



## The de Ferrers Trust

8 February 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

I am disappointed to have to inform you that 20 of the 29 members of the NASUWT union at Granville Academy have voted to take industrial action.

This includes four days of strike action on the following dates:

Thursday 14 February; Tuesday 26 February; Wednesday 6 March; Thursday 7 March

They also state that they will not attend meetings before or after school (despite being paid for some of these).

I must point out that there are many excellent and committed professionals who work tirelessly at Granville in the interests of your children. Some are members of this union.

However, some members of this union are objecting to several policies we have. They want to return to the 'Derbyshire policies' that were in place before the school joined the Trust on 1 September 2017.

We are trying to improve the life chances of your children by helping them achieve more in school. The Derbyshire policies, which no longer apply at Granville Academy, are partly responsible for the unacceptable underachievement seen in the county's secondary schools over the years.

This isn't good enough for your children. It gives me no pleasure to state that last year children who left Granville Academy's Year 11 made less progress than: a) any other school in the Trust; b) other schools nationally; and c) the average Derbyshire school - which was the worst performing authority in the East Midlands as it is.

It is my job, along with my colleagues at Granville Academy, to change this on behalf of you and your children. At the moment, it appears that a number of the 20 voting members (I don't believe it is all of them) are trying to prevent me from doing that. They, quite literally, don't want change. The reality is, the members of staff who wish to go back to 'Derbyshire policies' want to do so because they are easier for them, and this is what they confirmed to me in the collective feedback I received. There was no mention of what was in the best interests of children.

1.4 miles down the road from Granville Academy is another Derbyshire secondary school in our Trust – The Pingle Academy. The diligent staff there have worked for several years in a really positive spirit to do the absolute best by the children in their care. Most recently, this was with our policies and the help of Trust staff. Last year, they were the most improved school in the whole of Derbyshire and one of the most improved in the country.

**Why should your children, literally walking distance away, not benefit from these improvements?**

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The main objection of these union members appears to be the number of times they can be observed teaching. In reality, it isn't very often and they are usually short visits. It is just more than these teachers are used to or that they would like. I make no apology for this. We cannot find out how to improve things (and they need to improve for your children) unless we visit. Some teachers at Granville are doing an excellent job. Others, with the same children, are not doing well enough. We want to help them.

If we identify that a teacher needs some help in order to improve, we offer informal support through coaching.

I do not want to inconvenience parents by closing the school but I am sure you understand that losing 20+ members of staff in a relatively small school like Granville Academy has a significant impact on those colleagues who will not be disrupting the children's education as well, of course, as on the children themselves. However, your children will be educated on 14<sup>th</sup> February, despite the strike.

The industrious leadership team at Granville and the small central team at The de Ferrers Trust have worked incredibly hard to come up with some alternative arrangements for your children on these days. We are trying to make the best of the situation and offer your children something different and of great value to their learning and development.

There will be more details to follow but here's the outline of **'Granville's Aspire and Achieve Enrichment Day'** for 14<sup>th</sup> February:

Year 7: A 'Character and Resilience' day at Chestnut Woodlands Forest School, Moira

Year 8: A day of activities at Burton Albion Football Club organised by Burton Albion Community Trust

Year 9: 'Superheroes and Villains' day – a cinema visit followed by creative writing

Year 10: Watching a live performance of 'A Christmas Carol' performed by a theatre group, followed by interactive workshops with the performers

Year 11: A GCSE day at The de Ferrers Academy's new Sixth Form Campus in Burton, focusing on English and Mathematics

All transport costs will be covered by Granville Academy and/or The de Ferrers Trust.

The leaders of Granville Academy and representatives of the Trust has made it very clear to the NASUWT that we wish to keep discussing their issues of concern in order to seek a resolution to this regrettable and, as I see it, wholly unnecessary action.

We would appreciate your support at this difficult time.

Yours sincerely

**Ian McNeilly**  
Chief Executive