

Forest Fields Primary & Nursery School

Stanley Road off Berridge Road Nottingham NG7 6GQ
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www.forestfieldsprimary.co.uk
Headteacher: Mrs S Chowdhury BEd (Hons), NPQH, MA
AfCGI, ILM Level 5 Certificate in Effective Coaching and Mentoring



Friday 24th July 2026

Dear parents and carers,

I hope you are all well.

Please find below an update on the dispute.

The independent review commissioned by Nottingham City Council has now concluded and we are writing to share its key findings and the next steps for the school community. The reviewer considered a wide range of evidence, including interviews with staff, governors, union representatives and other stakeholders, alongside staff surveys, school and union documentation, health and safety information and reports from independent professionals. The report was shared with NEU representatives at the same time as the it was sent to me and we have been asked by the NEU not to share the report in full until fully discussed. We will continue to work with the NEU on resolving the dispute and this report, along with other information, will help us to develop an action plan next term.

The review found that concerns regarding workload, wellbeing, communication, increasing pupil complexity and staffing pressures were well evidenced. It recognised that many colleagues have been working in extremely challenging circumstances and that these pressures reflect wider challenges being experienced across the education sector nationally.

The review also found evidence that some staff experienced declining trust and concerns regarding communication and consultation, including their confidence in being able to share their concerns in an open and supported way. These experiences were recognised as genuine, and the report makes clear that they should not be dismissed. We are committed to addressing these issues, and some of the changes we have already communicated will continue to develop further as part of this work.

At the same time, the review found that experiences across the school were not uniform. Many staff described positive working relationships with leaders and confidence in the direction of the school. Independent external professionals consistently reported evidence of effective leadership, active governance and continuing school improvement.



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Importantly, the review did not find sufficient evidence to suggest that the matters raised were indicative of wider or systemic issues in leadership, governance, the management of bullying, or the school's overall organisational culture. Instead, the evidence pointed to a more complex picture in which relationships and levels of trust between some staff, trade union representatives, and senior leaders had become strained over time, contributing to differing experiences and perspectives across the organisation.

The reviewer concluded that this deterioration in relationships became a major contributing factor in the escalation of the dispute and that the dispute should not be interpreted as representing the experiences of the workforce as a whole.

The review concluded that rebuilding trust and positive professional relationships across the school community will be an important priority moving forward: while some staff described feeling unable to raise concerns openly with leaders, there were also reports from some colleagues that they felt unable to express views that differed from others or that they had experienced negative interactions with colleagues during the dispute.

The report concludes that rebuilding an environment where all staff feel able to express their views respectfully, challenge constructively and work positively with one another will be an important part of moving forward. We welcome the recommendations of the report that seek to address this and are working hard to implement these recommendations.

The review's overarching conclusion is that the school's principal challenge is relational rather than structural. The systems necessary to support effective leadership, governance and school improvement are largely in place, but rebuilding trust, strengthening psychological safety and restoring constructive professional dialogue are now critical priorities.

The recommendations are therefore focused on rebuilding trust, strengthening psychological safety, improving communication and consultation, clarifying roles and responsibilities, strengthening partnership working and creating the conditions for constructive and sustainable industrial relations.



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We recognise that the industrial dispute has had a significant impact on colleagues and the wider school community. Our hope is that, following publication of the review, all parties can now focus their efforts on rebuilding trust and strengthening working relationships. We recognise that some staff who have participated in industrial action, as well as those who have continued to work in school, have experienced anxiety, uncertainty or upset during this period. Throughout, we have sought to respect both the right to strike and the right not to strike and we continue to take our duty of care for all staff seriously.

At the meeting today with NEU representatives, we asked for clarity on outstanding issues in the dispute. We were told that concerns continue in relation to safety, staffing numbers, fixed term contracts, the protocol for union relations in school, TA timetables and the call-out system. I have previously shared the actions I and SLT have already taken and explained the context but wanted to share and update you further:

- Safety in school has been reviewed in great detail including input and walk arounds by the LA lead for school Health & Safety and our School Improvement Adviser. This was done when the school was fully operating and I can share that there were no concerns raised or recommendations and you can be assured of a safe environment in school.
- I have explained previously that we employ 27 TAs including temporary and we spend more of our income on staffing than the DfE expect. We know that sickness and time off for other things has been high in the past and that this impacts on those colleagues in school; we are considering this as part of managing these requests moving forward. I am also committed to reviewing the pastoral support structure as part of the behaviour review that will be undertaken next term and I will update you on this as part of that process.
- We have an established way of working in school with fixed term contracts and as we have falling pupil numbers it would be irresponsible to appoint to all roles permanently. Fixed term contracts are used when there is not certainty and as a way of protecting permanent staff in case changes are needed in the future. Adverts are clear when roles are fixed term and not permanent. There are three fixed term contracts in school now.
- A mediation session has taken place with a school NEU representative and I and from that we have agreed a number of principles regarding working together. A protocol is being discussed, and the



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NEU have indicated that it is now in a better place and we look forward to finalising early September.

- Staff agreed that the deployment of TAs would be in phases and linked to pupil need. Meetings have happened and that is operating this term coordinated by Phase Leaders and this will continue in September. What this means is TAs will be given timetables as an indication of general deployment, however, they will be subject to change based on need and in line with the job description and level of the TA.
- The call-out system will be reviewed as part of the behaviour review and I recognise the importance of this as the system currently sits outside of our behaviour policy. As part of this behaviour review staff will have the opportunity to input and I am open minded to any improvements that come out of this.

As we look ahead to the new academic year, we hope to move forward with open minds, kindness and a shared commitment to restoring positive and professional relationships. We know that strong working relationships are essential to achieving the best outcomes for the children and families we serve.

We are committed to working constructively with all staff, trade unions, governors and Nottingham City Council to develop and implement the recommendations contained within the report. You are also aware of changes that have already been agreed and introduced this term, which will continue and develop further during the next academic year.

A review of our behaviour policy, and how it is applied in practice, will involve meaningful input from staff and stakeholders. This work will help to inform future decisions about staffing structures and ensure that our provision remains fit for purpose in meeting the needs of our pupils.

We recognise that colleagues may have different reactions to the report and its findings. Moving forward, it is important that we create opportunities for respectful dialogue, rebuild confidence and work collectively towards a positive future. The review makes clear that restoring trust will require commitment from all stakeholders, and we are determined to play our full part in that process.



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Our shared focus remains unchanged: delivering the very best outcomes for the children and families of Forest Fields.

We hope that you have a relaxing summer and look forward to welcoming you back in September.

Take care,
Shahida



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