

EDUCATION AUTHORITY – SOUTHERN REGION

Donaghey Primary School

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Thursday 23rd November 2023

Dear Parent

Strike Action

Teachers across the province are due to go on strike on the morning of Wednesday 29th November for a half day. The strike will end at 12 noon. This strike action is in addition to further actions associated with action short of strike measures. These measures generally do not impact our pupils however there will be disruption next Wednesday due to the strike action. As a result of the strike action, I will have teachers to cover only two classrooms. As a result, the pupils in the P5/P6 and the P6/P7 classes will stay at home in the morning with normal school resuming for those pupils at 12.00pm. The P5-P7 pupils are welcome to come in for 12.00pm to have their lunch or they can come in at 12.45pm. The Department of Education would expect that all our P5-P7 pupils return for the afternoon session, however I recognise that it might not be convenient for you to bring your child to school at this time. Therefore, all P5-P7 pupils will be marked present for the full duration of the day next Wednesday regardless of if they are in school or not. This will not apply to pupils who are out of school for any other reason, for example, illness. Please note, the Garden Club will not take place. The P1-P4 pupils will have a normal day with the bus running at the usual times. We appreciate that his situation is not ideal for the pupils and our parents. It is regrettable that the Department of Education has failed to address the issues facing teachers and non-teaching staff.

It is my understanding that the unions will proceed with further strike action in the new year. Dates for strike action have not been confirmed. If a situation arises again where I only have enough staff to cover half our classes (two out of our four classes), The P1-P4 pupils will stay at home with the P5-P7 pupils going to school as normal. However, the situation is fluid and teachers reserve the right to strike when given permission by their respective unions. I will keep you posted regarding any further developments. Let's hope there is a resolution to the dispute in the very near future.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the staff at Donaghey Primary School. I know that our pupils and parents are very grateful for all that they do. It is a shame that the Department of Education do not value our staff in the same way. It is no coincidence that every single teaching union and the non-teaching unions are involved in a dispute with the employers. We are in a position where the teaching profession is becoming less attractive due to pay issues and workload. Staff across the province have absorbed the impact of cuts from the Department meaning that most of our children still receive great experiences at school. I can only conclude that the Department of Education has no issue whatsoever of taking the good will of staff for granted. However, staff can only absorb so much. Please support them! The teachers take great comfort from your support and acts of kindness. For example, our parents' association have again provided £10 for every child to go towards resources to save teachers from using their own money. This is much appreciated.

Chronic underfunding by the Department of Education is also an issue. There is simply not enough money to operate standard sized classes of pupils. There are no areas within our school to make savings! I am sure

Principal: Mr S Harrison, BSSc, PGCE, PQH (NI).

you will agree, we are not extravagant with our spending and as referred to above, we heavily rely on our parents' association to provide funds for resources. However, the DPA cannot fund staff costs, electric and oil. This chronic underfunding of schools is also a reason for the current industrial action. It is very easy to blame the current lack of a functioning Executive, however, the situation was never any better when a Minister of Education was in place. Let's hope that when the Stormont Executive returns, the politicians realise that Education is important, and they act accordingly to address the issues within the sector.

In the meantime, please promote our school within the community and encourage parents to come along to our open day next month. It is critical that our enrolment numbers remain strong along with a good uptake for Free School Meals.

Nativity Play

Tickets for the Nativity Play on Wednesday 6th December have been sent home with your youngest child. There are no more tickets left. Nevertheless, you will also have the opportunity to drop in to view an informal showing of the Nativity Play on Thursday 7th December, 10.00am. Thank you for your support.

More details regarding school life for the rest of the term can be found in the letter 16/11/23. The letter and other documents can be found on the app.

Yours sincerely

Mr S. Harrison (Principal)