

Lewisham NUT

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Dear Colleague

February 25 2015

FURTHER ONE-DAY STRIKE CALLED FOR THURSDAY 5 MARCH

Hitting the Headlines on February 12

Thanks to everyone for supporting education and your Union by making sure our first one-day strike to protest against the threat of a change of employer was so solidly supported. Pickets were held on each of the four schools – Sedgehill, The Vale, Hilly Fields and Ladywell Fields before



strikers packed into a Ladywell cafe to warm up for the rest of the day. From 9.45, strikers gathered outside Hilly Fields School where the Governors of the three schools in the Prendergast / Leathersellers Federation were meeting to vote on whether to apply for an Academy Order.

The energy and determination shown by all the teachers, parents and students who protested will have been an inspiration to everyone determined to halt the privatisation and break-up of education in Lewisham. The meeting could have been left in no doubt about the views of the school community as they chanted "Teachers, parents, students say, 'Academies in Lewisham - No Way!' " For a video and pictures of the protest, visit the Stop Academies In Lewisham Facebook page.

Prendergast – Governors vote for Academy Order – but this battle has only just begun!

The fact that this overwhelming show of opposition was then to be so blatantly ignored will be a bitter disappointment to all those who protested. Regrettably, however, the fact that a majority of the Federation Governors were intent on voting to apply for an Academy Order was never really in doubt. Governors have, as yet, shown no intention of taking note of the strength of the arguments against academies - nor the strength of opposition in their school community. That's why we have to take further action to make sure that Governors have to take note - and are made to think again!

Our campaign is also backed by parents and students through Stop Academies in Lewisham. We have helped SAIL produce a detailed response to the Governors' Working Party Report which makes absolutely clear that there is no justification for turning the Prendergast schools into academies.

Sedgehill – can the IEB reassure us that the school is not going to become an Academy?

Sedgehill staff face the threat of their school being forced into Academy Status – not by their Governors (who have been replaced by the IEB) but by the DfE who expect the IEB to pursue academisation. Unions have met with the IEB and the NUT made clear that, if they were able to put firm assurances in writing, then we would discuss with members and the National Union whether further action could be withdrawn. Without such assurances, however, our action must continue.

We can win this battle – but we need to take further action first!

We have already seen Bonus Pastor School withdraw its plan to apply for Academy status. With a bold campaign, we can achieve the same result at Sedgehill and the Prendergast Federation too.

The arguments stacking up against academisation become stronger every week. The SAiL response to the Prendergast Governors gives fact after fact explaining why academies are no way forward. Our dispute is specifically over the threat to terms and conditions that could result from a change of employer. Again, the SAiL pamphlet explains why Governors' reassurances cannot be relied upon, particularly in the climate of further budget cuts that the Working Party itself is predicting!

SAiL is building links with the 'Hands Off Hove Park campaign' which successfully defeated an attempt to academise a school in Brighton. Their victory was based on a combination of public campaigning and union strike action. Lewisham unions and residents can achieve the same!

Join the strike on Thursday March 5th – together with Prendergast Federation GMB/NASUWT

Under the terms of our 'discontinuous' ballots for sustained strike action, the NUT is legally covered to call further days of strike action as part of our ongoing disputes at the four schools. Now, two other unions, the NASUWT and GMB have successfully balloted their members at the Prendergast Schools in the same way. Just as we did in February, these unions need to take action within a specific legal period after announcing their results – and so we have had to liaise to see if there was a day when we could all co-ordinate strike action on the same date. That date has now been set as March 5th. (I know it's another Thursday – we'll try and avoid repeating the same day of the week).

Remember the ballot was for 'sustained' action so that any loss of pay for taking part in the strike will be reimbursed by the Union for both days of action. Reps are being sent forms by the National NUT so that you can provide copies of pay-slips, once deductions are made, to process the claims.

Join the strike on March 5th – but don't just sit at home - take part in the strike activities!

- February 12 was an excellent day of action. March 5th promises to be even better, with colleagues from GMB and NASUWT taking action alongside the NUT.
- Your Union is sustaining you to take part in this strike action, so, if you were one of the NUT members who decided to grab a chance to have a lie-in and catch up on your planning on the last strike-day, this time, take part in the strike activities!
- Join the picket-line outside your school at 7.30 am – get in that “team-photo” !
- Meet all your colleagues for breakfast after 9.00 am – provisionally aim for “Le Delice” again (by Ladywell station) although, if we can't all fit in, we might have to overflow into some of the neighbouring cafes along Ladywell Road!
- We will be making other plans for the day, including street stalls and perhaps a delegation to hand in a letter to the Leathersellers Company near Mansion House.
- Please also come along to Lewisham NUT's AGM, 5pm on MONDAY, MARCH 2nd in Committee Room 3 in the Civic Suite at Catford Town Hall, so that we can agree plans for the strike day and make sure that colleagues from schools across Lewisham can ask you about the dispute and give you their support and solidarity.

Any Questions / Queries? ASK your reps and/or Lewisham NUT

Martin Powell-Davies, Secretary, Lewisham NUT