



NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION — LONDON REGION

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Strike Action Today

The NEU regrets that we have been forced to take strike action today. We teach our pupils that bullying is never acceptable. We cannot, therefore, stand by and allow it to happen in our own school. By asking that the culture of fear at St Catherine's is addressed, we seek to ensure that the school is a safe place for all who work there. We do this so that the interests of the pupils in our care can always be placed first.

Two members of staff are currently unjustly suspended and a third has been unfairly sacked. A fourth member of staff, who had been suspended on a bogus allegation in the summer term, subsequently returned to work in September with no case to answer. We need all of our colleagues reinstated and all bullying to end. Below is the original press release from 18th October.

Staff Strike Against Bullying Head at St Catherine's School Bexleyheath

Staff at St Catherine's have reluctantly voted to take strike action following repeated arbitrary and bullying behaviour by the Head Teacher. These actions have included breaching promises on confidential information, ignoring staff views, banning trade union meetings, suspending staff (including the NEU rep without good reason), sacking an employee without recourse to any disciplinary investigation or due process. The NEU have sought regular meetings with the school governors, but so far these have not been arranged. Members have repeatedly raised their concerns with governors who have failed to take swift, appropriate and effective action. Now teachers and support staff have no confidence in the Head Teacher to conduct the management of the school in a fair or reasonable way.

The vote to take strike action was overwhelming. NEU members voted by 55 to just 3 to stop work. Teachers, teaching assistants and support staff will strike on the 30th of October and further days if necessary until they receive assurances that the bullying will stop and their concerns are fairly addressed.

Debbie Jones, Bexley District Secretary of the NEU said:

“Most NEU members at St Catherine's have never taken strike action before and we very much regret the disruption this will cause to the students' education. However, our members have been forced to take action as a last resort because of a prolonged campaign of bullying and arbitrary behaviour by the Head Teacher. What was a very happy school has now become an institution with a deep culture of fear. Despite all of this the staff have continued to work extremely hard and have continued to produce outstanding exam results. Our members have repeatedly appealed to the governors to intervene. Sadly our members have been left with no other choice than to take strike action but we hope this will now convince the governors to engage in constructive negotiations with us so we can resolve our members concerns and agree important safeguards to protect our members from the Head's behaviour. This must include an immediate end to all bullying by the Head. We have proposed talks at ACAS and we hope that happens soon. Of course, until our members issues are resolved then the strike action will go ahead ”

Further planned strike days include: 6th, 7th, 12th, 13th and 14th of November.

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