



The Gordon Schools
Huntly
Aberdeenshire
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27 March, 2019

Dear Parent / Carer,

Guidance on Pupil “Strikes”

Background

The school “strike” movement started in August 2018 when Greta Thunberg, then 15, held a solo protest outside the Swedish Parliament. In recent months the ‘Youth Strike 4 Climate Change’ has promoted pupil strikes (or more accurately, non-attendance) and these have grown to the extent that pupils from many countries are now not attending school on Fridays (or in some cases part of Fridays). This movement now includes young people from schools in Scotland. On Friday 15 March, this movement extended to The Gordon Schools.

The Gordon Schools position is that climate change is a topic that teachers and pupils should continue to engage with in order for pupils to play a role as responsible citizens in wider society and also to allow them to make informed consumer choices in the future.

However, this must be balanced with ensuring the safety and wellbeing of young people which is of paramount importance. The Gordon Schools with Colleagues have a duty of care towards young people as well as a need to ensure the safeguarding of all young people in our care. Existing procedures, therefore, should be followed. Pupils may seek advice on participation in the “strike”. However, the GTCS standards governing teachers’ conduct make clear that it would be inappropriate for teachers to potentially influence pupil decision-making, irrespective of any personal sympathies which may be held.

If a young person under the age of 16 receives prior parental permission to participate in any strike, then this can be recorded as an authorised absence. It must be the Parents/Carers who inform the school of this and we request that this is done in writing or through verifiable e-mail. Otherwise, absences will be recorded as unauthorised. A pupil who is “on strike” must not attend School nor be on School grounds during this period. Parents/Carers are responsible for their child during this time and for their journeys to/from school if they are absent for part of our School day.

Due to their age, there is a different legal position for young people who are 16 or over. They can make the decision to strike on an independent basis, however they must inform The Gordon Schools in advance of the day of organised action. If they fail to do so, then their absence will be recorded as unauthorised. As a courtesy, we will also inform Parents/Carers of those over 16 about the attendance of their child in these circumstances. As above, a pupil who is "on strike" must not attend School nor be on School grounds during this period. Parents/Carers are responsible for their child during this time and for their journeys to/from school if they are absent for part of our School day.

If you would like any further information, please contact me at School.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Phil Gaiter', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Phil Gaiter
Rector