

PRINCIPAL: G MULLAN BSc MEd



NEWTOWNHAMILTON HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Parent

You will be aware of the severe financial straits in which most of us find ourselves in 2011, with parents concerned about their jobs, short term working, high unemployment (particularly in the 18-25 age bracket) and budget cuts in education and other sectors. In comparison to previous years, schools are being targeted for cutbacks in terms of teachers' take home pay/pensions and less money being allocated to provide for the quality education that pupils need and deserve to face these challenging times.

As reported widely in the media, unions representing workers in the public sector have recently held a ballot of their members regarding strike action on **Wednesday 30 November 2011**; some unions have called for a one day strike on that date and some teachers have indicated to me that they are intending to respond to that call, as is their legal right.

As Principal of Newtownhamilton High, I have undertaken a risk assessment in relation to the effect of this industrial action, focussed on the health and safety of pupils in our care and whether it is possible to provide adequate staffing to cover all or some of the pupils, whether there will be adequate supervision of children at lunchtime and break time, the security of the site, whether hazards can be dealt with appropriately etc. I have been advised that school buses will operate normally, cleaners and office staff will be on duty, first aid cover is available, caretaking staff will be working normally and school meals will be provided on that day.

Without interfering with the teachers' legitimate right to strike action, I have attempted to provide an uninterrupted education for as many of the pupils in my charge as possible; the situation may change in the next 48 hours. Having analysed the timetables of teachers involved in the action and consulted with the Chairman of my Board of Governors on 25.11.11, I have advised that the current situation is **that a full compliment of teachers is available for Year 8X and Year 9 pupils only** on that day. Since teachers not participating in the action do not provide cover for those on strike, I do not have the staffing available to provide for the education and supervision of other pupils for their full day; it will be up to parents to make suitable arrangements for their child's welfare in this case. I would encourage all these latter pupils to use the opportunity to have a study day of preparation for the class examinations that are due to take place in the month of December.

I trust that you will appreciate that this is not a situation of my making and one that I do not relish. I have attempted to clarify the exact position relating to our individual circumstances as soon as was practicable and I am now taking the opportunity to inform parents of the situation in Newtownhamilton High as it pertains at the moment. If there are any changes to those circumstances, they will be posted on our website. I hope that this arrangement meets with your approval.

Should you wish to discuss any of the contents of this letter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Garnet Mullan (Principal)

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