

Seize the day

EXCELLENCE. RESILIENCE. INCLUSION.

Headteacher: Mr Alexander Silk, MA , NPQH

13th April 2026

Dear Parents/Carers,

It is with a heavy heart that I once again find myself writing to parents and carers regarding proposed industrial action affecting the school. I had sincerely hoped that, following the previously announced dates of industrial action in February, which were subsequently called off, we were moving into a more positive and constructive phase of industrial relations.

As parents and carers may be aware, the school engaged in mediation through ACAS with union representatives, during which a number of actions were agreed for both parties to undertake. The school has already completed many of the actions agreed, with further points scheduled to take place during the Summer Term. It is therefore particularly disappointing that, to date, the NEU representative has not fulfilled their agreed obligation under the ACAS agreement in relation to the proposed changes to the school's sickness absence policy.

Against this backdrop, I regret to inform you that, during the Easter holiday, the governing body received formal notification from the National Education Union (NEU) that its members have voted to undertake sustained 'discontinuous industrial action' (to go on strike on a series of dates) in relation to the issues contained within the current ballot, and a planned second ballot for industrial action

The existing ballot strike action

- Unfair and unacceptable management practices and failure to consult on management change
- Unfair application of sickness procedures
- To secure improvements in school policies and procedures
- Excessive workload

They have announced they will be going on strike on the following dates:

- Tuesday 21 April 2026
- Wednesday 22 April 2026
- Thursday 23 April 2026
- Friday 24 April 2026
- Monday 27 April 2026
- Tuesday 28 April 2026
- Wednesday 29 April 2026
- Thursday 30 April 2026
- Friday 01 May 2026
- Tuesday 05 May 2026
- Wednesday 06 May 2026
- Thursday 07 May 2026
- Friday 08 May 2026

April 2026							May 2026						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1	2	3	4	5					1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30				25	26	27	28	29	30	31

These proposed dates amount to industrial action on every school day across a three-week period. As with previous periods of industrial action, the NEU has written to its members confirming that any loss of income incurred as a result of participating in this strike action will be fully reimbursed.

In the coming days, I will write to all parents and carers to set out the arrangements the school will put in place to minimise disruption and reduce any loss of learning time. It remains my firm intention to keep the school as open as possible and to maintain teaching, lessons, and continuity of learning for our students throughout this period.

A second ballot for industrial action

In addition to this, the NEU has also written to inform the school that it intends to hold a further ballot for industrial action in relation to a proposed staffing restructure and compulsory redundancy process. The stated grounds for this ballot are:

- compulsory redundancies
- alleged unreasonable management practices
- alleged victimisation of elected trade union representatives

Unfortunately, the current redundancy process is unavoidable. Due to a sustained decline in pupil numbers, the school has experienced a corresponding reduction in funding. As staffing costs represent the largest proportion of the school's expenditure, it is not possible to set a balanced budget without addressing the staffing structure; this is both a financial and legal necessity. By taking these steps, the school will be able to achieve a balanced budget and ensure that a greater proportion of its income is directed towards student resources, teaching and learning provision, and the wider needs of the school, rather than being disproportionately absorbed by staffing costs. The school is currently undertaking the formal consultation process which will conclude at the May half-term break. All proposed changes to the staffing structure are intended to be implemented from September 2026.

The school has seen a continued reduction in student admissions over a sustained period. This decline in parental preference reflects a range of factors, including concerns previously expressed through both Ofsted Parent View and our own parent survey feedback, where significant dissatisfaction was raised regarding the level of disruption caused by repeated industrial action over successive years. Quite simply, the school must align its staffing establishment with the number of students on roll and the number of classes required to be taught. It is neither financially viable nor educationally responsible to maintain staffing levels that are no longer supported by pupil numbers and curriculum needs.

The governing body and the Headteacher are accountable for the stability, safety, and long-term viability of the school. My duty is to act in the best interests of our students and their families, our staff, and the wider school community. I am legally required to set a balanced budget and, with fewer students on roll, fewer classes are required. Consequently, the school cannot sustain posts where there is insufficient teaching allocation to justify them. These are difficult decisions, but they are necessary to secure the future of the school and to protect the quality of education for the students we serve.

Regrettably, there is likely to be a range of leaflets and commentary circulated locally in the coming days. In light of this, I am writing to provide a clear, factual and balanced account of the situation, and the steps the school has taken, and continues to take, to seek resolution and minimise disruption to students' education. I want to be unequivocally clear that the school has made sustained, genuine and repeated efforts to resolve concerns and avoid industrial action. I want to reassure you that the school has acted reasonably, transparently and in good faith throughout. Leadership time, expertise and capacity have been consistently prioritised to resolve matters and avoid disruption.

At every stage, my absolute priority remains the education, wellbeing, and future success of our students. I know that repeated uncertainty and disruption is deeply frustrating for families, and I share that frustration. Please be assured that every decision being taken by the school and governing body is guided by what is necessary to protect the long-term stability of Connaught and to ensure that our students continue to receive the high-quality education they deserve. I am grateful, as always, for the continued support, trust, and understanding shown by our parent community, and I remain fully committed to keeping you informed with clarity, honesty, and transparency as we move through this period.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support and understanding and patience.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Silk', written in a cursive style.

Mr. Silk
Headteacher