

10th March 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

I trust you are well. We are now in a position to let you know how you will be affected by the remaining planned industrial action on the 15th and 16th of March.

Unless we hear of some last-minute changes from the NEU or from the Department for Education, we have decided to stay open to all year groups **except Year 8** on Wednesday 15th March and all year groups **except Year 9** on Thursday 16th March next week. Please also remember that on Thursday we have the **Hawking Comic Relief** non-uniform day, and that we cannot move it to Friday because the school is closed to all pupils for a training day.

The academy will provide remote learning for **Year 8 pupils at home to complete on Wednesday** and **Year 9 to complete on Thursday**. We will also email a £2.50 voucher for a local supermarket to the parents of those pupils who are currently eligible for Free School Meals and who are not able to attend school on the day.

Year 9 students who are attending the **Sleeping Beauty dance trip** on Thursday will be able to sign in at break at reception, and they will be collected by a member of staff from there.

Student Voice and Members of Parliament

Last week we were visited by the first of three politicians (current or previous Members of Parliament) who have been keen to come into school to meet our students and hear their views. We openly invited any student to come and listen to an inspirational talk from Stephen Twigg, ex Shadow Education Secretary, and then ask what turned out to be some brilliant questions. Afterwards, Stephen and Amanda Davies, (Director of Education here in Dorset) met and mingled with the students at break time, (many were keen to get selfies!) and gathered their views on how education and children's services can be improved both locally and nationally. It was a brilliant event and we are looking forward to welcoming two more well-known MPs in the coming weeks and months.

The views of our students are really important to us, and we have a huge student voice body representing their fellow students on the School Council, the Academy Council, as Sports Leaders, as a Rights Respecting School or Anti Bullying Ambassadors and on issues relating to the LGBT+ agenda. Over the last year we have taken the unprecedented step in ensuring that students have become directly involved in training our staff on wider issues relating to Sexual Harassment, LGBT+ issues and Student Voice. We have plenty to work on but we have made excellent strides in giving a voice to our students and involving them in the decision-making process.

We have many channels for students to raise their concerns here at Budmouth, through their School Council, the Academy Council, through Whisper, an anonymous system used to report their concerns or by talking to the large number of teachers, pastoral and mental-health support staff with an open-door approach here at the school.

You may have seen in the national news, that some students have campaigned against the use of cameras in toilets or the complete closure of toilets in some other schools during lesson time. We have listened to our student body and **we have not closed our toilets and we will not be installing cameras**. We think it is important to keep them private and open all day, particularly for girls and young women who may need round the clock access to sanitary facilities. Sometimes however, specific toilets are locked, but only to repair damage or to prevent vandalism. Toilet vandalism costs the school thousands of pounds every year and makes toilet facilities worse for every other student, the majority of which use them sensibly.

The Pineapple Project

Rachel Janaway from DCC's Pineapple Project came in last week to tell our students about a much-needed project starting up in Weymouth. This has been launched to help to keep girls and young women safer when they are outside of their family home. The Pineapple Project uses the principles of community guardianship to give young women a safe haven when things don't go to plan, perhaps by stepping into a local shop where they can charge their phone or put some distance between them and any person who may be bothering them.

The aim of the project is that all young women should feel safe in the communities where they live, that they should be given the opportunity to understand their right to safety and that they should be able to seek the right support at the right time. Local businesses have signed up for the project, with their staff trained to help people who find themselves followed, harassed and potentially vulnerable. The businesses which are taking part will be able to recognise signs that could mean that a young woman is at risk of harm and know how to offer help. They also have a toolkit which they can refer to. To learn more about the project, or even join up as a member of the business community, please click on the BBC link below.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-dorset-62160645>

Equipment

We know purchasing equipment can be expensive and time consuming, so we have now added an option on Pay 360 where you can purchase individual items of stationery for as little as 10 pence. Once purchased via Pay 360, this can be collected by the student before school, breaktimes or after school in the Main Office. Please login to Pay 360 - Products - Stationery.

Alternatively, we have also restocked our pre-filled pencil cases that are also available to purchase via Pay 360, these are filled with all items that the students are required to have in school on a daily basis. Please login to Pay 360 - Online Shop.

Uniform

Please note that from 1st September 2023 we are making changes to our current PE kit. These changes have been implemented to help parents source items easier and cheaper than before. The main changes are that we will have only one option of a PE top and PE jumper (both available to purchase via DEP only) and we will be changing our navy bottoms to black. If your child currently has a PE kit that fits them in Years 7 to 11, then they are welcome to wear this until the need to purchase additional items. For more information regarding extra PE items (shin pads etc), please find the updated uniform policy here: <https://www.budmouth-aspirations.org/parents-information/uniform/> The new kit will be compulsory for students entering Year 7 from September 2023.

School meals and our cashless approach

Due to inflation, there have been small additional price increases in the canteen and there may be further increase in the near future. We are aware that this can cause issues in the current economic climate and would encourage everyone to get in contact should you have any concerns regarding this. We have asked our school catering provider to come to our Academy Council and explain why prices are going up as it is good to put the students in the global picture. Student Council members will no doubt put them through their paces.

The amount allocated to Free School Meals has also increased (it is now £2.50) and therefore the rises in the costs do not prevent those students from accessing the meal deals that have always represented the best value for money and best nutritional value. Nationally, evidence shows that more and more families should be eligible for Free School Meals and I would advise that all families check their eligibility using the following link:

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/education-and-training/schools-and-learning/at-school/free-school-meals>

Can I remind parents that we are entirely 'cashless' and that you should contact the main office if you are having trouble signing up to Pay 360 at Office@budmouth-aspirations.org

FAB

We are actively looking for more parents to join our parents' forum. Friends and Associates of Budmouth is a parent group which meets at regular times with members of our teaching and leadership team during the academic year. The group positively supports the Academy staff in contributing to school policies, helping to ensure high standards and to provide a purposeful, enjoyable and successful school experience. The meetings are quite informal and open, and we often have presentations from staff/departments within the school and an open Q&A session at the end of every meeting. Previous minutes and additional information can be found on this link -

[Friends and Associates of Budmouth Group](#)

We always want to hear the views and ideas put forward by parents and would love more to get involved in life here at the Academy. Parents wishing to join, or just hear more about the group, please contact Mrs Charlotte Reed – our Director of Business and Support Services on creed@budmouth-aspirations.org

Yours sincerely,



Michael Hoffmann
Budmouth Academy, Weymouth