEO: Education Authority, 40 Academy Street Belfast BT1

Sarah.long@eani.org.uk

Eve Bremner, CEO: CCMS, Linen Hill House, 23 Linenhall Street, Lisburn, BT281FJ

Eve.bremner@ccmsschools.com

Nuala O'Neill, Director: Governing Bodies Association, Fountain Centre, Belfast, BT16ET

nuala@gbani.org

Mark Bailie, Director of Workforce: DENI, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor Co. Down, BT19

Mark.bailey@education-ni.gov.uk

Mark Brown, Permanent Secretary: DENI, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor Co. Down, BT19

Mark.brown@education-ni.gov.uk

We will keep you updated on any further developments and we thank you for your patience and understanding.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sheila McKeown

St. Francis' Primary School