



Portway Junior School

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Head Teacher: Mrs. K. Puszczynska
8th March 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to update you on where the school currently stands in light of the continuing strike action and to clarify why we have made the decisions we have thus far. This has been a heart breaking and difficult decision for SLT and Governors to make.

This week non-striking staff are in school completing appropriate training, planning curriculum developments and working hard to plan for the next two weeks of learning.

As you know, we continue to be affected by the ongoing dispute between Unison members and the Council. We are the only school in Derby where teaching assistants, midday supervisors and the office staff are collectively involved in this lawful strike action. As a school we have worked hard over a number of months to minimise the impact on our children, you as parents/carers and the school teaching staff, and I thank those of you who have been willing to assist us with lunchtimes and so on during this time.

However, there are multiple issues which impact on the safety of pupils:

- We only have **half** our required number of qualified staff in school on any strike day.
- It is illegal for us to use paid relief staff to cover industrial action.
- Difficulties in sustaining the number of lunchtime volunteers due to length of dispute.
- Medical needs of children cannot be ensured due to capacity of staff in school as teachers must be in class and therefore are unable to administer to those individual medical needs.
- Support of children with additional needs some of whom find that not having their normal support staff available and other changes to school routines difficult to manage causing disruption for staff and other pupils.
- The use of DBS checked parent volunteers can only be used as an additional support due to confidentiality and being in breach of Industrial law.
- Parent volunteers are being asked to support in roles to which some are unfamiliar and consequently need guidance to ensure safety.
- No office staff means also no capacity for health and safety checks etc. We are currently experiencing issues with heating and hot water, which are now being addressed.

- The capacity of the Senior Leadership to continue completing additional tasks to keep the school running, alongside organising volunteers and supporting the reduced numbers of staff.
- I am also very concerned about the well-being and safety of staff in school with little additional support to continue their daily duties effectively.

In addition to 5 days of strike action called for next week w/c 13th March Unison has also called a further 5 day strike action w/c 20th March 2017. This will mean four full weeks of strike action on top of the 60 additional days since June 2016.

With all this in mind and the legal complexities of working during strike action, we have tried to find a safe and legal solution to re-open the school.

Previously, we have tried to achieve 100% of the children in school 100% of the time, but with only 50% of the necessary capacity, as we recognised the pressure this would put upon the whole school community.

After a lengthy governors meeting and follow on discussions with the SLT we have put together the following timetable to allow the safe partial re-opening of the school.

Day	Year group in school (8.45am – 3.30pm)
Monday 13 th March	Year 6 and Year 4
Tuesday 14 th March	Year 6 and Year 4
Wednesday 15 th March	Year 6 and Year 4
Thursday 16 th March	Year 5 and Year 3
Friday 17 th March	Year 5 and Year 3
Monday 20 th March	Year 6 and Year 4
Tuesday 21 st March	Year 6 and Year 4
Wednesday 22 nd March	Year 5 and Year 3
Thursday 23 rd March	Year 5 and Year 3
Friday 24 th March	Year 5 and Year 3

In order for us to achieve and maintain this partial opening of school we will need:

- Commitment by all families to only send their child/ren to school on the arranged days
- Sufficient DBS checked parents to volunteer and assist in school to cover lunchtimes

If you feel you are able to support us and have a current DBS, please get in touch using head@portwayj.derby.sch.uk or leave a message on the answer phone with contact details, name of child and days you can help.

We really do want to get the school safely re-opened and fully understand your frustration with the situation. Although this solution is not perfect it is the safest way we can legally open. Thank you for your continued support and patience. We will update you with any further developments or details with regarding clubs etc as soon as possible.

With kindest regards

Karen Puszczynska - Head Teacher