



5th May 2026

RCK/HBE



Dear Parents and Carers,



I am writing to inform you that members of staff at Cowley International College will be taking strike action on Thursday 7th May.



This follows a period of ongoing conversations with the trade unions. As you may know, strike action only occurs when talks break down and all avenues to resolve matters have been exhausted. I, SLT and Governors have responded to every request made by the trade unions, and we have remained steadfast in the belief that the work taking place at Cowley is in the very best interests of our students.



It is incredibly disappointing that Union members have chosen to strike at such a critical time for our Year 11 and Year 13 students, who are starting their exams. We all know that every lesson is key for their studies. I also fully understand the impact this will have on families, including parents and carers who may need to take time away from work. For this reason, I have continued to ask the trade unions what more can be done to prevent this strike from going ahead.



Last month, trade unions, governors, and school leaders agreed to a Joint Memorandum of Understanding, and at a further meeting on 23rd April, there were positive comments acknowledging that progress had been made. However, late last week, the situation took a different turn, and the NEU again pushed for strike action.



Today, we have spent considerable time working on the three items identified by the unions last week. Senior staff and Governors have been working with unions and staff to resolve their concerns:

1. Some staff are not content with the new pastoral structure currently being trialled voluntarily.
2. Some staff are unhappy with how senior staff visit lessons.
3. Some staff have concerns about communication on our internal radio system.



It was a positive day with the following agreed:



- Some of the job descriptions changed following requests from the staff involved in the trail pastoral structure.
- New contracts created and offered, providing all staff involved with pay rises. With some staff accepting this.
- An agreed protocol for lesson visits.
- An agreed protocol of radio use.

I had hoped that by continuing to address these concerns directly today when meeting with staff and agreeing some protocols for radio use and lesson visits, we would demonstrate clearly that we are listening and responding. Unfortunately, the unions remain adamant that strike action is the only way forward, despite mine and the Governors continued openness to discuss and negotiate.

Ultimately, many of the concerns raised stem from the changes we introduced 12 months ago. Cowley needed to make bold moves to improve and to better serve our community. Change is difficult, but for Cowley it was necessary. The College is now very different from what it used to be, and this has been recognised widely and difficult for some to accept.

Our most recent Ofsted inspection in February 2026 highlighted this transformation, noting that:

“The school is undergoing rapid, purposeful and well-sequenced improvement”

“Leaders, together with governors, are strategic in their actions and deeply committed to improving the school. They know exactly what to work on, why it matters and how each action contributes to better outcomes for pupils. Leaders and governors make changes in the best interests of pupils”.

And **“There is a newly created positive culture for learning. Pupils are rising to leaders’ increased expectations of their achievement and behaviour”**

Arrangements for this week.

- Wednesday (tomorrow) will run as a standard school day for all year groups.
- Thursday, the school will be open for Year 11 and Year 13 students only.
- We do not yet know which individual staff members will be striking. However, Year 11 and Year 13 students will be taught revision classes by those teachers who are in, myself and the leadership team.
- Mrs McKay and Mr Bennett will be contacting specific families to offer a sanctuary and timetable for our SEND and vulnerable students.
- All other year groups will study at home, further details to follow on our website.

- All exams will run as normal.
- Friday will be a standard school day for all year groups.

The trade unions have further strike days planned. However, I want to be clear that I fully respect every eligible employee's legal right to take part in industrial action and to express their views. I remain hopeful that they will return to the table and continue the process of finding a resolution, one that supports our children and responds to the issues raised.

Thank you for your continued support and understanding during this challenging period.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Cormack', written in a cursive style.

Mr R Cormack
Principal