

CWA/LDA/GHA

25 January 2023

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: Industrial Action – Planned Closure on Wednesday 1 February 2023

First of all, I genuinely hope this letter finds you all as well as you can possibly be.

Further to my brief letter sent out last Tuesday, after a significant amount of ensuing discussions, meetings, the reading of numerous updated associated documentation and conducting a final risk assessment, we will not be able to safely open the academy to the vast majority our students on **Wednesday 1 February 2023**. The main reason for this is we have had it confirmed that nearly 60 of our teaching staff will not be reporting for work that day but instead, opting to take industrial (strike) action in conjunction with their professional association, the National Education Union. However, I will not actually know who those Colleagues are until after the day itself has started as current legislation states these Colleagues are not legally obliged to inform their respective schools of their decision beforehand. Just their professional association who then pass on an overall number to the individual school's leader. Therefore, whilst we have secured a current working number, in all likelihood, this could run to over 70 teaching staff not reporting for work next Wednesday. We will, however, and as highlighted in a separate letter, still be conducting our planned Year 13 mock examinations although these will be the only students who are able to access the academy on that day.

It is also important to note there are many other somewhat restrictive factors when it comes to being able to plan for such a day and when such a significant number of teaching staff will not be operational. Firstly, school leaders cannot ask those teaching staff to prepare cover work be it in the classroom or with regards remote learning. Secondly, school leaders are not able to direct other non-striking teaching staff to cover the lessons of Colleagues who are taking industrial action. School leaders are able to look to bring in external cover teachers, however, nowadays, these are few and far between and in the majority of cases, the quality tends not to be of our expected standard. Furthermore, supply agencies themselves have said they are highly unlikely to supply staff on a strike day anyway.

From a remote learning perspective, again, due to what I've already highlighted, we will not be able to provide our usual programme of lessons for every individual class and student, however, after some coordinated work from the academy's Quality of Education Team, we will be able to provide the following remote provision next Wednesday:

- Students in Years' 7, 8 and 9 will have a bespoke project to work on independently at home. The projects, once completed, can be submitted for feedback via email or alternatively, be handed to the Student Support Centre (SSC) when the academy re-opens. A range of rewards will recognise student engagement and achievement in relation to the tasks set. The projects will also cover a range of curriculum subjects.
Students and parents/carers will be emailed full details of the projects **by 4pm on Monday 30 January**.
- Students in Years' 10 and 11 will be encouraged to access Seneca Learning and other available online platforms, including MathsWatch, to consolidate learning across their key stage four courses.
A reminder of how to access the range of online platforms will be emailed to students and parents/carers **by 4pm on Monday 30 January**.
- Years' 12 and 13 students who are not sitting mock examinations next Wednesday should engage in independent study, homework and revision.

Students who are entitled to a free school meal next Wednesday will automatically have their credit placed on their ParentPay account the day before. However, should any parent/carer wish for their child to access a packed lunch next Wednesday, please contact Mr Scott, Director of Finance and Premises, via R.Scott@plume.essex.sch.uk and this will be arranged.

I will conclude by apologising for having to write to you about next Wednesday's closure and for any disruption this may subsequently cause to some of you. However, and as I believe the vast majority of you know, from a Plume Academy perspective, never will such a decision be arrived at without a significant amount of due diligence occurring beforehand. Looking ahead, let us also hope more constructive discussions can be held between the professional associations and the Government so as to ensure further decisions like this one do not have to be taken in the future.

Yours sincerely



Mr C A Wakefield
Executive Principal