

**To all Controlled, Maintained and Special Schools
cc VG and GMI**

23 November 2011

Dear Principal

Re: Notice of Industrial Action following a Ballot – Wednesday 30 November 2011

You will be aware that Trade Unions representing Public Sector employees including staff in the 5 Education and Library Boards carried out ballots of their members in relation to strike action in dispute over an increase in member contributions to the pension schemes and ongoing budget cuts across all areas of public services in Northern Ireland.

It is likely to be the case, therefore, that a number of teaching and non-teaching staff may participate in strike action on Wednesday, 30 November 2011. In addition employees in other Public Sector Bodies, including Translink and school nursing services, may also take strike action.

To be of assistance the Board would advise as follows.

- 1 **Operation of School** - The operational decision to open, partially open or close a school rests with the *Principal who must determine the appropriate course of action in his/her school, depending on individual circumstances. In doing so you should bear in mind the following:

**In the event of the Principal taking industrial action their duties should be delegated to the Vice Principal or a member of the senior management team, or the most senior member of staff remaining.*

Staff not participating in strike action should be in attendance at school.

- You are entitled, and it is appropriate for you, to clarify with members of staff as soon as is practicable who is likely to be absent due to strike action. This is essential as these staff may be employed in a pupil support capacity. If, you are of the view that an appropriate level of supervision/assistance or support cannot be provided or that there might be health and safety issues you should inform parents/guardians, and where applicable school transport, at the earliest opportunity that the child/ren cannot attend school on that day.
- In seeking to clarify who will be absent because of the strike or in determining the appropriate action in your school you should bear in mind that this strike has been called as a result of an official ballot by the Trade Unions. Employees have a legitimate right to participate in such industrial action and should not be pressurised or victimised for so doing.

- You should ensure that a risk assessment is undertaken which should also incorporate consideration of other activities on this date, such as educational visits, to ensure appropriate levels of supervision.
- 2 **Recording Attendance (Staff)** - Any member of staff participating in strike action is not entitled to remuneration for the period of the strike. Principals must record the withdrawal of labour of any employee as a result of strike action and deductions from wages/salary will be made accordingly. Principals should enter "Industrial Action" on timesheets, as appropriate.
 - 3 **Recording attendance (Pupils)** - If a school is forced to partially close where there is industrial action, sessions for those pupils unable to attend should be marked in the register using an appropriate code that will mean it is not counted as a possible non-attendance.
 - 4 **Employment Issues** - Any time when an employee takes part in a strike does not count in the computation of "continuous employment" but it does not break continuity of employment.
 - 5 **Picketing** - It is trusted that any picketing which may occur will be peaceful and that staff will not be prevented from attending work if they wish to do so.

The provision of **home to school transport** and **school meals** will be important considerations for many pupils, parents and schools.

- 6 **Transport** - Principals should, therefore, liaise with their local Translink Area Managers to ascertain the availability of school services and the likely impact of any industrial action on the transport requirements for your school.

The Board will also provide information as best it can in relation to its own transport fleet including the position of taxi and private hire buses where that is relevant.

Principals should inform transport providers and the Board if transport services are not required for those pupils affected.

If you have any further queries regarding transport provision, please contact:

Transport Unit County Hall 028 25662277

- 7 **Meals** - In some schools it may not be possible to provide the normal school meals service. Where this is the case, a limited service will be provided where practicable, particularly for those pupils present who are entitled to a free school meal. Provision of a service to dining centres will be dependent on transport being available.

Principals are requested to liaise with the Kitchen Supervisor to establish if a School Meals Service can be provided and the type of service available. Where a service cannot be provided, Principals should advise parents that their child/(ren) should bring a packed lunch. Principals are requested to inform the Kitchen Supervisor if a School Meals Service is not required.

Advice is available from the relevant Area Catering Manager or by contacting:

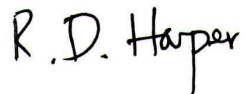
School Meals Service Antrim Board Centre

028 94482242

If you have any further queries regarding the strike action, please contact:

Marjory Cook, 02825662417
Phyllis Russell 028 25662418
Shirley Lowry, 02825 662413.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R.D. Harper". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

Chief Administrative Officer