**Why is the National Education Union (NEU) planning strike action?**

The NEU are one of the unions who negotiate pay on behalf of the teachers in the sixth form colleges. In this year’s negotiations the Employers side (National Joint Council) offered a 5% pay award across all pay points rising to 8.9% on the lowest pay point on the teachers' pay spine. This offer is at the very limit of affordability for colleges, because it is unfunded, and in general the funding per learner has only increased by 2% this year.

On the 7th March 2023, it was communicated by the NJC, that in recognition of this year’s very particular circumstances and in the context of the financial pressures arising from the current cost of living crisis, the NJC is recommending that colleges uprate teachers’ pay with effect from 1st September 2022, in line with the offer made by the Employers’ Side. Esher Sixth Form College will be actioning this recommendation with immediate effect.

For clarity, this is not an acceptance of the Employers’ Side offer by the teacher unions and both sides acknowledge that the NJC teacher unions’ dispute with the Secretary of State for a fully funded pay increase is ongoing. The NJC Employers’ Side will continue to support SFCA’s efforts in lobbying the government for improved funding for the sector, that may enable the NJC to revisit pay for 2022/23.

The dispute is not against the College. The dispute is ultimately with central government in respect of unfunded pay awards.

**Are any other unions involved?**

UNISON have accepted the pay award on behalf of support staff in Sixth Form Colleges. The NASUWT teachers’ union did not meet the required turn-out threshold for strike action.

**What has happened with the strike ballot?**

The national strike ballot of sixth form college teachers closed on 21st April. The turnout was 53.27% and the yes vote was 88.39%, so the ballot was carried.

**When will the strike take place?**

The NEU strike is due to take place on Wednesday 5th July and Friday 7th July 2023. NEU members who choose to strike will not work on this day. They may picket at the entrance to the College. All other members of staff will work as usual.

**Will the College be open on the strike days?**

The College will be open as usual, and some students will see no impact whilst other students may have more than one of their teachers who are not working on this day. We have asked teachers if they are intending to strike to let their students know, however the teacher has no obligation to tell students if they are choosing to strike. Therefore, two scenarios are permitted for any classes affected:

* Students must use their lesson time based in their usual classroom to get on with work such as independent study, coursework, consolidation of prior learning and/or wider reading.
* A student who is aware of their teachers’ absence can chose to work at home for that lesson. However, a student must still attend all lessons in College that are still taking place.

All lessons that are unaffected will be registered as normal and attendance will be expected. Any student who does not attend without a reason for absence, will be marked as unauthorised.

**Will there be further projected strike dates?**

There are no further strike dates at present.