

## ADVICE & GUIDANCE

# How to deal with proposed pupil strike action

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### **Purpose of this paper**

You may have seen some press coverage over the last few days regarding the 'strike action' some pupils are planning to take over climate change this **Friday, 15 February 2019 between 11am – 2pm**, as part of a coordinated day of action.

It was evident that some of the reports, featured in the national press, suggested that we support the pupils' strike, and to be clear, this is not the case. We recommend that pupils do not take part.

While we support the right of young people to express themselves, first and foremost, pupils should be in school during term time. We do not condone young people missing out on education.

The purpose of this paper is to help guide you and your staff on the day, if you believe that your own school will be affected.

### **Important considerations to make**

The DfE has stated that this proposed action is a matter for individual schools. Their guidance however makes it clear that term-time leave can only be granted for pupils in 'exceptional circumstances' and when it is authorised by the head teacher.

Whilst this is the very first time that school climate strikes are proposed in the UK, it is highly unlikely that the proposed action on Friday amounts to 'exceptional circumstances'.

The risks associated with absent pupils are significant. Out of sight pupils, during term-time, place head teachers in a difficult position as they are accountable for pupil health, safety and welfare during term-time and the scheduled hours that pupils are in their care.

If pupils are indeed absent, without the consent of the head teacher, such absences will need to be recorded as unauthorised - this is unlikely to reflect well on school attendance records or with the parents and carers who do not support the proposed strike action.

Our guidance on term-time pupil absence can be found here:

<https://www.naht.org.uk/advice-and-support/pupil-well-being/guidance-on-authorised-term-time-pupil-absence/>

## **Practical guidance for you on the day**

So, as a head teacher, what are your options on the day and what can you do now to prepare for such an eventuality?

### **1. No action**

There may, of course, be no action or proposed strike action at your school whatsoever. Nevertheless, you may want to alert parents – please see the note below.

### **2. Create an alternative space for pupils**

The proposed strike action will be taking place between 11am–2pm on Friday 15 February. As an alternative for those pupils who are hearing about the event (via social media) and want to engage, you may want to create some space for children to engage with the issue, but in school time (say, an assembly or a lunchtime debate), so that safeguarding can be provided, and you can also avoid the prospect of having to deal with a significant number of unauthorised absences.

This will provide some stretch for your resources, but it may also provide an engaging experience for your pupils at the end of the school half-term, if you haven't already broken up.

### **3. Encourage pupils to get involved in organised events outside term-time hours**

If pupils wish to engage with climate change or other important issues, it may be prudent to signpost them to organised events that are scheduled outside term-time hours and during school holiday periods.

In any of the scenarios described here, you may wish to alert parents to provide them with the reassurance that their children will be safe on the day, as on any other day, and highlight the opportunities they have to learn about climate change and other issues across the curriculum during a typical school week or term, in history, citizenship and PSHE.

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If you would like to discuss anything further in this document or would simply like some advice or guidance, then please give us a call on our **NAHT Advice Line on 0300 30 30 333 (option 1)** where we will be very pleased to make arrangements to discuss your situation further or you can e-mail us at [specialistadvice@naht.org.uk](mailto:specialistadvice@naht.org.uk)